

A VIRTUE-THEORETIC APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY: FAITH
AS AN ACT OF EPISTEMIC VIRTUE

by

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(Under the Direction of Sarah Wright)

ABSTRACT

This work lies at the juncture between religious epistemology and virtue epistemology. Currently, both fields in epistemology are burgeoning with interest and novel theories, arguments, and applications. However, there is no systematic or sustained overlap between the two. I aim to provide such a systematic connection. Virtue epistemology holds that epistemology should turn away from analyzing person-neutral concepts like evidence, reliability, etc. as the *primary* locus of analysis in favor of person-based properties like intellectual character traits. I develop and defend a virtue-theoretic approach to religious epistemology; arguing that, in certain circumstances, faith can be an act of epistemic virtue. After developing my own account of epistemic virtue, I turn to an analysis of epistemic trust and argue that such trust is an epistemic virtue. To place epistemic trust in someone is to be disposed to see him/her as a kind of intellectual authority and depend on that authority—a kind relying confidence or confidence reliance. Next, I analyze the conceptual connections between faith and epistemic trust—arguing that robust religious faith is a species of epistemic trust. We should see faith as an expression of epistemic trust in certain ways; namely, for religious matters and for beliefs that matter deeply to one's overall intellectual, moral, pragmatic, etc. worldview. Given my argument(s) that epistemic trust is a virtue, it follows

that faith is a particular expression of that virtue. Therefore, faith (when expressed properly) is epistemically virtuous *qua* act of epistemic virtue. We have an epistemological analysis of faith rooted systemically and deeply in virtue epistemology. The overall upshot is that genuine faith expresses a epistemically virtuous character via trust and, as such, can confer positive epistemic status on religious beliefs. Moreover, genuine faith must fit the same framework as other virtues: it must admit of a mean between excess and deficiency, it must come under the direction of practical wisdom, it must be consistent with other virtues, and other key criteria. I end by discussing how my approach addresses serious issues in religious epistemology and I locate it in the landscape of major theories of proper religious belief.

INDEX WORDS: Virtue epistemology, Religious epistemology, Faith, Epistemic Trust, Epistemic virtue, Testimony, Zagzebski, Universalism, Reliabilism, Assurance, Divine hiddenness, Religious diversity, Evidentialism, Reformed epistemology, Fideism

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BA, Wofford College, 2006

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2012

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December 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have come about without the help, support, and criticism of many people over many years. Special thanks and gratitude go to the entire philosophy department of the University of Georgia. But, in particular, I must thank my committee members: Frank R. Harrison, Charles Cross, William L. Power and especially my director, Sarah Wright. Without their guidance, this task would have been impossible and fruitless. And my wife, Melia Brannon McCraw, has given me the encouragement, love, and enthusiasm necessary to keep me and my thoughts on the path necessary to complete this work. All of these people have my heartfelt thanks and gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

EPISTEMIC VIRTUE

My overall aim in this work is to explore and ultimately defend a virtue-theoretic approach to religious epistemology. To this end, my aim in this first chapter is to articulate and argue for my particular account of epistemic virtue that informs and provides a framework for everything that follows.¹ In brief, I shall argue that an internalist, responsibilist approach to epistemic virtue provides the most satisfactory account of virtue upon which to model one's epistemology. (I am aware that I am using epistemological terms of art without defining them here. They will be defined when the argument so requires—nothing philosophically interesting turns upon them right now.) My work in this chapter will run as follows. First, I shall give some *very* brief and general reasons to think a virtue approach to epistemology offers a productive and philosophically advantageous framework. I do not intend to *argue* for virtue epistemology, strictly speaking, but merely to give some reasons to think it a good basis from which the current work proceeds. Second, I shall argue for the general approach to epistemic virtue I think is best; namely, virtue responsibilism. To accomplish this, I shall distinguish two different approaches to epistemic virtue (the other being virtue reliabilism) and argue that responsibilism is preferable. Given all of this, I shall then argue that Linda Zagzebski's specific responsibilist approach is the most satisfactory here. Then, I shall argue that her theory is not totally satisfactory, and offer what I

¹ For the remainder of this work, I use the terms "epistemic virtue" and "intellectual virtue" equivalently.

consider to be a more successful modification of her theory. Finally, I shall end by considering some worries or concerns that my proposed account faces.

Virtue Epistemology in General:

The present work takes a general virtue-theoretic approach to epistemology for granted. As briefly as possible, virtue epistemology is the view that epistemological evaluation and analysis centers on epistemic virtues. Now, different theories give different accounts of what an epistemic virtue is but the unifying theme here is the centrality of *whatever* a virtue is for one's epistemological enterprise. This implies that proper epistemological analysis moves from evaluating agents to beliefs and not the other way around. Other common epistemological theories like foundationalism, coherentism, and evidentialism focus analysis primarily on beliefs and only from there do we have the tools to analyze the agent who has those beliefs. For all of these views, certain properties of beliefs (e.g. being properly basic or based on such beliefs, bearing certain logical connections to one's other beliefs, or being based on adequate evidence) determine the epistemic status of those beliefs and *from there* can we evaluate the believer. Focusing on epistemic virtue reverses this direction of analysis and/or evaluation. On a view of this type, we focus on certain aspects of an agent (e.g. epistemic virtues) and *from there* we evaluate that agent's beliefs. In short, a virtue-theoretic approach reverses the direction of analysis from belief-to-agent to agent-to-belief.² I have neither the space nor the time to give a robust defense of this view *and* use it in the manner I intend through this work. However, even though I offer no thorough defense of this view, I do think it

² This feature of virtue epistemology is supposed to parallel a virtue *ethic's* direction of analysis from agent-to-act (whereas views like consequentialism and deontology move from act-to-agent).

important to give some brief (even if not robust) grounds or reasons to think this view plausible. Thus, this section works more as a list of motivations to adopt the approach rather than any full-blooded defense.

First and most briefly, there is good reason to think that a virtue-theoretic approach solves certain nasty worries or problems that face epistemology. Early virtue epistemologists urged a virtue approach as a means to escape the foundationalist-coherentist debate—one that seemed intractable at the time.³ Ernest Sosa also tries to motivate virtue epistemology by arguing that such a view can solve (or at the very least mitigate) worries for certain specific epistemologies; most notably reliabilism.⁴ His argument here is that a change to virtue theory can solve specific problems that critics of reliabilism had marshaled against the view. Finally, Linda Zagzebski claims that epistemologists are at loggerheads about the epistemologically central notion of ‘justification’ (broadly construed).⁵ A quick glimpse at the field uncovers no shortage of views, some fundamentally different than others, regarding this vexed concept.⁶ In fact, some epistemologists (e.g. William Alston) have even argued that the ‘debate’ about justification results from different philosophers using fundamentally different concepts when engaging in such a debate with the result that epistemologists continually talk past one another.⁷ Adopting virtue theory, Zagzebski argues, removes the problematic notion

³ See: Ernest Sosa, “The Raft and the Pyramid,” in *Knowledge and Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 165-191 and Lorraine Code, “Toward a ‘Responsibilist’ Epistemology,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 45, no. 1 (September 1984): 29-50.

⁴ Sosa, “Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue,” in *Knowledge and Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131-145.

⁵ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 29-43.

⁶ See William Alston’s *Beyond Justification: Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006) and Alvin Plantinga’s *Warrant: The Current Debate*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) for lists and analyses of such views.

⁷ See Alston’s “Epistemic Desiderata,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 53, no. 3 (September 1993): 527-551 and Chapter 1 of *Beyond Justification*.

of ‘justification’ from its place of pride in epistemology; thus providing a path away from the epistemological quagmire of ‘justification.’ Various philosophers have proposed various accounts of ‘justification,’ with no one account or account type having overwhelming arguments for it or against it. Zagzebski’s claim is that, by focusing epistemology on epistemic virtues, epistemologists can appeal to some more basic concept than ‘justification’ to do the major philosophical work. The idea behind all of these arguments is that a virtue-theoretic approach provides the resources to respond to specific epistemological issues or problems.

In general, these arguments exemplify a call for a virtue-turn—suggesting that using concepts and arguments from virtue *ethics* will bear significant philosophical fruit for epistemology. It is in these early works that we see a philosophical call to arms, as it were, for epistemologists to take note of the revival of the virtue tradition in ethics so that a similar revival might assuage deep worries that afflict epistemology. Different specific arguments here may appeal to different specific epistemological problems, but the spirit or essence remains the same: epistemologists ought to turn to virtue ethics to set their own theoretical house(s) aright. This core motive may take on different forms in different accounts but it remains consistent throughout all of these (early) appeals for a virtue-theoretic approach to epistemology.

Finally, there are broad reasons to accept such an epistemology grounded in historical motivations for this view’s ethical or moral analogue (i.e. virtue ethics). Again, I see no need to catalogue arguments from ethicists here, so I shall present only a few non-technical grounds that I find particularly appealing. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is a theoretical treatise—it concerns a philosophically defensible account of virtue

and, accordingly, the appropriate moral life. But, one gives the theory in order to put it into practice; that is, that one might know what virtue is or have a good account of it in order to *become* virtuous. I suggest the same concern with theory meeting praxis can occur in virtue *epistemology* as well.⁸ Epistemology can appear to be an “ivory tower” enterprise sometimes—arguing about anti-Gettier clauses, deductive closure, brains in vats, etc. that seems only tangentially related to how people actually cognize or cognize well.⁹ A genuine virtue approach cannot (or at least, ought not) go too far afield into concerns like these without eventually returning to the virtuous *agent*. Focusing on epistemically virtuous agents necessarily involves concerns about how these agents think or would think. Taking a cue from Aristotle, a virtue approach here means that epistemological theory and a concern with epistemological or intellectual practice are wed and necessarily so.

Varieties of Epistemic Virtue:

In this section, I begin my argument for the specific account of epistemic virtue that I favor. In general, an epistemic virtue is a feature of a person that makes that person a good thinker, believer, knower, etc. and/or promotes intellectual flourishing; which can be defined in terms of obtaining knowledge, understanding, wisdom, or some other intellectual end. As should be obvious, giving such a description does hardly anything to make the concept less ambiguous. Virtue epistemologists make a common distinction between two different theories of epistemic virtue; a distinction that helps make this

⁸ See Roberts and Wood *Intellectual Virtues*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2007), 20-27, for a similar line of reasoning.

⁹ This is, of course, *not* to argue that such debates are not philosophically interesting or important. My only claim is that there are more practical epistemological aims that the field should consider as well.

notion a bit clearer and lays the groundwork for my argument in this section. In this section, I shall argue that only one type of virtue epistemology (i.e. virtue responsibilism) provides a satisfactory account of epistemic virtue. That is, I am concerned here to eliminate one whole class of theories on epistemic virtue—leaving only one other broad type. In order to make such an argument, though, we must make this distinction clear.

Following Guy Axtell, I distinguish two different types of virtue epistemology: virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism.¹⁰ A virtue epistemology is reliabilist just in case it counts (almost) any cognitive feature or process as a virtue (provided that it is reliable with respect to producing true beliefs) and a virtue epistemology is responsibilist just in case it counts *only* character traits as putative virtues. Thus construed, virtue reliabilists and responsibilists differ regarding the *kinds of cognitive features* that could count as virtues or, alternatively, they differ about the scope of the genus one must give in one's definition of virtue. Virtue reliabilism, in counting all sorts of cognitive features, has a *much* wider notion of what counts as a virtue; thus employing a broader genus for the reliabilist account (i.e. 'disposition' or 'process'). Since responsibilists countenance only intellectual character traits, they can include far less cognitive features as possible virtues. If we consider different epistemologists' accounts or definitions of epistemic virtue, the distinction I am trying to make should be more perspicuous.

Several early virtue epistemologies provide examples of virtue reliabilism. For instance, in an early work, Ernest Sosa gives the following account of (epistemic) virtue:

A subject S's intellectual virtue V relative to an "environment" E may be defined as S's *disposition to believe* correctly propositions in a field F

¹⁰ See Axtell's introduction to *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Guy Axtell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000) as well as "Recent Work in Virtue Epistemology," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1 (January 1997): 1-26.

relative to which S stands in conditions C, in “environment” E.¹¹ (*italics mine*)

My concern in the above definition is the types of features that count as virtues (i.e. the genus). Virtues are types of dispositions on Sosa’s account, albeit dispositions indexed to fields, conditions, and environments. Sosa also speaks of virtues as faculties, giving a somewhat narrower class of dispositions to count as virtues.¹² But, even if Sosa restricts dispositions to faculties, it is clear that a great many (intellectual) features could count as virtues. Perception, memory, and rational intuition become epistemic virtues *par excellence* for a theory of Sosa’s type here because they are paradigmatically reliable cognitive faculties.¹³ Alvin Goldman gives a similar theory. According to him, “belief-forming processes...are deemed virtuous because they (are deemed to) produce a high ratio of true beliefs.”¹⁴ Like Sosa, his paradigmatic epistemic virtues are “vision, hearing, memory, and (‘good’) reasoning.”¹⁵ Since each account of virtue features an extremely broad class of cognitive attribute types (i.e. dispositions, faculties, or belief-forming processes), each theory will feature a concomitantly large list of putative virtues (again, provided they are appropriately reliable).

Sosa’s later work modifies his earlier approach slightly while giving a somewhat more restricted account of epistemic virtue. Virtues, here, function akin to intellectual (cognitive) skills or manifestations of epistemic competence.¹⁶ John Greco’s account follows Sosa’s later work. He claims that “a virtue-theoretic account of epistemic

¹¹ Sosa, “Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue,” 140.

¹² Sosa, “Knowledge and Intellectual Virtue.”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Goldman, “Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology,” in *Empirical Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers), 429.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge, Vol. I*, (New York: Oxford University Press 2009), 22-24.

normativity is one that explains knowledge in terms of person-level excellences” where he takes “such excellences as intellectual abilities, or intellectual powers” such that “abilities are [reliable] person-level dispositions.”¹⁷ At this juncture, epistemic virtues look less like cognitive faculties themselves and more like the reliable exercise or use of those faculties. Yet, even though theories like Greco’s and new-Sosa’s might seem to move away from the broad accounts we see with Goldman and (old school) Sosa, this is not the case. “Person-level” dispositions are still dispositions and, accordingly, plausibly refer to a large class or range of putative cognitive features. Similarly, if we index intellectual skills or epistemic competences to the faculties of which they are competences, we seem to have just as many skills/competences as we have faculties. Thus, these newer accounts of virtue may not be quite as broad as the older versions based more directly on cognitive faculties, dispositions, or processes in general but they are still too broad to suffice here. Person-level dispositions could possibly count as any disposition a person could have and, clearly, this will still plausibly refer to a very wide range of features. Thus, they qualify as species of virtue reliabilism in precisely the same manner as those older theories. The essential point here is that a virtue reliabilism counts a wide class of cognitive features as a virtue whether it is faculties or competences one manifests in the exercise of those faculties that we consider.

Virtue responsibilists, on the other hand, give a much narrower class of cognitive features in their account of virtue. Only traits of character can satisfy their definition of virtue. For instance, Linda Zagzebski defines virtue *simpliciter* (and, hence, epistemic virtue) as a

¹⁷ Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-Theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity*, (New York: Cambridge University Press 2010), 10.

deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.¹⁸

Like Sosa, Greco, et al., Zagzebski here includes reliability as a necessary condition for virtue. However, she drastically differs with respect to the genus of her definition or the sorts of features that count as virtues. Instead of dispositions or faculties, only excellences *of persons* that are deeply embedded and acquired can possibly satisfy her definition of virtue. Other responsibilists also think of virtues as kinds of character traits. Lorraine Code, for instance, explicitly argues that a virtue epistemology should shift “the focus toward the intellectual ‘character’ of the knower;”¹⁹ viewing “epistemic responsibility as the primary virtue.”²⁰ Beginning his description of epistemic virtues, James Montmarquet says that “an important part of our notion of virtue...is that these are qualities we want so thoroughly engrained as to be *habits*” (emphasis his).²¹ And, *a fortiori*, Montmarquet explicitly takes these habituated features to be character traits.²² Clearly, then, responsibilists differ from reliabilists regarding what *sort of thing* each takes an epistemic virtue to be. It is my contention now that, of these two very different varieties of virtue, only responsibilism provides a satisfactory account of epistemic virtue.

The most convincing argument against reliabilism, to my lights, is what I shall call the Analogue Argument. It is more a family of arguments than one specific line of reasoning, but there is a core motivation that, if sound, makes responsibilism far more

¹⁸ Zagzebski, op. cit., 137.

¹⁹ Code, op. cit., 33.

²⁰ Ibid., 42.

²¹ Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 1993), 26.

²² Ibid., 24.

preferable than reliabilism. The core behind the Analogue Argument is this: only responsibilism provides a theoretical framework in its account of virtue to provide a suitable or sufficient analogy to virtue ethics. Consider arguments by Zagzebski. According to Sosa, a virtue is a virtue almost solely because it is related in a certain way to a particular epistemic end or goal—that of truth (via reliability). Thus, Zagzebski argues that Sosa’s “definition of virtue is consequentialist” providing us with “an informal concept of virtue that is not embedded in aretaic ethics.”²³ Interestingly enough, Goldman makes it explicit that, on his view, virtues have exclusively consequentialist value.²⁴ The idea here is that views like Sosa’s (read: virtue reliabilism) are not *really* based on virtue-theoretic approaches at all. In other words, (virtue) reliabilism has the wrong view about what makes a virtue a virtue—defining them almost purely in consequentialist terms of reliability. Put another way: virtue reliabilism differentiates virtues from any other cognitive feature or faculty wholly in terms of reliability (of a sort embedded to fields, conditions, or environments), so that it is the consequentialist value of reliability that does the philosophical work here. This would be akin to Aristotle defining a moral virtue as any disposition of an agent such that the disposition reliably leads to *eudaimonia*. Insofar as a definition of this sort would be unacceptable to a genuine virtue ethics, the definition of virtue on virtue reliabilism is unacceptable for virtue epistemology.²⁵ One implication of the Analogue Argument is that virtue reliabilists radically mistake the proper structure or grounding of epistemic virtues.

²³ Zagzebski, op. cit., 8.

²⁴ Goldman, “The Unity of the Epistemic Virtues,” in *Virtue Epistemology: Essays on Epistemic Virtue and Responsibility*, eds. Abrol Fairweather and Linda Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press 2001), 31.

²⁵ I assume that consequentialist virtue theories like Hume’s are not robust or genuine virtue theories, since virtues play only a minor theoretical role with respect to consequentialist value.

There is another implication, though. Virtue ethics focuses analysis upon the moral agent *as such*.²⁶ That is, virtue ethics is committed to analyzing primarily those features of the agent characteristic of that person. Now, it would appear that virtue reliabilism focuses (epistemic) analysis upon the agent because faculties, dispositions, and the like cannot occur without some agent that has or bears them. There are no disembodied belief-forming processes. However, as I am suggesting here, this is not to focus on the epistemic agent *as such*. Virtue reliabilism focuses on the epistemic agent *qua* bearer of reliable faculties rather than agent *qua* agent. One might think that Greco's skill or person-level disposition approach can escape this charge, since skills are features of an agent. However, skill *simpliciter* is still too broad of a genus to capture virtue. A skill could be either good or bad; i.e. have positive or negative value. Homicidal maniacs can have certain skills that are vital to their operation *qua* murderer. But, this is different than virtues which, intuitively, have positive values. Keeping to the analogy to virtue ethics, we would expect a satisfactory account of epistemic virtue to be agent-central or agent-based. However, the agent-centrality of virtue reliabilism occurs only as means to get to the faculties, dispositions, or skills born by that agent. Were it possible to have a cognitive faculty without an agent, virtue reliabilism would lose all theoretical grounds to talk about the agent in *any* respect. Clearly, then, this approach does not square with virtue ethics. Considering virtue epistemology as an analogue to virtue ethics gives us two results from the same core line of reasoning: virtue reliabilism takes an unsatisfactory approach to the structure of virtue and how the virtues *of an agent* work into the theory. By making character traits essential to virtue, responsibilists avoid all of

²⁶ See, for example, Michael Slote, "Virtue Ethics," In *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed. Hugh LaFollette (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 325-347.

these worries. Thus, virtue reliabilism provides an insufficient account of epistemic virtue.

There are two possible responses, I think, from the virtue reliabilist here.

Goldman gives us the first. He says that

some proponents of “high church” virtue epistemology might find elements of teleology or consequentialism anathema to their hopes for a distinctive, virtue-based epistemology. By “high church” virtue epistemology, I mean a form of virtue epistemology that models itself closely after virtue ethics...I think we should resist the temptation to insist that virtue epistemology must conform to the model of ethical theory...Epistemology and ethics are different fields, and it should not be presumed that what holds in one must also hold in the other.²⁷

I think his reasoning here fails for several reasons. First, responsibilists (like Zagzebski) do not *presume* that virtue epistemology must conform to virtue ethics; rather, they *argue* for it. Goldman’s response does not suffice as a *counterargument* to those—it is just a bald rejection. Second, early virtue epistemologists like Sosa, Code, Zagzebski et al. motivate their virtue-theoretic approach by appealing to the benefit concepts derived from virtue ethics has for epistemology.²⁸ Thus, there is motive for any of these views to hold to the essence or substance of a virtue-theoretic approach to ethics. Therefore, if virtue reliabilism fails with respect to responsibilism in its connection to virtue ethics, then it has undercut its own theoretical motivation. Third, if Goldman wishes to rework his motivation for a virtue-theoretic approach without any deep consideration of virtue ethics, then I must confess I find no real reason to take this approach over a simple process reliabilism. If reliability is all he wishes to gain, then there is no need whatsoever

²⁷ Goldman, “The Unity of the Epistemic Virtues,” 31.

²⁸ For explicit parallels to a parallel or analogy with virtue ethics, see: Sosa’s “The Raft and the Pyramid,” 189-190; Code, *op. cit.*, 29; Montmarquet’s “An ‘Internalist’ Conception of Epistemic Virtue,” in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Guy Axtell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2000), 135; Montmarquet’s “Epistemic Virtue,” *Mind*, vol. 96, no. 384 (October 1987), 482-483; Greco, *op. cit.*, 42; and Zagzebski, *op. cit.*, 6-15.

to invoke anything like “epistemic virtues.” If virtues *qua* virtues do no philosophical work, then it would be far more parsimonious to leave them out of the final analysis. So, what shall we make of Goldman’s rejoinder? Goldman has a dilemma: either he should drop the pretense at a real *virtue* theory or else we find that the reliabilist approach to virtue undermines that theory’s own core motivation. That is; either we have no virtue theory at all or else his is a theory of virtue that we must find seriously lacking. In either case, reliabilism proves a worse account of virtue than responsibilism.

Second, we find this reply from Greco to Zagzebski’s responsibilism. Responding to Zagzebski’s argument that Sosa in particular and virtue reliabilism in general fail to give an adequate conception of virtue, Greco claims that

specifically, [Zagzebski] has confused Aristotle’s account of moral virtue with the definition of virtue in general. As Sosa notes, Plato calls vision the virtue of the eyes and hearing the virtue of the ears...If we do not make Aristotle’s account of moral virtue definitional of the concept of virtue in general, then we can see that Sosa, Goldman, and Zagzebski are members of an important camp; one appropriately labeled “virtue epistemology.”²⁹

In short, he claims that responsibilists unduly focus on virtue as understood in a specific way; namely, Aristotelian ethics whereas virtue reliabilists understand virtue in the broader Greek sense of something like ‘excellence’ or ‘perfection’ in general. That is, we can keep the analogy to virtue theory, but we need not restrict it to the specifics that responsibilism takes for granted. However, there are a couple of problems with Greco’s response here. As Zagzebski notes, “for both Plato and Aquinas, a virtue is not the natural faculty itself, but the excellence or perfection of the faculty.”³⁰ That is, when

²⁹ Greco, “Two Kinds of Intellectual Virtue,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 60, no. 1 (January 2000), 180-181.

³⁰ Zagzebski, “Responses,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 60, no. 1 (January 2000), 208.

Goldman and early Sosa define epistemic virtue such that straightforward faculties like perception and memory satisfy those accounts, they *still* cannot suffice as genuine virtue-theoretic approaches. However, Greco's and newer Sosa's views now imply that it is abilities and powers rather than the faculties themselves that count as virtues. Perhaps these abilities are the "perfections" of faculties. But, later comments by Greco provide the second problem for his view. According to him,

the defining characteristic of virtue epistemology, in this sense, is that *it makes the normative properties of persons conceptually prior to the normative properties of beliefs.*³¹ (Emphasis mine)

Greco affirms a common (and probably essential) thesis of any virtue theory: the direction of analysis, be it ethical or epistemic, centers on the agent primarily. The epistemic version of the direction of analysis thesis implies that epistemological analysis moves from the agent to that agent's beliefs and not vice versa. Recall our earlier discussion of the essential agent-centrality of a virtue-theoretic approach. I suggest that Greco's comments about the direction of analysis here results from this same commitment. The problem is that, even considering abilities and powers, theories like Greco's do not focus on the agent *as such*. Skills and simple dispositions are too 'thin' to capture accurately something about the agent as that agent. As we examined earlier, such accounts focus only on the agent *qua* bearer of abilities. Now, I do not deny that it is possible that some skills are characteristic of their bearer in ways parallel to character traits, but it is certainly not the case that *all* skills are characteristic in the way that character traits are. One can possess a certain skill, like the skill of being able to perform tricks on a yo-yo, which is not characteristic of the agent/person that possesses that skill. Virtues, though, like courage, humility, et al. *are* characteristic of the virtuous person.

³¹ Greco, "Two Kinds of Intellectual Virtue," 181.

Thus, even a more sophisticated virtue reliabilism like Greco's or (new school) Sosa's cannot provide the *necessary* agent-centrality that any robust virtue-theoretic approach (to either ethics or epistemology) must provide. Hence, of the two approaches, only responsibilism—with its focus on character traits—can ensure that such a condition is satisfied.

One can respond to Greco's argument in a different way, as well. Suppose that he is correct that Zagzebski unduly focuses on Aristotelian *moral* virtue and other virtue epistemologists focus on a broader sense of 'virtue' akin to 'excellence.' In this case, "virtue epistemology" becomes an account of knowledge, justification, warrant, rationality, etc. that comes down to cognitive or intellectual excellence. Hence, it would seem that *any* epistemology that accounts for knowledge, justification, warrant, rationality, etc. in terms of epistemic excellences would count as a 'virtue' epistemology. However, once we put the issue in these terms, it would seem that *any* and *all* epistemologies thereby count as 'virtue' epistemologies. Evidentialism defines knowledge in terms of an agent's possessing sufficient evidence to justify a belief, reliabilism defines knowledge by faculties that reliably produce true beliefs, foundationalism sees justification/warrant as a property supervening on the relation between foundational and inferential beliefs, coherentism sees justification/warrant as a relation between beliefs in a holistic web of interrelated inference, and so forth. All of these theories, I suggest, focus on some kind of epistemic excellence. William Alston makes what is effectively the same claim in his talk of "epistemic desiderata."³² He means that each of these epistemologies focuses on some excellent or good-making

³² William P. Alston, *Beyond Justification* and "Epistemic Desiderata."

property of beliefs.³³ As such, they all—whether explicitly or no—describe epistemic concepts (e.g. knowledge, warrant, justification) in terms of epistemic excellences.

I find this similarity of description natural and expected. The relevant epistemic goods like knowledge, understanding, justification, et al. are just that—*goods*. Hence, we easily understand them in terms of excellences or obtained by such excellences. Now, the kinds of excellences differ and they disagree about how these goods come about by the specific excellence in question. But the point remains that any epistemology (I should expect) appeals to intellectual excellences in some fashion, whether these excellences be the possession of adequate evidence, the proper functioning of reliable faculties, and good inferences between beliefs (with this is described foundationally or in terms of coherence). Thus, since any of these epistemologies do their work in terms of intellectual excellences, it follows that they are all ‘virtue’ epistemologies on Greco’s use of the term. But, if *any* epistemology counts as a virtue epistemology, then the term ‘virtue epistemology’ has only a vacuous or trivial meaning since it does not really distinguish anything. He can keep the term ‘virtue’ if he likes, but then it does nothing of any real substance as far as distinct epistemological approaches goes. Instead, we should preserve the real distinctions here and keep ‘virtue’ in a more restricted sense, as we see accomplished in virtue responsibilism.

The Analogue Argument, as I have given it, implies that a robust or genuine theory of epistemic virtue must have (at least) two features in keeping with virtue ethics: (1) virtues must not have a consequentialist structure and (2) virtues must bear the proper relations to virtuous agents; that is, virtues must be agent-central or agent-based. Above,

³³ He goes from there to argue that none give a satisfactory or full account of each possible way a belief can be good, but this further claim is not relevant to my point here.

I have argued that virtue reliabilism, unlike responsibilism, fails to satisfy both (1) and (2). Thus, it follows that, with respect to providing a satisfactory or sufficient account of virtue, (virtue) responsibilism turns out better than (virtue) reliabilism. Therefore, in what follows I shall model epistemic virtue on responsibilist lines—taking *only* character traits as the sorts of features suitable for epistemic virtues.

Zagzebski's Responsibilism

Furthermore, I shall take a Zagzebskian approach to virtue. Recall that, on her account,

a virtue, then, can be defined as a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.³⁴

She argues convincingly in *Virtues of the Mind* that, explicitly following virtue ethics, virtues must have certain features. They must be acquired traits of character, involved in a process of habituation that takes a significant amount of time and effort.³⁵ Virtues are deep; that is, virtues are distinctive for the agent that has them.³⁶ The courageous person's courage marks him/her as *that particular* person s/he is. Moreover, virtues have a necessary motivational component.³⁷ On her view, "a motive is an action-guiding emotion with a certain end, either internal or external."³⁸ Without possessing the motive of, say courage, one cannot really *be* courageous. Instead, that person is simply acting the part of the real courageous person. These features fit nicely with the arguments above. Zagzebski uses traits of character as the genus or the class of putative virtues,

³⁴ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 137.

³⁵ Ibid., 102-103.

³⁶ Ibid., 104.

³⁷ Ibid., 129-134.

³⁸ Ibid., 137.

which means this view will not suffer from the problems that plague virtue reliabilism, since traits make for a nice analogue to virtue ethics. Her view also fits nicely with intuitions we have about how deeply imbedded virtues are in the personality of the agent. We saw above that certain reliabilist theories analyze virtues thinly in terms of dispositions, but Zagzebski's view will not fall victim to criticisms of this type since virtues must be deeply embedded and characteristic of the agent as such. Finally, her characteristic motivations component gives us a way to distinguish virtues from one another and ground the affective element in virtue that moral theorists often emphasize. However, while I do think that Zagzebski's account is the most satisfactory so far, I shall argue that it is not *totally* satisfactory. There is one aspect of her definition above that I think false.

I reject the final clause of in this definition—i.e. it is false that (possessing a) virtue entails reliable success with respect to the end characteristic of the virtue in question. I shall argue in this section that, while Zagzebski's overall account of virtue is *almost* correct, her success/reliability component is false. She is correct that *in general or typically* a person with a virtue is reliable in achieving the end in question, but it false to think this a necessary condition for virtue. I shall use two different kinds of argument to attack this aspect of her account. First, I shall examine the reasons she gives to think that virtue entails (reliable) success and argue that they are not sufficient. Second, I shall analyze a cluster of arguments designed to show that virtue does not entail such success. It is my contention here that these arguments have the same core worry that different theorists cash out in different ways in these arguments. Focusing on this core worry sharpens the point against Zagzebski's reliability clause in the above definition. If sound,

then, we have good cumulative reasons to reject the success component of her account of virtue. Let us turn to Zagzebski's line of reasoning to accept this view.

Regarding her account of virtue in general, Zagzebski makes the following claims on behalf of her success component:

Virtue possession requires reliable success in attaining the ends of the motivation component of the virtue. This means that the agent must be reasonable successful in the skills and cognitive activities associated with the application of the virtue in her circumstances.³⁹

"Virtue" is a success term. The motivational component of a virtue means that it has an end, whether internal or external. A person does not have a virtue unless she is reliable at bring about the end that is the aim of the motivational component of that virtue.⁴⁰

But even when the motivational component of virtue is *generally* related to success, we do not call a person virtuous who is not reliably successful herself, whether or not most people who have the trait are successful in carrying out the aims of the virtue in question.⁴¹

In all of these passages, we see Zagzebski's unequivocal support of the success component of virtue. The problem, however, is that I see no *arguments* here and, what's more, I find no arguments for these claims anywhere in her account of virtue or an act of virtue. It seems that Zagzebski takes her claims to be uncontroversially intuitive or else following directly from how we consider and name persons of virtue in our ordinary language. If her support comes from an implicit appeal to the intuitions of her reader, then I must disagree—it does not seem intuitive to any degree that virtue *entails* (in a strict logical sense) reliable success. I can agree, perhaps, that virtue will lead to success in general or that *most likely* virtuous agents are reliably successful, but these claims are

³⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁴¹ Ibid., 177.

very different from making such success a (logically) necessary condition on virtue (and hence, acts of virtue). If she is simply appealing to our ordinary talk or conceptions of virtuous agents, then her view rests upon folk usage rather than philosophical argument and, I take it, such an endeavor does not lead to positions that have strong philosophical defenses. At least, a defense like this will not do so without a good deal of further argumentation. Thus, I see no satisfactory or sufficient reason here to accept her claim that virtues have necessary success components.

In another work, Zagzebski weakens her claims a bit. She says that

to some extent I think we should admit that there is no determinate answer to the question of whether virtue requires reliable success in reaching its end, if it has one, because the concept of virtue...is embedded in a complex set of social practices that serve many different purposes.⁴²

Here we see a much weaker approach to the necessary success component of virtue than above. All of this notwithstanding, she gives a line of reasoning that one could use to argue for including a reliability or success component to virtue:

we think that one of the most important reasons we have for moral practices at all is to make the world a better place. Morality has a practical aim, and that aim is directly related to our evaluation of persons, since it is persons who implement it...moral evaluation is public business, at least in part. That is because morality has a common end, and moral evaluation includes evaluating persons on how well they do in contributing toward that end.⁴³

Thus, we have socially motivated reasons to think that virtue requires (reliable) success because morality is, in part, a social endeavor to improve the world and others' places in it. Zagzebski needs to be more precise here. She claims that "moral practices" must "make the world a better place," a claim that is very plausible, but without specifying the manner in which morality must make things better. Applying her general comments

⁴² Zagzebski, *Divine Motivation Theory*, (New York: Cambridge University Press 2004), 127.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 128.

about morality to virtue theory, the claim seems to be that virtues must make the world a better place. Again, that sounds very plausible and I do not disagree. However, she needs more than this claim to conclude that virtue has a necessary reliability or success component. More exactly, she needs to show that the ways that virtues make the world better is through the obtainment of the ends specified by those virtues. And, again, I do not disagree. Yet, it seems plausible to think that virtues could “make the world better” even if they were not necessarily reliable. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that virtues do not have an externalist success clause and that they are defined primarily in terms of motives. Would the world be a better place with this non-Zagzebskian approach to virtue? I think so: for it seems evident that a world containing virtuously motivated agents is better, *ceterus paribus*, than a world where such agents are absent. If this is so, then virtues can improve the world without including a necessary reliability/success component and, therefore, her considerations above do not give a sufficient reason to accept the inclusion of such a component in our account of virtue (or acts of virtue). The idea is that virtues can better the world without reliably bringing about the ends that define those virtuous motivations.

Thus, I conclude that Zagzebski offers nothing approaching a conclusive or decisive argument for the success component of virtue. But, lacking a positive reason to accept a claim is not equivalent to a negative reason to deny a claim. It is to this latter task I now turn.

I shall focus on a cluster of arguments to the effect that virtue does not entail reliable success. After we examine them, I shall contend that they share a common worry that unites them. It is that core issue or concern that, I think, counts decisively *against*

Zagzebski's success component. Let us turn to these arguments now, leaving a more in-depth analysis until we have finished them all. James Montmarquet offers a duo of arguments against the truth-conductivity (i.e. reliability) of virtues. Let us call Montmarquet's first argument the Aretaic Peers Argument. He asks us

if we are to appraise the relative worth or "virtue" of epistemic agents by the truth-conduciveness of their intellectual dispositions, then how are we to accommodate the approximate *equality* of epistemic virtue we find in such diverse agents as Aristotle, Ptolemy, Albertus Magnus, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein? From our current vantage point, we recognize these thinkers as differing greatly in the truth of their respective beliefs and systems of belief, as well as in the truth-conduciveness of their leading ideas and methodological postulates. How can such rough equality in virtue be reconciled with this veridical diversity?⁴⁴

Montmarquet's aim here is to pick out thinkers—some with highly reliable beliefs and some with highly *unreliable* beliefs—that we take to be both aretaic peers (i.e. roughly equivalent with respect to epistemic virtue) and aretaic exemplars. If this holds, as I think it does, then a reliability constraint on virtue must be false. We have a deep intuition that "any theory of intellectual virtue that does not *clearly and definitively* count the likes of Aristotle, Newton, Galileo, etc. as being intellectually virtuous does not capture what we mean by 'intellectual virtue'."⁴⁵ Insofar as Zagzebski's success component entail that such aretaic peers are not *really* peers (with respect to virtue or acts of virtue), then it must fail to provide a satisfactory account of virtue.

Second, he offers what I shall call the Evil Demon Argument. He asks us to

assume that a Cartesian "evil demon" has, unbeknown to us, made our world such that truth is best attained by thoroughly exemplifying what, on our best crafted accounts, qualify as intellectual vices. Presumably, we would not therefore conclude that these apparent vices are and have

⁴⁴Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility*, 20-21.

⁴⁵ Wayne D. Riggs, "Understanding 'Virtue' and the Virtue of Understanding," in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press), 211.

always been virtues...but this is hardly to say that, retrospectively, Galileo should now be regarded as epistemically vicious and, say, Schmalileo, his lazy, intellectually uncurious brother, as epistemically virtuous.⁴⁶

If one's definition of virtue includes a success/reliability clause, then that account cannot accommodate Montmarquet's Evil Demon case here. But, supposing that he is correct about our consistent retroactive evaluation of Galileo and Schmalileo, then the proper account of virtue should not feature such a component entailing that we should have precisely the *opposite* views about virtues and vices. Hence, the Evil Demon Argument implies that Zagzebski's success component is false.

Sarah Wright offers an argument similar to Montmarquet's Evil Demon Argument, one that is 'modally loaded' to avoid the way that virtue reliabilists index virtues to fields, circumstances, etc.⁴⁷ She asks us to consider two persons, Faith and Constance. Constance forms her set of beliefs on the basis of exhaustive list of what we take to be virtues, whereas Faith forms her beliefs on the basis of what we take to be vices. However, they too live in a world in which Descartes' Evil Demon resides. Let us suppose then, that this demon brings it about that both Faith and Constance have all false beliefs (the demon is *evil*, after all). In that case, they are equally reliable insofar as they are not reliable at all. Both fail to satisfy the success component in Zagzebski's account of virtue, which means we *should* evaluate them (and their beliefs) in the same way. But, as Wright notes, this is counterintuitive—we have a strong intuition that Constance is more virtuous than Faith. Zagzebski, however, cannot accommodate this result. Both Wright and Montmarquet use Evil Demon scenarios to emphasize the following point: some traits (like those exemplified in Constance and Galileo) have high epistemic value

⁴⁶ Montmarquet, *op cit.*, 20.

⁴⁷ Sarah Wright, "The Proper Structure of the Intellectual Virtues," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 47 (2009), 96-97.

and, extending this point further, are virtuous even if they are not truth-conductive or reliable. This, however, is clearly inconsistent with the success component of Zagzebskian virtue.

Our final argument in this cluster comes from William Alston. He argues that Zagzebski's view on virtue as a success term

has the startling consequence that a person who would give freely of her resources if she had more than is required to sustain life cannot be termed 'generous', and a person who is sincerely devoted to helping others but is so inept as to more frequently harm rather than help the intended targets could not be termed 'kind' or 'compassionate'.⁴⁸

Alston's example of the inept kind person has problems, since one could argue that such actions do not count against Zagzebski since they are, *ex hypothesi*, not formed the right way *qua* inept. Wright gives another example that rectifies this problem.

Consider the case of Grace, who makes a large contribution to a local charity. She makes this donation because she is motivated to alleviate the suffering of others, and she frequently feels and acts on this type of motivation. Unfortunately, Grace's chosen charity is a well-hidden scam, and the money she donates to it never ends up helping anyone in need. If Grace is surrounded by such scam charities, she will not be reliably successful in bringing about the external ends of her motivation.⁴⁹

Unlike Alston's case of inept kindness, Wright provides us with one of misled generosity. So, we have two cases regarding an uncontroversial virtue in generosity. In the first case, the agent fails to have reliable success in the end of generosity which, let us suppose for the sake of argument is to benefit those in need, because that person has greater need than everyone else. This person cannot be generous because s/he is in no socio-economic position to make *any* gift without thereby leading to non-subsistence level living. In the second case, the agent fails to be reliable with respect to the aim of generosity because of

⁴⁸ Alston, "Virtue and Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 60, no. 1 (January 2000), 186.

⁴⁹ Wright, *op. cit.*, 103.

a different kind of peculiarity of circumstance—s/he is the victim of a scam. So, in both cases the agent fails to be (reliably) successful due only to features of that agent's circumstance beyond his/her control. Yet we want to affirm here what Zagzebski's view denies; namely, that both agents really are generous, even if each fails to be successful.

We have four arguments against a Zagzebskian success component to virtue: Montmarquet's Aretaic Peers Argument, his Evil Demon Argument, Wright's New Evil Demon Argument, and Alston/Wright's Unsuccessful Generosity Argument. They might appear to be independent grounds to reject Zagzebski and they are insofar as they do not rise or fall together. But, I shall contend here, they are not totally independent because they share a core worry for approaches requiring success, reliability, or truth-conductivity in virtue. They are all arguments dealing with problems of luck.⁵⁰ The problem of Unsuccessful Generosity clearly exemplifies this worry. Alston's poverty-stricken and Wright's misled agents all fail to satisfy the success component because of features in those agents' circumstances beyond their control. I am not going to offer a substantive account of luck here, for it would take us *far* beyond our immediate concerns, but let it suffice to say that, loosely speaking, states of affairs dealing with luck are marked by an agent's lack of control over those states of affairs. For Alston/Wright, the agents can satisfy all other components of generosity: the trait is embedded and habituated properly, they are appropriately motivated, they do what agents with the virtue of generosity would do, etc. but they fail for reasons utterly beyond those over which they have any control. Consider the cases involving Evil Demon scenarios. Wright's Constance and Montmarquet's Galileo prove unreliable only because of the actions of a (near)

⁵⁰ My concerns about luck are similar to Jason Baehr's views about virtues and reliability. See his "On the Reliability of Moral and Intellectual Virtues," *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 38, no. 4 (July 2007), 456-470.

omnipotent being over whom they have no control. Like the generosity cases, the agents' failure is due to the circumstances immune to the control of those agents rather than any feature for which those agents are responsible in any way. Montmarquet's Aretaic Peers have wildly different and mostly unreliable beliefs because they found themselves in situations in which it was impossible (or nearly so) to realize that their beliefs were mostly false. By what they could consider or know from their own lights, it is a purely a matter of luck that their views were false.

To bring all of this together, it seems like all of these arguments focus on failures due to luck. They have a nearly identical formula: take an agent that, in normal circumstances, clearly exemplifies some virtue and 'tweak' features of one's environment beyond one's control so that the virtue in question lacks the reliability in 'non-tweaked' circumstances. Therefore, I suggest that it is a consideration of luck that drives these views. An anti-luck commitment provides the meta-account that unifies the core motivations behind these seemingly disparate arguments. But, they all work to emphasize the same intuition: one cannot 'lose' one's virtue purely as a matter of luck. Requiring actual success, from a success component of virtue, implies that moral and epistemic agents are susceptible to a kind of luck that these arguments, if sound, prove unacceptable. Hence, given this central core motivation, we have very good reason to deny Zagzebski's claim that virtue has a necessary success component.

Modified Zagzebskian Responsibilism

So, given the results of the previous section, we should accept the following account of virtue:

**A virtue is a deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person,
involving a characteristic motivation to produce a certain desired end.**

We now specify this general account of virtue to get a definition of *epistemic* virtue by stipulating that the ‘excellence’ in question must be a cognitive or intellectual one (broadly construed) where the ‘ends’ in question are certain types of cognitive states (e.g. beliefs, understandings, pieces of wisdom, etc.). These specifications are quite vague, but I think this kind of vagueness is necessary without a more detailed account of *exactly* what epistemic ends or values there are and how they are related. I am also going to leave the “intellectual” or “cognitive” modifier for “excellence” undefined since, as with epistemic ends, this would require a manuscript-length work at the intersection of epistemology and philosophy of mind. Since I do not have the space for such an exhaustive account, I shall be vague here since nothing of import turns upon it for what follows.

From her general account of virtue, we can derive a definition for an act of virtue (which we use to evaluate specific actions of agents rather than their general moral standing), modified as to exclude her success component.

**An act A is an act of virtue V if and only if A arises from the
motivational component of V and A is something a person with V
would (probably) do in the circumstances.**

Not only must an agent be appropriately motivated to express virtue, but that agent must go about that expression in the right way (i.e. the way that the genuine person of virtue would go about things). It is this final clause that preserves the Aristotelian notion that acts of virtue do not require that the agent actually possess the virtue in question but

merely that the agent do what that agent *would* do in similar situations.⁵¹ Modifying the above definition of an act of virtue to include *intellectual* acts, usually beliefs but I suppose ‘cognitive state’ in general suffices, where one changes the “do” in the last clause to reflect the specific cognitive state specified by the *type* of intellectual act with which one is concerned. This, then, is the general account of virtue that informs the rest of this work and the definitions based upon this account are those that underpin what follows. Before we close out this chapter, however, I want to respond to a few possible objections that could prove worrisome.

Objections

In this section, I shall respond to some possible objections that might arise to my internalist approach to virtue. Recall that my theory is internalist because I have defined ‘virtue’ such that each condition an agent must satisfy in order to possess virtue is a condition that is ‘internal’ to the agent. Let us begin this section by considering a thought experiment. From there, we can see how an objector might find fault or problems with the account I have described and argued for above.

Imagine two persons—Lucky and Unlucky. We stipulate that Lucky and Unlucky are cognitive internal twins; that is, they possess the same character, faculties, evidence, etc. What’s more, Lucky and Unlucky possess excellent evidence, an impeccable character, and perfectly reliable faculties. The only difference between Lucky and Unlucky is the circumstances in which they find themselves (much like the demon worlds of Descartes, Montmarquet, and Wright). Lucky and Unlucky live their lives using all of the excellences they are afforded. But, as one might expect, we can further suppose that

⁵¹ See Aristotle’s discussion in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, II.4, 1105a25-1105b10.

Unlucky is just that—unlucky. All of Unlucky’s actions turn out for the worse and all of Unlucky’s beliefs turn out false. Unlucky, like Lucky, has all of the proper tools to do things right and get things right but, as bad luck would have it, always fails. Like all Evil Demon cases, the point here is to sever the internal from the external—we want to ensure that Lucky and Unlucky are exact twins internally but that these internal features have radically different outcomes. Let us take stock of how my internalist account of virtue analyzes the case of Lucky and Unlucky.

My view clearly implies that Lucky and Unlucky have the full and exhaustive set of virtues and, accordingly, their actions would count as acts of virtue in precisely the same sense. But those including a reliabilist or success component on virtue or acts of virtue will find this implication deeply problematic. What sort of argument might one give to show this result worrisome and what *exactly* is the problem in question? Here is one possible way to fill out this objection. Recall that Zagzebskian acts of virtue are those that are reliably motivated, are what people with the virtue in question would do, and are successful in the aim of that virtue. She uses another phrase equivalently to ‘act of virtue.’ She says that “knowing is an intellectual act that is good in every respect—what I formerly called ‘an act of intellectual virtue’.”⁵² Accordingly, Zagzebski views an act of virtue as an act that is “good in every respect.” Call this the All-Good Thesis (AGT). AGT can be ambiguous, though, so we need to examine it a bit more closely. We have two options regarding how to interpret AGT:

(AGT₁): Acts of virtue are such that each of their components/aspects is good.

⁵² Zagzebski, “Epistemic Trust,” *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2003), 116.

(AGT₂): Acts of virtue are such that each of their components/aspects is as good as possible.

I have no problem with AGT₁ and it seems perfectly consistent with my account.⁵³ Thus, interpreting AGT as AGT₁ will not prove worrisome for my theory. Now AGT₂ is certainly inconsistent with my own view and, if merely assumed, would simply beg the question. What I see in AGT₂ is not an *argument* but a *motive*.

On my view, Lucky and Unlucky are aretaic peers. But, Lucky clearly does not parallel Unlucky in *all* aspects, since we have stipulated that they have exactly *opposite* external features—where Lucky succeeds, Unlucky fails. The idea, on this sort of objection, is that an internalist analysis of Lucky and Unlucky cannot countenance how *different* they are and, thus, how different our analyses of them ought to be. In particular, an internalist account of virtue cannot distinguish between acts of virtue that are good (enough) from acts of virtue that are as good as possible. An internalist approach here provides no further honorific for Lucky (and Lucky's acts) above Unlucky (and Unlucky's acts). Even if Unlucky's acts are good, as we have stipulated, they are not *as good as possible*. Lucky's acts, however, *are* as good as possible and, thus, we need the room in our theory to adequately address the relevance difference between Lucky and Unlucky with respect to important values like having true (rather than false) beliefs. To accommodate this important difference, we must distinguish those acts that are somewhat good from those that are as good as possible. Thus, we should elevate the account of virtue and acts of virtue to a 'higher' status to account for the exhaustive goodness of Lucky (and Lucky's actions). In order to satisfy this motive behind AGT₂, then, we must

⁵³ This, of course, assumes that the motivation component of each virtue is good and that it is good to do what a person of virtue would do in similar circumstances. I do not plan to argue for these claims because they appear obviously true to me.

include a reliabilist clause in our account of virtue—otherwise we cannot do proper service to the important distinction between Lucky’s acts and those of Unlucky.

What AGT₂ provides, then, is not a direct argument against an internalist view like mine but, if my interpretation is faithful to the commitments of reliabilists (like Zagzebski), it does provide an anti-internalist motive insofar as it motivates us to think of acts of virtue as actions that cannot be better in any respect. This motive provides, indirectly, the argument in the previous paragraph. The AGT₂-motivated argument there provides us with two problems that require a response. First, there is the objection that an internalist approach cannot provide a distinct conceptual or analytical honorific to capture virtue plus success. Second, one might also object to an internalist approach to virtue based on the claim that virtues and acts of virtue must be maximally good—i.e. as good as possible. We can dismiss the first objection with the greatest ease, so let us address this first.

My account of virtue differs from Zagzebski’s in a very important way other than my internalism. According to her, if one takes an act of intellectual virtue and adds belief, then one obtains knowledge.⁵⁴ There is nothing to knowledge other than acts of intellectual virtue and belief. I have made no such similar claim. My internalism, in what I have proposed so far, is restricted to concepts like virtue and acts of virtue—without connecting either of these concepts to knowledge. In the interest of full disclosure, I shall connect my concepts of epistemic virtue and act of epistemic virtue to epistemic *justification*, but I am not on the philosophical record (so to speak) regarding how these relate to the concept or definition of ‘knowledge.’ Therefore, I am free to use

⁵⁴ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 271. There she defines knowledge as “a state of belief arising out of acts of intellectual virtue.”

a distinct honorific for cases like Lucky's—where some external condition is required, but I am not bound to include any such condition in my account of virtue itself. I can simply say that Lucky's acts are better than Unlucky's acts while denying that I must account for this 'betterment' in terms of virtue. We could simply appeal to the necessary truth condition that all epistemologists (of which I am aware) include in knowledge. Or, we could affirm some other kind of necessary, externalist condition or some modal criterion for knowledge in addition to a virtue component. In either case, we do have conceptual space to distinguish Lucky (and Lucky's acts) from Unlucky (and Unlucky's acts) without having to add any externalist or reliabilist component to my account of virtue (epistemic or otherwise).

Secondly, theorists falling in line with Zagzebski will require that acts of virtue be as good as possible—this is the second objection arising from out consideration of AGT₂. And this requirement may seem appropriate given certain obvious truths regarding the status of virtues as completely good. There are truisms that can seem to support the truth of AGT₂, but they are not really sufficient for the task. That is, there are obvious truths that appear to give reason to think that virtues must be as good as possible, but we must carefully distinguish the truisms from the stronger maximizing claim in AGT₂. I see the import of AGT as a thesis about virtue being wholly good. Frankly, I cannot imagine anyone really contesting that sort of claim. But accepting that virtues (and, hence, acts of virtue) are wholly good is not tantamount to accepting the maximizing version of AGT—interpreted as AGT₂. Skills and other character traits differ from virtues insofar as the latter, unlike the former, *always* have positive value. That much, I take it, is simply a truism. What's more, we can even accept AGT₁ as a truism—it seems obvious that each

component of virtue is itself a good (i.e. has positive value on its own). I accept the view that virtues are completely good—taken in the sense that each component of virtue is good. The obvious truths about the goodness of virtue simply are not the same as the maximizing approach behind AGT₂. We can affirm and accommodate these truisms regarding the positive value of virtues and still deny that no part of virtue could be better. There is no inconsistency in accepting that states arising out of virtues are always good and those states could be better (i.e. have more value). One needs further argument to move from what is a truism about virtue—i.e. that virtues (and all components of it) are good—to the main thrust of AGT₂—i.e. that virtues are maximally good. As argued above, we can accommodate the higher value possessed by Lucky’s acts over Unlucky’s without an external component to virtue and, thus, we do not require a maximizing approach in order to accomplish this work. Thus, I understand and accept the commonsense appeal of AGT and the truisms about the complete goodness of virtue, but neither of these acceptances requires me to accept AGT₂. Thus, the truisms that support AGT (and even AGT₁) do not support AGT₂; we need more argument for the stronger view. However, I shall give some considerations that attack the truth of AGT₂ directly rather than removing its support.

My first problem regards the axiological basis behind AGT₂. By requiring that virtues be as *good* as possible, this maximizing thesis must have some core commitments to the nature of values in general. If we think about what kind of commitments AGT₂ has at its core, it would appear that it (unlike AGT₁) smacks of consequentialism—particularly a maximizing sort of consequentialism. To put it another way, I am worried that the “good as possible” motive buried in AGT₂ belies the wrong kind of metaethical

or metaepistemological basis. If a decidedly aretaic theory claims that virtues are virtues because they maximize certain goods, then I would be concerned that the theory has more of consequentialist basis than an aretaic one. Virtues, then, become only superficially important as a way to talk about dispositions that maximize goods. This certainly is not the kind of robust virtue-based approach that motivates so many virtue epistemologists and epistemologies.

My second worry brings a problem from moral philosophy into play regarding AGT₂. Once we see that the maximizing, “as good as possible” condition inherent to AGT₂ takes on a decidedly consequentialist tone, philosophical worries with consequentialism become pertinent and possibly worrisome. The most obvious ethical parallel here is what Tim Mulgan calls the “Demandingness Objection” to consequentialism.⁵⁵ Let us give the problem as a *moral* objection to consequentialism and, from there, we can extend the Demandingness Objection to an objection for the epistemic parallels to moral goods.⁵⁶ Mulgan asks us to imagine Affluent, a normal person in a typical first-world, developed nation.⁵⁷ Affluent has two envelopes on her desk: one to a relief organization and one to the local theater company. Not being wealthy, Affluent can either give money to the aid organization or the theater company but not both. Being aware of the dire need in undeveloped countries, Affluent knows that, if she were to give the allotted money to the relief organization, the amount would go a very long way to promoting the goods of increased education, food/water supply, medical assistance, etc. We might also suppose that going to the theater would increase

⁵⁵ Mulgan, *The Demands of Consequentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.

⁵⁶ Mulgan is certainly not alone in discussing this problem for consequentialism. I see no need to catalog the others here and I use Mulgan simply as an instance of the wider philosophical debate in this section of ethics.

⁵⁷ Mulgan, *ibid.*

the artistic goods in Affluent's life but certainly not to the text that her charity could give to the impoverished subjects of the relief organization's aid. According to a maximizing consequentialism, Affluent can do the morally correct thing only if she gives the money to the relief organization. And so the story goes for all of one's money, property, and time up until the point that one is impoverished as well. According to the Demandingness Objection, consequentialism requires far too much of moral agents. It would certainly be good of Affluent to give money to charity but it is counterintuitive to say that Affluent *must* give this money to the aid organization. By requiring that our actions be as morally good as possible, consequentialism demands too much of moral agents. So goes the moral version of the Demandingness Objection.

We can, however, modify this objection to fit epistemology. According to AGT₂, each person's acts of virtue must be "as good as possible." Let us imagine Brilliant, a very intelligent person who can win a prize by guessing the exact number of jelly beans in a mason jar. Now, we can suppose that Brilliant is extremely smart and lacks for nothing as far as intellect goes. Brilliant has even determined that the mason jar contains either 859 or 858 jelly beans, due to virtuous and masterful intellectual wizardry. But, one jelly bean out of so many is beyond even Brilliant's remarkable ken and there is no decision procedure possible to determine which of the numbers is correct. And, further, let us suppose that the mason jar contains 858 jelly beans. According to AGT₂, Brilliant's impressive intellectual undertaking is virtuous *only if* Brilliant believes correctly. And as with the moral analogue to this objection, the same holds for every single belief of every single person. But, as with consequentialism's demand that Affluent's always give to charity; this implication of AGT₂ seems to demand far too

much of Brilliant and, by extension, the rest of us. By requiring that all of our beliefs and intellectual acts must be as good as possible, AGT₂ demands too much. Hence, we have the epistemic analogue to the Demandingness Objection to (moral) consequentialism. Demanding that our intellectual acts be maximally good makes irrational demands upon us and, thus, any theory requiring such an ideal cannot suffice. Therefore, we should reject AGT₂ as making irrational demands upon the virtuous agent and acts of virtue.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defined and defended the account of virtue upon which everything that follows is based. We have seen that virtue responsibilism fares better as a virtue-theoretic approach epistemology than virtue reliabilism based on motivations and commitments both views share. If one motivates a virtue-turn to epistemology by appealing to virtue ethics, then one ought to prefer an account of virtue that provides the strongest analogy or parallel to those moral theories. Responsibilism, I have argued, succeeds in this task much better than reliabilism. We have examined Zagzebski's overall responsibilist approach to virtue and found that, in general, it provides a very satisfactory theory. However, including a 'success component' in virtue (and, thus, acts of virtue) leaves her theory open to certain problems with luck. In particular, we saw that her account entails that certain agents cannot in principle possess virtues or express virtues solely because of certain features of their situation or circumstances utterly beyond their control. And, since we have deep intuitions that circumstances beyond our control should not be able to affect so disastrously our moral or epistemic status with respect to virtue, such considerations count decisively against such a success component.

Modifying Zagzebski's account to remove this clause provides, accordingly, a more satisfactory definition of virtue. Finally, we examined some objections and found that, while some may be problematic, none of them give sufficient reason to abandon such a modified Zagzebskian responsibilism. Thus, I shall take this definition as the working account for the remainder of this work.

CHAPTER 2

EPISTEMIC TRUST

In the previous chapter, I defended my preferred account of epistemic virtue—one built upon Zagzebski's framework but modified to exclude what I consider a worrisome success or reliability component. I shall use this account later on to develop a virtue-theoretic model of intellectual or epistemic trust. The current chapter lays the groundwork for this model by giving an analysis of epistemic trust (ET). In order to show how ET fits a virtue-theoretic model, I must first develop an account of what ET is in the first place. This chapter, primarily, works out my view of just what ET is and, secondarily, why such an account of ET is epistemologically necessary. Surprisingly, accounts of ET are quite rare and especially rare in any analytical rigor. Philosophers, to date, have devoted much more work to trust itself rather than distinctively *epistemic* or *intellectual* trust. So, we shall have to examine the notion of trust in general and, from there, we can move to the epistemic variety. After some introductory comments, I shall discuss various accounts of trust in order to locate some general features that theorists typically associate with trust. Once we have determined what sort of general features we must include in an account of trust *simpliciter*, we can determine how to develop these features into a distinctively epistemic approach to trust—thus giving us an account of ET. With this account in mind, we can turn to other plausible accounts of ET where I shall argue for the superiority of my view. Finally, I shall end with some arguments showing that a robust epistemological theory must account for ET because it is vital to our

intellectual or cognitive life. Once we have our theory of ET, then we can develop this theory along virtue theoretic lines in the next chapter.

General Comments about Epistemic Trust

First, I must issue a general warning about what sort of trust I take as the target of my analysis in this chapter. The sort of trust that occupies me here should avoid two pitfalls that can easily lead an account astray. What I mean is this: there are overly ‘thin’ and overly ‘thick’ views regarding ET that I want to avoid from the outset. When some epistemologists talk about ET, they mean it in a very ‘thin’ sense akin to mere acceptance or belief.⁵⁸ On this view, saying that *S* has ET that *p* is equivalent to saying that *S* accepts that *p* or that *S* believes that *p* (on the basis of *H*’s testimony). Here, we can make a distinction between an agent trusting *in* someone for some belief versus an agent trusting *that* something is true (via someone). The ‘in’ that occurs in the previous sentence is vital. If I trust someone only insofar as I believe them, I do not consider this robust ET or trusting *in* someone. We must distinguish a weaker sense of trusting someone’s words only insofar as we believe what they say and a stronger sense that displays this same sense of belief, adding more to it. The weaker sense of trusting-*that* simply reduces to belief-*that* and, thus, offers nothing of substance regarding trust *in* someone. Contrariwise, belief *in* (a person) does not reduce to belief *that* (a proposition is true). Consider an example from G. E. M. Anscombe: suppose that a friend tells you that

⁵⁸ See, for example, Snjezana Prijic-Samarzija’s remarks in “Trust and Contextualism,” *Acta Analytica*, vol. 22 (2007), 126: “accordingly, trust here is understood as the doxastic attitude of acceptance of other people’s testimony.” Prijic-Samarzija’s approach to ET clearly demonstrates the ‘thin’ view, a view that I wish to avoid.

Napoleon lost at the battle of Waterloo.⁵⁹ You believe what your friend says or, alternatively, you believe that what s/he says is true but, and here is the vital part: you do not believe *in* your friend here because you already know what s/he told you. Calling this situation one where you trust *in* your friend, I suggest, makes no sense because you already believe what s/he has told you. I take it, then, that trusting or believing *in* someone goes beyond simple acceptance or believing-that.⁶⁰ Even though the thick sense of trust-in may include (propositional) trust-that something is true, they nonetheless direct us towards different attitudes in the agent doing the trusting. So, in what follows, when I use the term “trust” I shall mean “trust in” (unless explicitly stated).

I take this to mean, first, that the kind of trust that we are making the object of analysis here (i.e. trusting *in*) is not reducible to propositional belief *that* some proposition is true (or false). That is, to say that *S* trusts *in H* for *p*, *S*’s trusting *in* includes more than something of the form “*S* believes that *p*” can capture. This is what I mean when saying that accounting for trust *in* as trust *that* is too thin. While there may be propositional beliefs involved with trusting *in*, as we shall see below, my point here is that trusting *in* cannot be exhaustively or reductively propositional. Indeed, there is a kind of relation here—an epistemic one, of course—between the truster and the trustee to which propositional belief is blind.

However, there is also a sense of ET ‘thicker’ or ‘stronger’ than I want to avoid as well. We should not think of the ET at issue here as some sort of explicit, quasi-contractual state where the truster and the trustee enter into some agreed upon relation of

⁵⁹ Anscombe, “What Is It to Believe Someone?,” in *Rationality and Religious Belief*, ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 144-145.

⁶⁰ Later on, though, I shall argue that robust epistemic trust *in* someone does include some propositional content. Nevertheless, it is a serious mistake to think that such propositional belief or trust exhausts the notion of trusting-in.

information-giver and information-receiver. When a student displays a trust in one's teachers, that trust may not explicitly or consciously granted but nonetheless it is there. Thus, we should be wary that an account of ET that can fail in (at least) one of two ways: it can be too 'thin' insofar as it reduces to belief or trust-that and it can be too 'thick' insofar as it implies that ET occurs only if the trust relation must be explicit or consciously granted. Either implication means that we have not located our target precisely enough.

There is another general comment that I must make clear before we begin our analysis. Trust in general and ET in particular can have two different kinds of objects: one can trust oneself and one can trust others. I assume that both self-trust and other-trust are viable types of trust *simpliciter* and, thus, we must make sure that any account of ET we might give allows for epistemic self-trust as well as epistemic other-trust.

General Features of Trust

To begin our analysis of ET, we need to see what features hold for trust in general. Once we have a grasp of trust itself, then we can develop this understanding into an account of the epistemic sort of trust that we seek. If one looks at the literature on trust, especially moral theorists' discussions of trust, there are several concepts or features that reappear.

There is one structural point I wish to make first. There is good reason to think that trusting is a triadic relation or, to put it another way, is a three place predicate.

Annette Baier explicitly takes this view regarding trust,⁶¹ with Zagzebski endorsing this view.⁶² That is, when we talk about trust-in, we are affirming some predicate of the form, *S trusts H with x*. We have three aspects to this relation: the *truster*, the *trustee* (or *trusted*) and the thing with which the trustee is entrusted. I want to emphasize points about the final two aspects here: the *trustee* and the thing with which the trustee is trusted.

First, in every description of trust (*in*) we have used, there has been a person or agent who is the object of trust. This is no accident. It would seem to be the case that whenever *S trusts in H*, *H* is always a person. Now, I think this is generally right, but things are not quite so easy here. Consider for example, this remark by John Schellenburg: “[c]learly, I put my trust in nonpersonal objects incapable of action all the time, as, for example, when I trust a rope to hold me as I swing across a ravine.”⁶³ And, in fact, we can think of many counterexamples like this: I trust in my GPS for the correct route to my destination, I trust in my car to get me safely to my destination, etc. Thus, we have a laundry list of putative non-person objects of trust-in: ropes, GPS, cars, and a host of others upon further consideration. So, it would seem that the object of trust-in need not be concerned with persons at all. But this would be a mistake. The GPS case makes this easiest to see. When I am following my GPS around how am I viewing or treating it? What is my cognitive attitude towards my GPS? It seems to me as though we treat our GPS *as though it were a person* giving us directions. The GPS may not be a

⁶¹ “Trust and Anti-Trust,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 101.

⁶² *Virtues of the Mind*, 160.

⁶³ Schellenburg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 120.

person but our attitude towards it is *personal*.⁶⁴ Schellenburg's rope case is harder since, unlike GPS and cars, no one seems to treat the rope as a person—there's no person-attitude towards a rope that seems plausible. But, let us consider why it is that we may trust in a rope to get us across the ravine? We think that there is something important about the rope that connects us to our goal of getting to the other side of the ravine. And we think that the rope has this important role because of certain features it has *qua* ravine-crossing tool. Schellenburg is right to insist that the rope is "incapable of action" but that does not mean that it cannot do something for us—namely, getting us from one side to the other. We may not see the rope as a quasi-person (as with the GPS) but we do treat it as a *quasi-agent* in the sense that the rope can *do* something for us. So, let us take these lessons into account. The object of one's trust-in (i.e. the trustee) must be some person/agent or something that one views *as a person/agent*. We can thus accommodate the spirit of the typical usage of trust-in as trusting in *someone* while accounting for these types of counterexamples.

Second, we can take the trusted 'thing' as broadly as possible. The putative objects of trust are legion: propositions, actions, attitudes, etc. Consider a few examples. I may trust my wife to pick up milk from the store. Here, I am the *truster*, my wife the *trustee*, and the getting of milk the entrusted thing. Also, I may trust my physicist friend about some particular theory of quantum mechanics. Again, I am the *truster*, my friend is the *trustee* and the theory would be the entrusted thing. No matter if I trust someone to *do* something (like get milk) or so that I may *believe or know* some proposition (like a

⁶⁴ I think my thoughts here apply to the car case as well. For instance, I can think of many people who treat their cars as quasi-persons. They may not literally think of cars as persons, but there's a kind of person-attitude involved in the way that some people care for, treat, and use their cars. This attitude isn't necessary but if it is simply understandable (as I assume it is), then we can make sense of how one can adopt a personal-attitude towards a car when one trusts in it.

complicated equation from quantum mechanics), we see that trust is a triadic relation. Now we can move on to non-structural features of trust.

Philosophers overwhelmingly associate trust with reliance or dependence. Anscombe says that “believing x that p involves relying on x for it that p ,” where I take “believing S that p ” to be roughly equivalent to “trusting in S that p ”.⁶⁵ Baier explicitly links trust and reliance, even though the former includes more than the latter.⁶⁶ Linda Zagzebski echoes Baier in her comments about trust in *Virtues of the Mind*.⁶⁷ Also, in a well-known work about trust in the scientific community, John Hardwig builds his case for trust upon how scientists display pervasive reliance upon their peers for a significant portion of their work.⁶⁸ I do not intend an exhaustive list here, but it should be clear that reliance is a key feature of philosophical discussion about trust. Other philosophers do not use the term, ‘reliance’, but instead talk about trust in terms of ‘dependence.’⁶⁹ I see no real substantial difference here between relying on someone and depending on someone. Thus, I shall take reliance and dependence to be equivalent features here.

The reliance/dependence aspect of trust leads to other features that theorists emphasize. First, Baier notes how trust makes the truster vulnerable in certain ways.⁷⁰ One might be vulnerable to failure by the trustee or the trustee might be a sort of ‘con’ artist—deceiving one into placing one’s trust in him/her on inappropriate or misguided grounds. Similarly, this vulnerability means that placing one’s trust in someone is

⁶⁵ Anscombe, op. cit., 145.

⁶⁶ See “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 98 and “Trusting People,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 184.

⁶⁷ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 160.

⁶⁸ Hardwig, “The Role of Trust in Knowledge,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 88, no. 12 (December 1991): 693-708.

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Peter Faulkner’s “On Telling and Trusting,” *Mind*, vol. 116 (October 2007), 879 and “A Genealogy of Trust,” *Episteme*, vol. 4 (2007), 312.

⁷⁰ Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 104.

inherently risky.⁷¹ In becoming vulnerable to someone, one takes a chance that one's vulnerability will not lead to one's harm. These features of vulnerability and risk follow from the reliance aspect of trust. For instance, if I rely upon Jones to water my garden while I am on vacation, I am both *risking* the health of my poor, sun-scorched plants as well as making my property *vulnerable* to Jones' failure. So, while risk and vulnerability may be important features of trust, we can capture them without complexity by the reliance/dependence aspect we have discussed above.

Another important feature of trust we find in the philosophical literature is confidence. Again, Baier's important works on trust emphasize this feature.⁷² Zagzebski, too, characterizes self-trust as a state of being confident, so it would seem that confidence, for her as well, exemplifies trust.⁷³ And Doran Smolkin takes it as a simple truism that "trust involves confidence".⁷⁴ Finally, Karen Jones describes trust as an "attitude of optimism" that the truster sees in the trustee's motives and competence.⁷⁵ She describes this "attitude of optimism" as that which grounds the confidence that one has in whom one trusts.⁷⁶

I have suggested above that confidence is characteristic of trust and, like the reliance/dependence aspect earlier, this aspect leads to another feature of trust; namely, expectation. Martin Hollis' account of trust conceives of it explicitly in terms of what we

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² See "Trust and Anti-Trust," ; "Secular Faith," in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 134; "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 135.

⁷³ Zagzebski, *On Epistemology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009), 78-79.

⁷⁴ Smolkin, "Puzzles About Trust," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 46 (2008), 432.

⁷⁵ Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," *Ethics*, vol. 107 (October 1996), 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

expect or predict of others or the world.⁷⁷ There he claims that “we trust one another to behave predictably in a sense which applies equally to the natural world at large.”⁷⁸ On his view, we characterize trust in terms of an expectation or prediction of how our interactions with others or the world plays out. However, I think this expectation is a symptom of confidence. Recalling my previous example, if I am confident that Jones will water my garden, then would seem absurd to think that I do not thereby expect him to do me this favor. Confidence, it seems, implies expectation and, thus, we can capture the latter feature of trust in the former.

Philosophers argue for several other features necessary for trust that I think are also connected with confidence. Again, we see insights from Baier. She claims that “[i]n trusting [persons], we trust them to use their discretionary powers *competently* and nonmaliciously, and the latter includes not misleading us about how they have used them” (emphasis mine).⁷⁹ Smolkin also argues that “[t]rust involves assessments of competence.”⁸⁰ I suggest that these features associate with confidence. If I am confident in Jones to ϕ , then I have taken it for granted that Jones is competent with respect to ϕ ing. Confidence in Jones to ϕ implies a positive assessment of competence of Jones’ prospects of ϕ ing. Thus, I shall take it that we can preserve a concern with competence we see in Baier and Smolkin by the confidence aspect of trust.

To sum up our discussion of these general features of trust, I suggest that we have two distinct ‘clusters’ of concepts that are essential here: (1) reliance/dependence and (2) confidence. All forms of trust must have a reliance and confidence aspect *qua* trust.

⁷⁷ Hollis, *Trust Within Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁹ “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 104-105.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 434.

Thus, part of our account of ET will involve tailoring these two clusters to fit a distinctively epistemic concept. Taking trust as a three-place predicate, we can add the proper epistemic conditions we need to fit ET and modify these two clusters to get their epistemic counterparts. This will yield the proper account of ET.

Definition of Epistemic Trust

Let us begin the account by drawing together the various conceptual threads necessary to develop a satisfactory account of what it means to trust in someone epistemically. The first, and most obvious, thread we need should reflect that ET is decidedly *epistemic*. That is, when one places ET in another, there is some resulting epistemic or cognitive state in the one who does the trusting. This means that we should have a belief component to ET.⁸¹ When *S* epistemically trusts in *H*, then *S* will have some belief *p*. This makes the belief that *p* the third place in our ET definition—*S* trusts in *H* for (*S*'s belief that) *p*. Including a belief component here, thus, stays in keeping with the general tripartite structure we need in any account of trust, especially an epistemic sort of trust. But, this belief clause will not be all that is necessary from a purely epistemic point of view.

We are missing an obvious part of the picture. ET does not occur without some kind of ground or cause that brings about the belief in question with the content that it

⁸¹ Perhaps a belief-state is not the only sort of epistemic state that results from ET. If understanding or wisdom are different kinds of states than belief, then I would have no qualms about making them putative results from some kind of ET. But, belief-states are the most straightforward. So, I shall keep the belief-that component here, while accepting that one might change the account *mutatis mutandis* to fit some other kind of positive epistemic state that ET can ground or bring about.

has. When Jones takes Smith's word that *p*, there must be something about Smith, with respect to *p*, in which Jones trusts. In short, ET cannot be a *sui generis* or *ex nihilo* relation that just happens to appear between Jones and Smith—something about Smith, in particular, must account for this kind of relation. Since Jones comes to believe that *p* on the basis of trust in Smith, there must be something about Smith that communicates the content of that belief (namely, *p*) to Jones so that Jones can have the belief in question. Thus, there must be some kind of communication component here to explain or ground how the truster comes by his/her belief.

Our conclusions from the previous section form the second kind of thread necessary for ET: reliance/dependence and confidence. Belief and communication components aside, it should be clear from above that the core of placing ET *in* someone, as I see it, is cognitive dependence or reliance. Both are necessary but neither is sufficient. Reliance is clearly insufficient for trusting in someone (or some group). Suppose, for instance, that I have a severe gambling addiction and that, further, I am not a very good gambler. Now, due to my poorly placed but frequent bets, I am in serious debt to some shady characters. Hoping to recoup my losses, I bet heavily on a long shot to avoid serious physical repercussions to my gambling misfortunes. Since the bet is a long shot, I do not reckon my odds of winning very high. Here we have a case with dependence but no confidence. I certainly depend/rely on the sports club to win me this bet, but I doubt we would further describe my state as one of *trust* in this team. I may rely upon a miracle to save me from a pair of broken legs, but such reliance or dependence is not properly called 'trust.'

We can think of similar arguments against the sufficiency of confidence for trust. Suppose, again, that I ask Jones to water my garden while I am away. Now, I know that Jones has a good memory, that he has freed his schedule specifically to water the garden, and that he is a good friend with my interests (namely, a lush garden) in mind. I am supremely confident in Jones to water my garden. However, just in case, I have rigged an irrigation system on a timer so that, if the system detects no moisture in the soil by a certain time of day, it will automatically irrigate the garden. Here we have confidence but no reliance. And, like above, I would hesitate to call my relation to Jones one of trust. If we amend each case to yield a situation where I display both confidence and trust in the sports team and Jones, respectively, we are much closer to trust. I conclude, then, that neither confidence nor dependence is sufficient for trust but they are both necessary.⁸²

Here I follow Thomas Reid's approach to accepting testimony. He says that "in believing upon testimony, we *rely* upon the *authority* of a person who testifies" (emphasis mine).⁸³ His approach to testimony echoes my approach to ET—we need two essential components that capture both reliance/dependence and confidence—through his talk of authority. In this case, our concern is *epistemic* authority: a notion that I suggest can be cashed out in terms of both reliance and confidence. The confidence aspect is easier to see, so let us begin there. To be confident in *S* requires that view *S* as somehow worthy and, in this case *epistemically* worthy. Putting it another way, being confident in

⁸² It is important to note that the levels of dependence and confidence here need not be very high and, I suspect, will vary for different hearers, speakers, and contexts. However, both dependence and confidence must be there to *some* degree for one to place genuine ET in another.

⁸³ Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay II, Chapter 20, in *Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays*, eds. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Keith Lehrer (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 203.

S epistemically involves seeing *S* as authoritative with respect to the issue(s) at hand—whatever they may be. If I have confidence in some expert on organic chemistry, then I see this person as an *epistemic authority* with respect to organic chemistry. And, if we add to this a notion of reliance or dependence, we can explain how we see ourselves as coming under someone’s (epistemic) authority. Now, given that I am no expert in organic chemistry, I depend upon the expert for whatever it is that I want to know. So, I see myself *qua* dependent coming under this person’s epistemic authority. Thus, we can account for Reid’s talk of authority here in ET and, in doing so we can explain ET’s relation to epistemic authority.

Furthermore, the necessary components of reliance/dependence and confidence (seeing as epistemically authoritative), explain why trust-in is ‘thicker’ (so to speak) than the purely propositional trust-that. Recall earlier that we distinguished mere propositional belief—trust that—from the more robust trust-in. What makes it “thicker” is the reliance and confidence aspects of trusting *in* someone (especially confidence). Trusting *in* someone involves a kind of relation where the truster has certain attitudes towards the trusted person (i.e. the object of trust). Seeing *S* as worthy of trust—my confidence *in S*—accounts for the thicker ‘attitude’ involved in trusting *in* as opposed to merely trusting *that* something is the case. Trusting *in* someone, therefore, cannot be exhaustively propositional or doxastic (i.e. belief-based) whereas trust-that only involves one’s relation to a certain proposition (to be believed). Thus, there is both a doxastic (propositional/epistemic) element as well as an attitudinal (affective/conative) element involved in trusting *in* someone.⁸⁴ Mere trust-that cannot accommodate this second,

⁸⁴ I will have (a lot) more to say regarding this attitudinal or affective component later in this chapter and in the next.

richer aspect of ET (or *any* kind of trust, for that matter) that must remain part of a decent account of ET-in someone.

Combining all of these thoughts, let us say that *H* epistemically trusts *S* for some proposition, *p*:

H places ET in *S* that *p* iff:

- (1) *H* believes that *p*;
- (2) *S* communicates⁸⁵ that *p*;
- (3) *H* depends upon *S* for (*H*'s belief that) *p*; and
- (4) *H* has confidence in *S* with respect to *p*.

Some of these conditions require refinement and clarification, but they give us a good place to begin. (1) is necessary because, as we saw above, the truster extends trust in order to come to a belief. Now, (2) needs revision because it is plausible to think that I can form a belief on the basis of ET even when the object of my ET does not intend to actually communicate to me. For a situation of this sort, Jennifer Lackey gives the example of someone's private journal.⁸⁶ In this case, the author never intends to testify or transmit information since, *ex hypothesi*, the journal is *private*. But, the intuition is clear—this is a case of testimony *qua* transmission. In other words, I can trust in someone's words even if those words were never meant to be communicated to me or anyone else. Accordingly, we need (2'):

- (2') *H* takes *S* to communicate that *p*.

⁸⁵ I use the term 'communication' to avoid implying that all transmission (testimony) occurs by explicit assertion. Here, I follow a broad approach to testimony, similar to Jennifer Lackey's in "The Nature of Testimony," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006): 177-197.

⁸⁶ Lackey, *op. cit.*, 185.

(2') can satisfy Lackey's journal case while still preserving our intuition that ET is somehow bound up with communication.

Now, let us turn to (3). We can plausibly ask just what it means for *H* to depend upon *S* for *H*'s belief that *p*. I am not prepared to give a robust, philosophically exhaustive account of what it means to depend or rely on someone. However, I can mention some important aspects that I think are necessarily bound up with dependence. We need to make a distinction between *S* as the cause of a belief and *S* as the object of my epistemic dependence or reliance. When I place my ET in another, that person is not a mere cause of belief—my trusting expresses my reliance in another for the belief in question. This dependence component expresses the stronger sense of trusting *in* someone insofar as one extends reliance or depends upon another in ways that merely believing someone cannot capture. Without (3) ET would have too strong of a tendency to reduce to simply believing someone. It is also important to note here that, as I see the matter, the dependence clause in (3) is not simply a causal or counterfactual issue. That is, I do not want to read (3) as: if *H* did not have *S*'s (perceived) communication that *p*, then *H* would not believe that *p* or *S*'s (perceived) communication that *p* brings about or causes *H*'s belief that *p*. Instead, the dependence here is reliance insofar as one has a sort of epistemic or cognitive lack. Depending upon someone for some belief means that I am not in the proper epistemic position with respect to that belief myself. This means that (3) will entail that *H* does not have conclusive or sufficient evidence (or grounds, in general) for *H*'s belief that *p* without *S*'s (perceived) communication. *S* does cause *H*'s belief, but dependence is not mere causality. Also, (3) is vague about what it is *exactly* about *S* that grounds *H*'s ET. In other words, we need to determine what about *S* makes *S*

the object of *H*'s trust. We have a straightforward answer: *H* trusts *S*'s communication that *p*. Thus, we obtain:

(3') *H* depends upon *S*'s (perceived) communication for *H*'s belief that *p*.

It is not simply that my ET in *S* causes my belief, but that only by depending upon *S*'s communication that *p* for my belief can we really capture the extension of reliance at the core of trust.

(4) needs clarification. One can plausibly ask what it means to have confidence in someone for some belief. Recall Karen Jones' position about the confidence involved in trusting.⁸⁷ She describes this as an "attitude of optimism" that one adopts towards the person in whom one trusts. For her, the optimism involved regards the goodwill and competence of the object of trust. How, then, can we modify this aspect of her *moral* account of trust to obtain an *epistemic* one? The answer is straightforward: our optimism regards the *epistemic* competence of the trusted person. We can cash out our confidence component in terms of the truster seeing the trustee as a person who communicates that *p* with warrant. That is, the confidence of the truster comes across in taking the trusted person's communication (of *p*) to have positive epistemic status. Call this status whatever you like: justification, warrant, an act of epistemic virtue, etc., but the key point is that we trust those in whom we think trust is well placed, so ET must account of the perceived (epistemic) competence of ET's object. Given all of this, one might think that one should read (4) as:

(4') *S* is in a (good epistemic) position to communicate that *p* with warrant.

However, (4') will not suffice either. I can trust someone with some belief even if that person is not *actually* in a position to communicate that belief with warrant. ET is still

⁸⁷ Jones, op. cit., 4-7.

trust even if it is placed in a completely *unreliable* source. What we require is that the *truster* see the *trustee* as someone competent, authoritative, reliable, etc. This element of ET requires a kind of attitude towards the *trustee* whereby the *truster* sees him/her as in a good position to communicate that intended piece of information in an intellectually competent manner. Hence, we need (4'') instead of (4'):

(4'') *H* takes *S* to be in a (good epistemic) position to communicate that *p* with warrant.

Now, it might be tempting to read (4'') as “*H* believes that *S* is in a good epistemic position to communicate that *p* with warrant.” However, these are very different. ET requires, if I am right, that the *truster* see the *trustee* in a certain way or, alternatively, to have a certain attitude towards the *trustee*. And having an attitude that *S* is trustworthy does not entail believing that *S* is trustworthy. I do not want to imply that a person must consciously believe that a person is trustworthy to take or see that person as trustworthy. So, we should be clear to read (4'') as a condition of one's attitudes or takings/seeings towards a person rather than simply having explicit propositional beliefs.

Thus, we have our modified account of what it means to place our ET in a person:

H places ET in *S* that *p* iff:

(1) *H* believes that *p*;

(2') *H* takes *S* to communicate that *p*;

(3') *H* depends upon *S*'s (perceived) communication for *H*'s belief that *p*;

and

(4'') *H* takes *S* to be in a (good epistemic) position to communicate that *p* with warrant.

We should note here that the above is an analysis of ET rather than *proper* ET. *H* (and *S*) can fulfill every condition above and *H*'s belief has little by way of warrant, justification, rationality, etc. We shall examine possible theories for the epistemic good standing or positive status of ET in the next chapter.

I also want to use the above definition above as a guideline to develop a more general or dispositional account of ET. Simply as stated, the definition applies only to particular instances of ET in particular testifiers for particular beliefs. However, I think we can easily generalize from this to a non-particular, general account of dispositional or cross-context ET. There are several plausible ways to do so. First, we can take the *S* (testifier) as a type of person rather than an individual and *p* (content of the belief in question) as a type of belief or field of inquiry. Thus, we can say that I (dispositionally) trust experts in, say, physics rather than simply that I trust *this* physicist with *this particular* belief about physics. So, we can say that I have ET in some general type of person for some general type of belief or field in order to widen the account from individual instances of either in order to get a more stable kind of ET across times, contexts, testifiers, and beliefs.

There are two brief features of my account above that I wish to call to attention before we move on to discussion alternative accounts of ET. First, my definition above is consistent with either self-ET or other-ET. The only aspect of my definition above that seems incapable of self-ET would be the dependence component. How can I depend upon myself for something that I lack? This seems absurd. However, if we think about self-ET in terms of my trusting some cognitive feature or process, we can make sense of all this. I can draw some information from my memory (as a quasi-discrete faculty or

process) that, were I lacking that faculty, I would lack that information as well. Hence, we can make sense of the ‘lacking’ aspect of my dependence component—it is a sort of portioned or compartmentalized lacking rather than a lacking *simpliciter*. Also, it should be clear that my definition of ET steers between the twin dangers of too ‘thin’ and too ‘thick’. On my account, ET does not simply reduce to trust-that or belief-that: clauses (2’)-(4’) should make that obvious. Also, nothing in my definition requires either *S* or *H* to explicitly or consciously trust or be trusted. Hence, we can avoid an account that is too ‘thick’ as well. Now, let us see what other accounts of ET one might propose and determine how they related to the one proposed above.

Alternative Accounts of Epistemic Trust

First, we can look at explicitly epistemologically approaches to trust. One such view we have dismissed from the beginning; namely, a ‘thin’ view of ET that treats it equivalently to mere trust- or belief-that. While I recognize that there must be some belief component to ET, I certainly think that such a mere propositional attitude cannot reflect the robust trust-*in* feature that I am trying to locate here. So, any view that would define or characterize ET in terms that reduce to mere propositional belief or trust will be insufficient. Also, Arnon Keren gives a different account than mine above regarding what it means to place ET in a speaker. He argues that “[t]o trust a speaker, to take her word for it, is to grant her epistemic authority on the matter.”⁸⁸ The obvious problem here lies in the lack of a dependence or reliance component to Keren’s account of ET. Someone in whom I place the utmost epistemic authority—defined however you like—

⁸⁸ Keren, “Epistemic Authority, Testimony, and the Transmission of Knowledge,” *Episteme*, vol. 4 (2007), 373.

can tell me something I already know. Even if an omniscient being, which I suppose would be an epistemic authority *par excellence*, tells me that “all green things are green,” I do not *trust* that being for such a belief. Since trust entails dependence or reliance, Keren is wrong to analyze ET (almost) solely in terms of epistemic authority. I think such an appeal to authority has a role in an account of ET akin to my use of ‘confidence’ but, as I argued above, confidence alone is not sufficient for trust. Thus, Keren’s account of ET will not suffice.

In addition to epistemological accounts of trust, we can also examine other views that one might tailor to fit an epistemological theory. First, we may look at what I shall call, following Paul Faulkner, predictive accounts of trust. Views of this type analyze trust as follows.

- A trusts *S* to ϕ if and only if
- (1) *A* knowingly depends on *S* ϕ ing and
 - (2) *A* expects *S* to ϕ (where *A* expects this in the sense that *A* predicts that *S* will ϕ).⁸⁹

Martin Hollis’ theory in *Trust Within Reason* would qualify as a predictive account of trust. We can ‘epistemicize’ this account, as it were, to restrict the ‘doings’ to communicative acts and specify a separate condition requiring *A* to form a belief in order to yield a distinctively epistemic approach. The central concern here, for our purposes, is (2). The problem here is that expectation or prediction is too thin of a notion to capture the robust sense of trusting *in* we want. As Faulkner notes, “[t]he expectation here is a matter of a belief about the future, an inductive inference.”⁹⁰ The predictive account of trust simply reduces to belief-that based on inductive evidence or perhaps a sort of ‘playing-the-odds’ approach. I take it that neither of these attitudes expresses the core of

⁸⁹ See Faulkner, “On Telling and Trusting,” 880.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

trusting in—to make a well-evidenced wager regarding your spouse is not to place your trust in that person. The confidence aspect to trust can account for some predictions regarding the trustee, but simple prediction alone cannot form the core of trusting in someone. Indeed, if I am confident that Jones will ϕ , then I certainly can predict Jones will ϕ , as one plausible symptom or expression of my confidence. Like confidence alone, prediction will not provide a sufficient condition for trusting in someone. Just as one can be confident in Jones to ϕ without trusting in Jones to ϕ , one can also predict that Jones will ϕ without trusting in Jones. Hence, like confidence, prediction will be insufficient for trust and, in recognizing how confidence relates to predicting, we can capture this feature in some respect on the account I propose. To think that sort of view is trust would be to radically mistake the sort of attitude one adopts in coming to trust another person.

Zagzebski offers a general account of what it means to trust. Like Baier, she accepts that trust is a three place relation composed of cognitive, affective, and conative aspects.⁹¹ She says that “I propose that when I trust x for purpose y , I *believe* x will get me y , and I *feel* trusting towards x for that purpose, and I *treat* x as if it will get me y ” (emphasis hers).⁹² Epistemic “[t]rust includes *relying* upon my faculties for the purpose of getting my questions answered, *believing* that they can get my questions answered correctly, and *feeling the attitude of trust* towards my faculties for that purpose” (emphasis mine).⁹³ In effect, Zagzebski has offered an epistemologically-modified account of trust based on a framework inherited from Baier’s decidedly *moral* approach to trust. I have emphasized the three major operational features of Zagzebski’s view: (a)

⁹¹ See, Baier, “Trust and Its Vulnerabilities,” 131.

⁹² Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy*, Chapter II, section 2 (manuscript).

⁹³ Ibid.

relying on something, (b) believing that something will ‘come through’ for you, and (c) having a certain feeling of trust regarding the trusted person. Clearly, I have no problem with (a) since I include it in my own definition in the previous section. (b), however, is tricky because it can be read in a few different ways. Do we take the ‘believing’ in question as a mere propositional belief *that* the trusted person will ‘make good’ or ‘come through’ on our reliance? Or is it a richer sense of believing *in* that person to satisfy our trust in him/her? I think this part of her theory needs some work to make it less ambiguous, but this is not my main quarrel because I am confident that she can correct this ambiguity.

My real issue with Zagzebski’s approach lies in (c) rather than (b), though. It is unclear just what she means by a “feeling of trust” that she includes in her definition.⁹⁴ She seems to be following Baier here, since Baier claims that trust has a distinctive ‘feel’ about it that makes the attitude recognizable.⁹⁵ The problem is that neither gives us an account of just what this ‘feel’ actually is, but comments by Zagzebski shed some light on the issue. She connects lacking this feeling of trust to being plagued by doubts.⁹⁶ This suggests that the feeling in question concerns a feeling of non-doubt, which I would take to be confidence here.⁹⁷ If I am right that we can cash out Baier/Zagzebski’s “feeling of trust” in *S* as feeling confident in *S*, then it would appear that there is significant overlap between her approach to ET and mine and rightfully so. After all, it has an explicit reliance component and a belief component that we can use to parallel the epistemic threads to my definition above. The only real problem I have is this: I do not

⁹⁴ Even leaving aside worries about including the *definiendum* in the *definiens*.

⁹⁵ “Trust and Its Vulnerabilities,” 131.

⁹⁶ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, Chapter II, section 4.

⁹⁷ Doubt being a kind of epistemic lack of confidence.

want to restrict my confidence component of ET to a feeling. Being confident in *S* might perhaps involve a certain feeling that one has towards *S*, but I do not think confidence is exhaustively affective. Confidence includes a kind of cognitive stance towards someone, even if dispositionally. That is, I view confidence having both an affective and cognitive component, whereas Zagzebski only seems to include an affective element. Her “feeling” of trust specifies no particular cognitive aspect regarding confidence because she keeps her “belief” component separate from her “feeling” component. On my view, confidence itself includes both types of aspects, whereas her view offers separates them into separate components. My confidence in the good motives of a friend is an attitude that includes a feeling of optimism but it is also a stance that includes minimally dispositional beliefs about that person’s motives. Confidence, on my view, cannot merely be a feeling but it must have some kind of cognitive aspect that grounds how we ‘see’ or take the object of our confidence to be, at least insofar as we are confident in this object.

So far, we have discussed what features any good account of trust must bear and, given those features, provided what I consider to be a satisfactory account of ET. Then, we examined a few alternative approaches to ET in order to show my proposed account preferable. I want to end this chapter by arguing that any robust epistemological theory must find a role for ET. I have several reasons for so arguing. First, it might not be obvious to some that ET is epistemologically vital; that is, some might think that ET is interesting but only of minor importance to epistemology on the whole. I shall contend that this view cannot be the case because ET is vital to our intellectual life in a number of ways. Second, by arguing how ET is central to our cognitive or intellectual life, we

provide a more comprehensive picture of the concept by showing how it works in how we think. In short, it gives us a fuller account than a mere definition. Finally, these arguments set the stage for the overall claim of the next chapter; namely, that ET is an epistemic virtue. Let us turn to these arguments now.

Why Epistemic Trust is Epistemically Vital

I shall give three arguments in this section. They aim to show that any comprehensive epistemology, i.e. any epistemology that claims to analyze all of the vital aspects of knowledge, justification, warrant, etc., has very good reason to account for ET. The arguments here will appeal to transmission of knowledge, epistemic circularity, and cognitive function. They show, in general, the important role played by ET in our cognitive life and, in particular, that ET is vital for many kinds of knowledge since our cognitive faculties and/or condition are not as strong as they could be. In short, the sort of epistemic or cognitive condition in which we find ourselves makes ET necessary in various ways. I shall begin with what I call the Transmission Argument.

The Transmission Argument

Like the Analogue Argument we discussed in the previous chapter, the Transmission Argument is more of a type or family of arguments rather than one single proof as such. Arguments of this type appeal to straightforward cases where we think of information being transmitted, communicated, testified, etc. between persons (or groups of persons). A general version of this argument runs like this.

We typically assume that it is possible to transmit knowledge. That is, we take it for granted that is possible for some person, *S*, who knows some proposition, *p*, to transmit that *p* to another via communication. And, what's more important, we assume that the listener knows *p* as well as *S*—or at least *can* know *p* as well as *S* under certain circumstances. Obviously, my aim here is testimony and the epistemic status of beliefs we obtain by testimony. The argument for the good epistemic standing of testimony (i.e. justifying the assumption about testimony) is simple and well-rehearsed, especially dealing with testimony in the sciences.⁹⁸ Unless we accept the possibility that knowledge can be transmitted via testimony, we shall be doomed to suffer a deep and intractable global skepticism.

If anyone considers what we think we know, then the amount of testimonial beliefs that form the core of this knowledge is quite substantial. We obtain knowledge of simple facts when we are young almost exclusively through the testimony of others. We know the term, 'cat,' denotes a certain type of furry mammal. But, this knowledge is entirely dependent upon learning that particular term's connection via linguistic convention to that particular type of being. My knowledge that certain beings are named 'cat' is exhaustively testimonial—if we are to know this proposition and others like it, we must account for testimonial knowledge. When older, we still must rely on others for a great deal of what we know—both mundane and significant. Whenever I ask someone, "What time is it?", I rely upon his/her testimony to give me some piece of knowledge. This knowledge can be either trivial or important. If I am walking leisurely downtown, then the testimonial belief is not important, but if I must be at a particular building for a

⁹⁸ See John Hardwig, op. cit., and Elizabeth Fricker, "Trusting Others in the Sciences: *A Priori* or Empirical Warrant?," *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 33 (2002): 373-383, among others.

job interview, then the time is key to the health of my financial life. *A fortiori*, philosophers have been quick to recognize this rather common-sense recognition of the role of testimony in our knowledge.⁹⁹ In fact, claiming that testimonial knowledge forms a great store of what (we think) we know borders on becoming an epistemological truism. Hence, if we are to know much at all—perhaps even *anything* at all—we must account for the transmission of knowledge.

Now, aside from the epistemic standing of beliefs via transmission, we must consider how it works, cognitively speaking. Transmission is not as simple as someone communicating that *p* and someone else believing that *p*. The person who receives the communication must accept it. Now assuming that acceptance is not automatic,¹⁰⁰ then what is it that can account for this acceptance? I suggest ET. If I place my trust in the person communicating that *p*, then I see that person as reliable and thus *p* as plausible. Due to my epistemic confidence in the testifier, I have grounds to accept that to which s/he testifies. I accept *p* only if I (intellectually) trust the person communicating that *p*. So, combining this claim with the conclusion of the prior argument, if we are to accept most of what (we think) we know, especially via testimony, then ET plays a key role in our theory of knowledge, justification, warrant, or other epistemic concept. Thus, a proper account of ET sheds light on our account of the transmission of knowledge—making it a significant object of epistemological analysis.

⁹⁹ See: Anscombe's "What Is It to Believe Someone?" and Paul Faulkner's "A Genealogy of Trust," amongst others.

¹⁰⁰ This is more than an assumption, though, for taking acceptance to be automatic would be absurd. If we have default acceptance of testimony, then we would come to have an implausibly large store of beliefs, many of which would be inconsistent. This is because most of us hear a *great* many things via testimony and not all of them worth the time it takes to listen. To think of acceptance as automatic would open the doxastic floodgates, as it were, leading to an impossibly unwieldy and irrational store of beliefs for any and all cognitive agents. Since this is clearly not how things work, epistemically speaking, I take it that acceptance cannot be automatic.

This Transmission Argument is legion in the epistemology of testimony, even if not always put in terms of trusting a speaker. The general line of reasoning is straightforward: we are not in the proper epistemic or cognitive situation to be able to determine most of what we want or need to know *first-hand*. Thus, we must appeal to second hand knowledge via transmission and, once second hand knowledge enters the picture, ET can become a vital player in explaining such transmission. Perhaps if we were born with a perfect store of innate knowledge or we could know everything *a priori*, ET would not be necessary but (for better or worse) that is just not the situation in which we find ourselves. Thus, for beings like us with faculties like ours put in contexts like ours, insofar as we extend ET to others, make it an important part of our overall account of how we learn from others. To my lights, it is the most convincing argument as to the necessity of ET but, if we only look to the Transmission Argument, we will miss other ways that ET functions in our thinking and intellectual life. This brings us to my second argument: the Epistemic Circularity Argument.

The Epistemic Circularity Argument

As with the Transmission Argument, philosophers have given much thought about the circularity of certain cognitive processes and doxastic practices. My main appeal here is to the work of William Alston, but concerns similar to his litter the philosophical landscape.¹⁰¹ Alston asks us to consider just what possible argument(s) we could give for the reliability of sense perception (SP). He examines several arguments

¹⁰¹ Cf. "Epistemic Circularity," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 47, no. 1 (Sept., 1986): 1-30; *Perceiving God*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), 102-145; *The Reliability of Sense Perception* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996); "On Knowing That We Know," in *Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge*, ed. C. Stephen Evans and Merold Westphal (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993): 15-39.

that aim to demonstrate the (general) reliability of SP and he finds that all of them at some point among the premises rely upon the assumption that SP is, in fact, reliable.¹⁰² Thus, in his terms, all arguments for the reliability of SP suffer from epistemic circularity. He means that, given our epistemic circumstances, faculties, and practices, we cannot be justified in accepting any premises here without presupposing that for which we are arguing.¹⁰³ The circularity here is not an explicit circularity in the sense that; *P*, therefore *P*, explicitly begs the question. Instead, he means that an argument or position is epistemically circular just in case one cannot have a warranted or justified belief in the premises without believing the conclusion. Faced with the epistemic circularity involved in justifying SP, we see that there is no privileged cognitive epistemic point from which we can evaluate SP, because we cannot “get outside of our own heads” to see if SP really does track reality. Because we do not have that higher order position to assess SP, we cannot have the higher order justification of SP that we desire as fully reflective agents.

Lucky for us, we need not *show that* we are justified in accepting SP to *be* justified in accepting SP. Without this answer, the epistemic circularity at issue could be vicious and defeat any knowledge from SP. So, on pain of a threatening global skepticism, Alston claims that “for any established doxastic practice it is rational to suppose that it is reliable, and hence rational to suppose that its doxastic outputs are *prima facie* justified.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² “Epistemic Circularity,” 5-8,

¹⁰³ This claim, I take it, is consistent with saying that if we had different (better) epistemic faculties or if we were in a different epistemic condition, then it is possible to demonstrate the reliability of SP without begging the question. However, this possibility is moot for the question at hand.

¹⁰⁴ *Perceiving God*, 183.

Now, for our purposes here, let us see just what it means to suppose that some doxastic practice is reliable. I suggest a plausible interpretation is that we place our trust in the doxastic practice at hand. That is, I am proposing that “S puts S’s ET in *F*” can often be a plausible interpretation of “S supposes that *F* as reliable.” I am not saying that “S supposes that *F* as reliable” is *equivalent* to “S puts S’s ET in *F*,” but there are often many cases when our taking someone to be reliable does evince the in kind of robust trust *in* someone that we have discussed at length. Supposing X to be reliable is not equivalent to placing ET in X because “S supposes that *F* as reliable” only captures the confidence aspect of ET but not necessarily the dependence or reliance aspect.¹⁰⁵ However, Alston’s concern with SP fits my ET approach nicely. Not only do we have confidence in our perceptual faculties but we obviously depend upon them as well. Clearly, we rely upon our perceptual faculties, so we can satisfy that much of our definition of ET. The only way to avoid the confidence component with SP would be to have some person that forms beliefs on the basis of SP, but where that person does not take those beliefs to have positive epistemic status. Unless, then, we are to be perceptual skeptics, our use of SP satisfies the confidence component of the definition of ET.¹⁰⁶ Thus, we have an important example where ET serves as a very plausible candidate in response to epistemic circularity—relying with confidence upon SP. We can account for this by the confidence component of the definition of ET above, were one typically sees the object of one’s ET as authoritative with respect to the topic in question. When I epistemically

¹⁰⁵ For instance, I may suppose that my watch is reliable (thus having confidence in it), but I need not depend upon it since my phone may be just as accurate. In this case, taking X to be reliable is not equivalent to placing ET in X.

¹⁰⁶ However, we need not take the confidence we have in our SP to be all that strong. One may believe one’s eyes but not to a very strong degree. All my argument here requires though is *some* degree of confidence—i.e. some positive value given to my perceptual beliefs—even if that degree is not very high. So long as we see our eyesight has having *some* degree of positive epistemic status, that is sufficient to satisfy as being confident in them.

trust my eyesight, then I am simply taking the beliefs caused by my vision to have positive epistemic status. The same goes for any of the senses involved with SP. Alston's argument implies that we are rational (or justified, warranted, etc.) in placing ET in SP. Yet, we need not stop with SP, for indeed Alston thinks that epistemic circularity infects any attempt to justify the reliability of "basic" sources of belief like induction, memory, deduction, to name a few.¹⁰⁷ I suspect he has in mind here certain arguments like those of Hume against induction, Carroll against *modus ponens*, Aristotle's concern in book Γ of the *Metaphysics* regarding the circularity of the principle of non-contradiction, and others. Hence, if we are to accept that we must place our ET in SP, then we should say the same about memory, deduction, and induction as well.¹⁰⁸ So, even though a host of doxastic practices may be infected with epistemic circularity, they need not be *viciously* circular such that they undercut knowledge because we are rational in placing our ET in them. As with the transmission argument, we can find a significant role for ET to play in our attempt to avoid a massive, trenchant skepticism.

Whereas the Transmission Argument above focuses on epistemic other-trust via testimony, the Epistemic Circularity Argument here focuses on epistemic self-trust of our own cognitive faculties or processes. In fact, Richard Foley takes the skepticism that looms if we take epistemic circularity serious as the major point of departure for his theory of intellectual trust.¹⁰⁹ He argues that

[o]ur lack of non-question-begging guarantees of our reliability is not a failing that needs to be corrected. It is a reality that must be

¹⁰⁷ "Epistemic Circularity," 8.

¹⁰⁸ And, as with SP, it seems clear that the dual aspect of ET fits nicely with these important doxastic practices. Not only are we confident in our memory (to varying degrees), deduction, and induction but we also normally rely or depend upon these practices for a large portion of our beliefs. Thus, like SP, our dual response of relying confidence or confident reliance on these practices uncovers a vital role that ET plays or can play in our overall epistemology.

¹⁰⁹ Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4-24.

acknowledged. We must acknowledge our vulnerability to error, and acknowledge also that inquiry always involves a substantial element of trust in our own intellectual faculties and in the opinions they generate. Significant inquiry requires an equally significant leap of intellectual faith.¹¹⁰

Foley's epistemically secular fideism here results from seeing that ET is a *rational* response to our lack of non-circular higher-order justificatory processes regarding our most fundamental doxastic practices.¹¹¹ Not only can we have a confident reliance on others for our testimony-based beliefs, but we must also have a confidence reliance in ourselves as epistemic agents for beliefs produced from faculties so fundamental that we have no way to break 'outside' of them to test their accuracy. Considering both arguments shows how widespread ET is for any kind of normal cognition and, thus, makes an even stronger and comprehensive case for analyzing ET as an epistemically vital portion of a decent epistemological theory. My final argument blends the lessons learned in the two prior arguments. I call it the Cognitive Function Argument.

The Cognitive Function Argument

My argument here has its genesis in Thomas Reid and follows a Reidian line of thought that he directs against skepticism. I shall take a different conclusion, but the reasoning behind his argument gives rise to the rationale I shall give below for my own conclusion. Reid argues that skeptical arguments (and perhaps skeptical hypotheses) cannot succeed because they are self-refuting.¹¹² He begins by noting that most of his life is marked by a complete trust in his senses (for instance) and that such trust has brought

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19-20.

¹¹¹ See Zagzebski's *Epistemic Authority*, Chapter II, section 3, for a different way to use epistemic circularity to motivate an approach to epistemic self-trust.

¹¹² Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, Chapter 6, Section 20, in op. cit., 103.

about reliable and productive beliefs. But he draws an important point: namely, that without such trust he would be unable to acquire the logic that skeptics use in making skeptical arguments and hypotheses. If our senses were generally unreliable and our trust in them and others were generally unjustified, we could not have the proper cognitive function necessary to develop the sophisticated arguments and hypotheses put to use by skeptics. The main point to draw from Reid's argument here is how our sophisticated, adult intellectual functioning relies upon our earliest cognitive developments in childhood and, according to him, our development in this stage (and through our later cognitive ability) manifests an important role for trust. If we consider how trust works at this stage and its relation to our future cognitive function, we have the basis for the Cognitive Function Argument of this section.

To see how this argument works, we must consider how it is that we come to possess and (properly) use our cognitive processes, practices, faculties, skills, etc. I am assuming here that none of us are born cognitively perfect. So, we must learn how to think or, alternatively, how to use our various cognitive features (well). Take our various cognitive traits, for instance. It is epistemically good that we be open-minded, think courageously, have cognitive integrity, et al. If we think about the intellectual virtues, we must learn how to develop and use them from someone else. Even considering faculties like SP, memory, and induction, learning is vital to our intellectual life. SP does not work in isolation of a person's use of it. We notice subtle differences in one's environment (e.g. that sticks merely appear to be bent when in water) that influence how we 'see' the world. The same goes for memory, since one can use it better or worse than another or at different times in one's life. Now, all of these usages, be they of virtues or

faculties, require learning to obtain and/or perfect—we just are not born with the proper cognitive skills that we possess at later stages of development. In short, we may be born with certain capacities to see, induce, think courageously, and others but we must perfect these practices in order to think or cognize well. This perfection is learned.

Now, consider how this learning works. We must trust others when they teach us—either explicitly or as a model—how to think. Using the same considerations in the transmission argument above, we find ET having a vital role here as well. Since it is a truism that we are born with cognitive skills, dispositions, and faculties needing perfection, we obviously rely or depend upon our teachers even if they are simply role models that offer no explicit instruction. Also, we have confidence in these teachers—at least enough to believe what they say or mimic what they do.¹¹³ Placing my ET in my teacher or exemplar of cognitive skill, typically allows me to learn that skill in question. Further, it should be clear from the considerations above that these cognitive perfections are necessary if we are to think well. Thus, if we consider how it is that we come to obtain the cognitive skills that occupy a central role in our epistemic or cognitive functioning, ET can serve a vital position in understand how we come by our proper intellectual function.

Tyler Burge has an argument that fits my general schema above regarding cognitive function.¹¹⁴ Instead of the various cognitive skills, abilities, virtues, dispositions, etc. by which we think rationally, Burge takes the language we use as his

¹¹³ As with the Transmission Argument, I suppose that it is possible that someone accept teaching or mimic someone's reasoning without really thinking that the belief formed is justified (or has positive epistemic status) or that one's habituated disposition is correct, but this would mean that the basis of our main cognitive functions is unjustified. More likely, I would think, that we actually see our teachers as worthy of our belief or mimicking—thus displaying some kind of confidence in them as students typically display of their teachers.

¹¹⁴ Tyler Burge, "Content Preservation," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 102, no. 4 (October 1993): 457-488.

model. Consider, for instance, how we learn simple words like ‘cat.’ Somewhere back in our past someone early in our development was able to get us to refer to the four-legged furry thing in our house with the simple three word term, ‘c-a-t.’ Without placing ET in this early linguistics teacher, I see no way that one could come by this term. If we generalize on this, without ET we are left without this shared simple term by which we can communicate with others. Living without ET at this point means doing without terms by which we make communication possible. As Burge claims: “[a]cceptance underlies language acquisition. Lacking language, one could not engage in rational, deliberative activity, much less the primary forms of human social cooperation.”¹¹⁵ Robert M. Adams echoes Burge here. He claims that we “acquire a large body of beliefs about the meanings of words long before [we] have either the intellectual capacity or adequate evidence to justify those beliefs.”¹¹⁶ Language learning, it would seem, becomes possible only by accepting the words of others before we have the capacity to determine their reliability. *A fortiori*, what we accept is the very basis of having the capacity to determine someone’s reliability or trustworthiness. And I suggest that ET finds a plausible role in accounting for this acceptance that is so crucial early in our lives. We find ET not only behind the epistemic practices that undergird our cognitive function but the linguistic practices that prove necessary for this proper functioning as well. Thus, we have the same result of the two previous sections—any comprehensive account of knowledge and epistemic concepts finds a plausible and important role for ET.

This argument bears a similarity to the Transmission Argument above insofar as we place ET *in others* so that we can come to be excellent thinkers. But, the argument

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 468.

¹¹⁶ Adams, “The Virtue of Faith,” in *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13.

also reflects an aspect of the Epistemic Circularity Argument insofar as the (eventual) product of our ET is the proper use of *our own* cognitive virtues, skills, faculties, etc. The Cognitive Function Argument blends other-trust and self-trust and, in so doing, shows that our cognition itself is such a blending. Unless we use *both* self-trust and other-trust working *in conjunction*, then all sorts of unfortunate epistemic situations can arise: we lose testimonial knowledge, we come to have deep doubts about our own cognition, and we never go through the learning processes whereby we become better and more epistemically perfect thinkers. Once we have drawn all of these arguments and their lines of reasoning tougher, it should be obvious just how vital a role ET can play for our cognition and intellectual life on the whole. Now, assuming the part of the epistemological program is an analysis and examination of this aspect of our life, then it follows immediately that ET seems like an important and interesting epistemic desideratum.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defined and defended my view on what it means to trust in someone epistemically. We examined various discussions on trust in general and, from there, determined the features necessary for a good account of trust *simpliciter* in the dual concepts of reliance and confidence. Thus armed with two central features of any view of trust, we modified reliance and confidence to get at their epistemological parallels. Combining this with general epistemic features necessary for an account of trust; I define ET as a state where the *truster* comes to a belief on the basis of some (perceived) communication by the *trustee*, such that the former relies upon the later (for the belief)

and the latter communicates the content of the belief with (perceived) warrant. From there, we examined a few alternative accounts and determined that they had problems that did not infect my definition. We concluded this chapter with a section of arguments showing the necessity of ET for our normal cognitive life and, thus, as a necessary concept that any decent epistemological theory must examine. In the next chapter, we can merge the results of the current with the previous: giving a virtue-theoretic model of ET.

CHAPTER 3

THE VIRTUE OF TRUST

This chapter draws together the previous two. Chapter 1 provides us a discussion of the general epistemological framework that underpins this entire work, ending with my definition of epistemic virtue. Chapter 2 works towards understanding just what ET is conceptually. However, Chapter 2 lacks an account of *proper* or epistemically good ET—that is, when ET is properly placed in some agent. Chapter 3 provides my own account of *proper* ET, developed along the general virtue-theoretic lines I defend from the outset. Specifically, I aim to develop the account of ET given in Chapter 2 on the model of epistemic virtue provided in Chapter 1. The previous two chapters are, in a sense, the necessary background for the view I defend in the current chapter. In short, the overall purpose of this chapter is to develop a virtue-theoretic approach to ET. I have two general arguments for this overall aim. First, I shall argue that my approach to ET defended in Chapter 2 can satisfy the definition of ‘epistemic virtue’ I defended in Chapter 1. Second, I shall show how a virtue-theoretic model of ET functions for the trusting or virtuous agent. In doing so, we can achieve a fuller picture of just what the virtue of trust looks like.

Once I have argued for ET as an epistemic virtue, we can examine some implications to this view—again, working to give as robust as possible a picture of the position on ET I defend. There are general epistemological implications that my view has as well as implications for specific philosophical issues. In addressing these issues, I

shall show how a virtue-theoretic approach to ET gives them some interesting answers regarding the epistemology of testimony, reasonable peer disagreement, and problems of “low-grade knowledge.” I shall contend that the epistemic virtue of trust provides attractive and philosophically fruitful positions regarding these topics. Thus, we have our direct arguments of the virtue of trust above as well as some indirect arguments here that aim to show such a view philosophically beneficial. The idea, then, is to make such a position as attractive as possible. Let us turn towards my direct arguments for ET as an epistemic virtue.

Trust as an Epistemic Virtue

In this section, I argue for the central thesis of this chapter; namely, that ET is an epistemic virtue. In the most straightforward way, such a claim simply involves showing that ET satisfies (or can satisfy) the conditions set forth in my definition of epistemic virtue from Chapter 1. Furthermore, I shall argue that ET functions the same as other virtues with respect to the theoretical grounding or structure that any virtue must have. We thus have two independent arguments for the same claim. Let us begin with the more straightforward argument.

Epistemic Trust and the Definition of ‘Virtue’

My first argument for a virtue-theoretic approach to ET derives from the modified Zagzebskian definition of ‘epistemic virtue’ given in Chapter 1. Recall that I define a virtue as a **deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a**

characteristic motivation to produce a desired end.¹¹⁷ Let us take each part of this definition piece by piece.

I follow Zagzebski in taking “deep” for our purposes to mean that, if a trait is a proper virtue, then it must be characteristic of that agent or, alternatively, part of that agent’s identity *qua* that particular person.¹¹⁸ Now, on this conception of what it means for a trait to be ‘deep,’ can ET satisfy this criterion? That is, can we think about some agent, Jones, such that that part of what makes Jones who Jones is would be Jones’ ET? It seems to me that the answer is an obvious ‘yes.’ We may all display *some* level of ET sometimes, but there are people whose trust is part of what makes them the (intellectual) agent they are. If we are willing to accept that ET can be ‘deep,’ then we should accept that it can be enduring as well. If ET is part of Jones’ character insofar as this trust defines part of Jones identity (*qua* Jones), then if Jones is to have an enduring character then Jones’ ET must endure as well. Thus, ET can be both enduring and deep.

ET must also be an “acquired excellence of a person” if it is to fit a virtue-theoretic model. I suspect that some will doubt that ET can satisfy this criterion. It seems, one can argue, that ET is not an *acquired* excellence in the way that a virtue is required via habituation over time. Rather, it seems as though ET is just a faculty or general disposition with which we are born. Trust is just part of our cognitive apparatus that we use to get along in the world: it requires no habituation for acquisition—we are just born with it.¹¹⁹ All of this might sound tempting, but there is good reason to think it false. There is evidence that we track the reliability of others as children and shape our

¹¹⁷ Where the “excellence” and “desired end” in question are *epistemic* excellences and ends.

¹¹⁸ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 136.

¹¹⁹ Zagzebski, for instance, seems to view ET as a fundamental kind of faculty or disposition with which we are born. See her “Epistemic Self-Trust and the *Consensus Gentium* Argument” in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25.

epistemic responses accordingly. Melissa Koenig and other researchers along with her have done experiments concerning how infants deal with reliable and unreliable sources. They determine that children do not have a default “trust mode” out of which they operate indiscriminately, showing that even small children display what Koenig calls “selective trust” in others that focuses upon the words of the speaker rather than the speaker’s behavior.¹²⁰ She claims that “developmental evidence demonstrates that a generalized credulity is not true of young children, even infants.”¹²¹ Selective trust, to use Koenig’s term, shows that trust is not a faulty (like eyesight) that we either possess or lack or something in which we engage or do not engage. Children merely open their eyes to see but they do not merely believe on basic, dispositional trust. Instead, trust is a disposition (at least) that we perfect and develop over time—meaning that trust itself is not faculty like even for infants. Rather, *if* we are to associate it with talk of faculties, the only way (given Koenig’s research) would be to see it as the *perfection* or *development* of a certain faulty or disposition as opposed to a faculty itself. But, if we should view ET in this manner, it certainly looks more like the excellence of a faculty that we must acquire over time rather than the natural faculty itself. Thus, ET would not be a natural disposition or faculty—it is the acquired excellence of that disposition; making ET seem much closer to something like a virtue *qua* acquired excellence than a faculty. Even if we have reason to think that ET is not faculty-like, we need more to show that it is acquired or perfected.

Koenig also finds evidence that children are “capable of evaluating both positive reasons for accepting as well as negative reasons for rejecting a particular speaker’s

¹²⁰ Melissa A. Koenig and Paul L. Harris, “The Basis of Epistemic Trust: Reliable Testimony or Reliable Sources?” *Episteme*, vol. 4 (2007), 264-284.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 265

claim.”¹²² Given this, we certainly have reason to think that young children are fairly sophisticated with respect to ET but this sophistication has limits. To see this, we find Koenig claiming that “very young children, even toddlers, are capable of selective trust *but may not be as competent or efficient as older children* (emphasis mine).¹²³ This means that children must develop and perfect ET over time, which suggests that it is a trait capable of acquisition and perfection. Koenig’s experiments give us the evidence to make two important claims here: (1) ET does not function like an inborn faculty and (2) ET requires development over time to function properly. ET may *appear* to be something that we are just born using, but rather ET is a habituated trait that we must perfect over time and experience to use properly.¹²⁴ Granted, this time and experience occurs so early in our cognitive life that we do not give it much reflection, but I suspect this is due to the importance of ET in cognition.¹²⁵ Thus, ET can be an excellence and one that is acquired (over time).

Epistemic virtues also have characteristic motivations. Zagzebski defines a ‘motive’ as “an emotion or feeling that initiates and directs action towards an end” where a ‘motivation’ is “a persistent tendency to be moved by a motive of a certain kind.”¹²⁶ The definitions of ‘motive’ and ‘motivation,’ then, require an account of emotion. On

¹²² Koenig, “Selective Trust in Testimony: Children’s Evaluation of the Message, the Speaker, and the Speech Act,” in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* Vol. III, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 254.

¹²³ Koenig and Harris, “The Basis of Epistemic Trust,” 273

¹²⁴ This would be an instance of disagreement between my approach to ET and that of Reid. As we see from Chapter 2, we have a similar approach to the concept of ET itself, but Reid thinks of ET more akin to a faculty—i.e. something we have as part of our cognitive apparatus from birth. I disagree and find Koenig’s claims instructive for my disagreement with Reid about the acquisition and perfection of ET *qua* trait rather than *qua* faculty. For Reid’s comparison of ET to the innate faculty of sense perception, see his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay II, Chapter 20.

¹²⁵ We saw in the Transmission and Cognitive Function arguments in Chapter 2 just how vital ET is to a remotely normal cognitive life. Given this, we should expect to develop ET quite early on to avoid the skeptical worries that drive these arguments.

¹²⁶ *Virtues of the Mind*, 131-132.

Zagzebski's view, an emotion has both an affective (i.e. feeling-based) aspect as well as a cognitive aspect. The affective side of emotions seems obvious: emotions are states with distinctive *feelings* like anger, joy, or disgust. But, an emotion "is distinguished from moods or sensations in that it has an intentional object. That is, an emotion is a state of feeling a certain way *about* something or *at* something or *toward* something."¹²⁷ Emotions are like perceptions insofar as they are ways of 'seeing' something as having a particular quality and they are like feelings insofar as the quality that we 'see' is affective. In short, an "[e]motion is a type of value perception that feels a characteristic way."¹²⁸ Thus, we need to ask: does ET have this sort of emotional basis? Our definition of ET in Chapter 2 provides a positive answer here.¹²⁹

Recall from Chapter 2 the two major elements of any kind of trust: confidence and reliance/dependence. Here, we account for trust as an extension of our optimism and/or confidence in a person—whether this is a moral or epistemic confidence. We extend this confidence because we depend upon others and ourselves for a great deal of what we know and our proper cognitive function (as we saw in Chapter 2). ET is a response to dependence with cognitive risk, but a risk of confidence or loyalty to the epistemic standing of some (hopefully) worthy intellectual agent. As we saw above, for Zagzebski, an emotion is a way of affectively 'seeing' the world. ET, accordingly is a way that we 'see' others and ourselves as worthy of both our dependence and confidence—which will form the characteristic motivation for ET. That is, we are motivated to depend upon others and ourselves for our beliefs and display a confidence in

¹²⁷ *Divine Motivation Theory*, 60.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹²⁹ Annette Baier's analysis of trust also involves both an affective and cognitive component. See "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," 132.

that person cognitively. Thus, we can give a characteristic motivation that underpins ET and, accordingly, satisfies this criterion of epistemic virtue.

Finally, a virtue must work towards some desired end. We can consider two different kinds of ends here. Consider a moral analogy. The virtue of benevolence has a two-fold end structure.¹³⁰ Following classical virtue ethics, we might think of benevolence as contributing to or partially constitutive of the moral ‘good life’ (*eudaimonia*). But, we can also construe benevolence more specifically: where the agent has the particular end of promoting the welfare of the object of one’s benevolence. Thus, if we consider some virtue, we have a general end that provides a framework upon which *any* virtue will fit and a particular end suited to that specific virtue. ET has the same two-fold structure of ends. First, we can think of the *general* end of ET as some putative epistemic value like true belief, knowledge, wisdom, understanding, rational belief, etc.¹³¹ As we saw above, our ET is an extension of our confidence in someone as a response our reliance on that person for something we lack. If I trust in you to tell me the correct time, I see you as worthy of my reliance for a piece of knowledge I lack—namely the time. My confidence in the face of dependence is a way of coming to know something when I cannot directly obtain knowledge of it. We can exchange knowledge in my example for any epistemic end or value. Thus, we can fit ET on the general framework of *any* epistemic virtue as a production of a general epistemic end. But, ET has an end that is specific to it as well. When I trust in you for the time, I am not merely aiming at knowledge but, insofar as I am trusting, part of my aim is to place the proper

¹³⁰ See Julia Annas’ distinction between the “overall aim” (*telos*) of an action and the “immediate target” (*skopos*) of the action in her “The Structure of Virtue” in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (New York: Oxford University Press), 23-31.

¹³¹ We can think of these ends as ones contributing (either partially or jointly) to the epistemic *eudaimonia*.

kind or amount of reliance on someone trustworthy and display a level of confidence appropriate to the situation in which I find myself. How I rely and how much confidence I have will vary according to the circumstance. There is a massive epistemic difference in my relying on a physics *professor* and a physics *student* for my understanding of quantum mechanics. Both, I would suggest, can be the objects of proper ET but not in the same way or to the same degree. Nonetheless, my aim is the same: in displaying proper ET, I should rely on them for the right kind of epistemic end in the right way and I should have confidence appropriate to the situation at hand. Given that ET works towards such epistemic ends, we can conclude that it satisfies every part of the definition of epistemic virtue from Chapter 1—ET is a proper epistemic virtue.

Epistemic Trust and the Metaepistemology of Virtues

A fortiori, there are other considerations available to show how ET fits a virtue framework. If we consider how ET functions in our cognitive life, we see strong parallels to other virtues. Different accounts of virtue have different implications for how they function in one's life. I shall argue below that ET functions nicely on either of the two main metaethical or metaepistemological accounts of virtue. Zagzebski, following Michael Slote, distinguishes two different types of theories by which one can ground virtue: good-based and agent-based.¹³² A theory is good-based if the notion of some good life or non-personal end serves as the fundamental concept or value in the theory. Aristotle's use of *eudaimonia* to define and ground his concept of virtue provides a good example of this kind of virtue theory. On the other hand, a theory is agent-based if it takes some property of a person as the bedrock concept or value. Zagzebski's own view

¹³² *Virtues of the Mind*, 80.

in *Divine Motivation Theory* takes the motives of a perfect moral agent (in her case, God) as the basic moral values. The issue between these theories is not whether virtues promote the good life or whether motivations have value, but rather how the value structure underpinning these features work out; i.e., which sort of value is more fundamental than the other. For my purposes, I think either view is plausible so I shall remain agnostic on which view is preferable. My neutrality here, though, means that I have two arguments to make: one fitting ET on a good-based account of virtue and one fitting it on an agent-based view. Let us turn to the former first.

In appealing to the epistemic *eudaimonia*, I shall have to walk a fine line.¹³³ On one hand, I need to say enough about it to avoid either triviality or vacuity. On the other, I must be broad enough so that a plurality of possible views will fit on my account. The plurality of possible views results from a plurality of ends that one might take to be epistemologically fundamental. Some theories view truth (or, more precisely, true belief) as the only non-derivative epistemic value and define any other end (e.g. understanding, wisdom, rationality, et al.) in terms of truth. Others deny this: claiming a plurality of non-derivative epistemic ends or values. So, different theorists give different accounts of the epistemic *eudaimonia* because of differences in how one views the value and structure of epistemic ends. Luckily, we can avoid this theoretical quagmire by considering the Transmission Argument from Chapter 2.¹³⁴ According to this argument,

¹³³ Interestingly, there is an argument from Augustine's *Concerning Faith of Things Not Seen* (chapters 2-4) for the necessity of faith (trust) in a more general sense of the good life than the epistemic good life here. He appeals to my faith (or trust) in my friend's good will. We have no good *a priori* evidence for this and no direct empirical evidence for my friend's good will, since s/he can always feign good will. To have a deep relationship with friends, thus, requires trusting in them for things that we cannot prove (in any strict sense). And, clearly, such friendships are part of the good life of humans. Generalizing here, we must admit that trust is part of the good life. I aim to give a similar argument for the restriction of the *epistemic* good life.

¹³⁴ See pages 61-64 for this argument.

we must account for ET in our theory because of the indispensable role that testimony, or transmission of knowledge in general, plays in our cognitive life. I take it that, no matter how one construes the epistemic *eudaimonia* or good life, testimony based beliefs, understandings, or pieces of wisdom will be there. If so, then ET fits into any account of the epistemic good; no matter how we take that good to be. ET promotes the epistemic *eudaimonia* and, hence, occupies the role that any epistemic virtue should take in that respect. ET is an epistemic virtue.

An agent-based approach takes some feature of the ideal agent or exemplar as the fundamental concept used to define ‘virtue’ or ground one’s virtue theory. Again, this argument is tricky. I must appeal to any good candidate for intellectual virtue, so my claims must be broad. But, I must not be so broad as to make such an appeal meaningless. So, I shall try to be minimal but informative as well. Consider what sort of traits the paradigmatic human person of epistemic virtue would possess, if actual. The modifier “human” may seem inconsequential or redundant above, but we must distinguish what kinds of exemplars *human* cognition may have opposed to any possible cognize that is not human. Consider God, for instance, and what sorts of epistemic virtues (excellences) would characterize God’s cognition. We should not find ET among God’s intellectual excellences since, as part of its definition, God *qua* perfect would not need to depend upon anyone for anything. Moreover, this *lack* of dependence would be appropriate for an omniscient being—as opposed to any finite intellect. So, while it might characterize the *human* exemplar of virtue to display ET (as I shall argue in what follows), it will not follow that ET occurs on any and every list of epistemic virtues for

all cognizers. None of this devalues ET as such, but I only point out that what counts as exemplary is indexed to what that exemplar is intended to model.

So, given all of these provisos, let us return to the question of what traits the human epistemic exemplar displays. I suggest that a good way to consider this question is to consider what sorts of motives that this alleged person would possess.¹³⁵ I take it that the guiding motive is to think well and to obtain whatever epistemic goods there might be—like the putative examples listed above: true beliefs, knowledge, justified beliefs, understanding, wisdom, and so forth. So, if we consider the virtuous paradigm in terms of motive, will such a proper epistemic motive lead one to display and possess ET? I think so. If one is motivated to obtain either true or justified belief, then one must be motivated to use doxastic practices well. And since use of these practices requires ET, as I argued in the Cognitive Function Argument of Chapter 2, then this exemplar must be motivated to trust. Also, if we recall the importance of testimony again, we should expect our epistemic exemplar to depend upon others for some beliefs. If the person of epistemic virtue is motivated to accept testimony, then s/he is motivated to place ET in others. When we consider some exemplar of rationality, I take it that such a person displays a great amount of ET in several contexts: s/he will listen to experts in fields about which s/he claims no expertise; s/he trusts others for beliefs about other people's lives and actions, and so forth. That is, displaying ET in a variety of contexts is just what the person of virtue does and, so, ET works in that person's cognition and intellectual functioning just as any other epistemic virtue. Hence, ET is part of the motivational structure of the paradigmatic person of virtue and, we must conclude that the virtuous epistemic agent will display ET. On either account of virtue, whether it be good- or

¹³⁵ My procedure here falls in line with Zagzebski's motivation-based approach.

agent-based, we find that ET works to promote the epistemic good life for the exemplar of virtue in precisely the ways that *any* proper epistemic virtue does. ET turns out as a virtue by considering both the definition of virtue and how any virtue functions on a virtue-theoretic model.

Implications

There are important implications that a virtue approach to ET possesses. First, virtues have two vices—one of excess and one of deficiency. Thus, ET has two such vices; such that one is excessive trusting and the other is deficient trusting. The former we can call gullibility or credulity and the latter we can call suspiciousness. Embedded within this very account of ET, we have an immediate conception of blind trust and a rigid lack of trust. We shall fall victim to all sorts of intellectual ills if we trust everyone with everything they say, but we cannot have a good life (*eudaimonia*) or think well if we do not trust some people some times. As Catherine Elgin remarks, “[t]o make effective use of testimony requires that we be neither too gullible nor too skeptical.”¹³⁶ Her claim seems entirely right upon reflection and gives strength to my virtue-theoretic model of ET since such an approach both affirms and *explains* this truism.

Related to this view of proper ET as a mean between gullibility and suspiciousness, classical approaches to virtue (especially that of Aristotle) involves what I shall call a “sensitivity” to contexts.¹³⁷ All virtues are a mean between excess and deficiency but what counts as a proper mean is, in part, a function of the context in which

¹³⁶ Elgin, “Take It From Me: The Epistemological Status of Testimony,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 65, no. 2 (September 2002), 307.

¹³⁷ Rosalind Hursthouse calls this the “built-in indexicality” of virtues. I see no difference here between her views and mine—only terminology. See, Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 1991), 240.

the agent finds him/herself. For instance, Aristotle notes that what counts as an appropriate mean between too much and too little food is different for a weightlifter with respect to a normal person.¹³⁸ Similarly, what counts as appropriate (read: virtuous) ET is sensitive to contexts. The level of trust I have in my spouse is appropriately higher than the trust I might place in a complete stranger. There is a mean in both cases, but such a mean differs because the context in which that mean occurs differs as well. Thus, what counts as *proper* ET, as opposed to suspiciousness or gullibility, must have this same context sensitivity as well. I find this implication extremely attractive, for it allows a nuanced approach to how we trust others that does not come down along hard and fast rules. Thus, we have the kind of context-sensitive ‘wiggle room’ to deal with hard cases of trust. We shall see later on in our discussion of the epistemology of testimony just what results this implication of my view bears.

Virtues are also intimately connected with proper education, especially with proper habituation. ET, on my view, is no different. Genuinely *virtuous* ET must always come by use and guidance, for fear of trusting excessively or deficiently. Just as being brash or cowardly can skew the student of courage from the virtue’s true form, it can often be all too easy to view ourselves or others with suspicious or credulous eyes. Avoiding these dangers is bound up with learning how to achieve the proper mean between them. As Koenig’s experiments with children show, we develop our trust over time and we begin this process *very* early on in our cognitive development. Good ET, like any virtue, can be quite fragile when considering just how wrong it can often go. Correct learning and training is necessary to develop our ET consistently between suspiciousness and gullibility.

¹³⁸ *Nichomachean Ethics* II.6, 1006b.

We also obtain an interesting position here regarding ET's relation to evidence. Reductionists with respect to evidence (i.e. evidentialists) argue that my ET for some belief is good only if I have good evidence for that belief or for the good epistemic standing of the person testifying. Credulists or universalists (non-reductionists), demurring, argue that ET is in *prima facie* good standing, assuming a lack of defeating evidence.¹³⁹ The view here has aspects of both in part but neither in total. On a virtue approach to ET, *H*'s ET in *S* is good when *H*'s trusting in *S* expresses intellectual virtue. Sometimes this might deal with evidence (from other virtues), sometimes it might deal with default (quasi-universalist) trust without positive evidence and no defeaters, and sometimes it might be a mix where the warrant for *H*'s ET in *S* comes *both* from evidence (from other virtues) *and* from the defeasible presumption of ET—the two aspects buttressing each other. Differences in circumstances will call for differences in our proper intellectual response to them. Depending upon the particularities of the situation, our evidence, and our own cognitive sophistication, the other virtues in operation will determine what positive evidence and negative evidence (defeaters) I have for my ET in that particular case and what evidence I *ought* to have in those particular circumstances. That is, if there is evidence that I should obtain, my ET should be combined with other virtues that govern the acquiring and weighing of evidence and if there is no such evidence, my default ET could be acceptable. Even in cases where my ET is default, as universalism suggests, evidential concerns play *some* role as a limiting condition regarding what evidence I ought to expect, given the circumstances. But, *pace*

¹³⁹ We shall discuss these views in Chapter 4 when I argue against an alternative approaches to my virtue-theoretic account of ET. I mention it here as contrast to my theory's approach to evidence—especially the role of evidence in testimony.

evidentialist reductionism, evidence is not the only good-making epistemic criterion here, though it is important. Our approach here should be nuanced to the epistemic context.

Finally, my position on epistemic virtue from Chapter 1 explicitly denies a success or reliability component on virtue. Accordingly, I accept the implication that it is possible (though perhaps improbable) that some agent always expresses ET properly yet always fails to get to the truth of the matter. This means that one can have responsible or perfectly rational ET even if one's trust is, in fact, always placed in one who always fails. Of course, I view this as a logical possibility rather than any real likelihood. ET, on my view, is primarily about extending one's confidence in someone as a response to dependence. Doing so well requires that the agent do whatever s/he can to make this confidence appropriate.¹⁴⁰ Doing one's best to succeed, though, does not entail that one will succeed. Those who adopt reliabilist approaches to virtue will find this implication unfavorable but, as should be clear from Chapter 1, one must have some room in one's theory of virtue to account for the role that luck plays when we consider how things in the real world often just fall apart.

Most of these implications are straightforward and follow directly from taking ET to be an epistemic virtue. I do not claim novelty in deriving them, but they are important for the overall theory. Thus, it benefits our understanding and depth of the position to discuss them, and they provide some beneficial reasons to accept ET as an epistemic virtue. In the next section, I extend these reasons, arguing that several nasty worries for epistemology find interesting and fruitful answers (if not solutions) on the virtue-theoretic theory of ET that I propose.

¹⁴⁰ What counts as 'appropriate' will, to a large part, come down to a discussion of the proper mean in the proper context, as we discussed above.

Epistemic Trust and Epistemological Issues

In this section, I give a very brief examination of several issues in contemporary epistemology and argue that my view on ET as an epistemic virtue provides them some philosophically beneficial answers. My purpose here is twofold: first, I want to show how my theory has application to certain theoretical issues in the field and, second, if my theory can answer some nasty philosophical problems with plausibility, this only adds to the attractive force of the theory. In what follows, I shall develop brief responses to the problem of Low-Grade Knowledge, epistemology of testimony, and the epistemology of disagreement. I do not intend an exhaustive analysis of any of these theories, so my concern will be to give the general philosophical landscape of the issue and briefly extend my theory on ET as an answer to that issue.

Epistemic Trust and the Problem of Low-Grade Knowledge

Many critics of virtue theory do so by appealing to perceptual knowledge.¹⁴¹ If knowledge requires acts expressing intellectual virtue, then simple cognitive acts like perceiving do not seem to need such aretaic sophistication. When I look out of my window and see a tree, it is hard to understand how my virtues work in conjunction to form that belief. Instead, it seems more plausible to think that my *faculty* of perception provides the belief without any need of intellectual virtues. But, if there is no need for virtues for this belief and if we think of that belief as justified, warranted, grounded, etc. then virtue theory will have trouble accounting for perceptual (or any ‘low-grade’) knowledge. We see by discussing perception that some instances of knowledge are easier to come by than others. Seeing a tree is less epistemically sophisticated than developing

¹⁴¹ See, for instance, Alston’s “Virtue and Knowledge,” 187.

a complex philosophical theory. We can recognize ‘high-grade’ knowledge that fits onto a virtue framework nicely, but the easier sort of ‘low-grade’ knowledge (like perception) does not fit as well. The problem of ‘low-grade’ knowledge is, then, an issue of how virtue theory can plausibly account for ‘easy’ instances of knowledge.

Zagzebski tries to solve this worry by discussing the person of intellectual virtue. If we ‘see’ as does this exemplar, then we are virtuous. The problem is that Zagzebski’s account of virtuous ‘seeing’ is really an account of non-vicious ‘seeing.’ She claims that what counts is that we do not exemplify certain *vices*, like *not* being prejudiced and *not* being in the grips of wishful thinking.¹⁴² The worry is that Zagzebski gives us a case of virtuous ϕ ing without giving a single virtue that has ϕ ing as an end. A virtue-theoretic approach to ET, though, gives us the means to rebut this argument from low-grade knowledge that requires no ‘epicycles’ on the system and provides a simple, principled solution.

If I am right that ET extends beyond testimony to trust in our own faculties (as I argued dealing with epistemic circularity), then there is a major virtue operating for perceptual knowledge—ET. Such trust must be here even if it is only dispositional. I see a tree outside and I trust my eyes, thereby obtaining the belief that there is a tree. Since there are virtues operating here rather than mere lack of vices, it is certainly a good candidate for knowledge on virtue theory. And, what’s more, if knowledge requires credit, then we have a virtue operating for both testimonial and perceptual beliefs. We can preserve attributions of credit that merely *appear* too easy—answering another

¹⁴² Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 281.

criticism of virtue theory.¹⁴³ So, if ET is a virtue, then we can answer the problem of Low-Grade Knowledge; strengthening both virtue epistemology on the whole and my own virtue-theoretic account of ET in particular.

Epistemic Trust and Testimony

A virtue approach to ET provides a ready-made, principled response to the reductionism/non-reductionism debate regarding testimony. Reductionists claim that the good epistemic standing of a testimonial belief reduces to or supervenes upon non-testimonial grounds; usually some standard source of epistemic justification like sense perception, memory, inductive inference, and others.¹⁴⁴ The evidence from these non-testimonial sources of justification may be inductive or *a priori*.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, this reduction thesis implies that a testimony-based belief must have positive, non-testimonial justification.¹⁴⁶ Non-reductionists argue for the negation of this—namely, that testimonial beliefs (can) have good epistemic standing without any positive, testimonial-independent grounds; usually including a proviso that such beliefs can be defeated, though, by *negative* evidence against them. I shall not catalog the worries with each position, but it should suffice to note there is no shortage of argumentative ammunition in

¹⁴³ For a criticism of virtue epistemology that centers around credit-attribution, see Jennifer Lackey, “Why We Don’t Deserve Credit for Everything We Know,” *Synthese*, vol. 158 (2007): 345-361.

¹⁴⁴ In describing these sources as ‘non-testimonial,’ I do not mean to exclude Elizabeth Fricker’s local reductionism. Here, testimony can provide evidence for *other* testimony, making this evidence independent of the testimony in question. See Fricker, “The Epistemology of Testimony,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, vol. 61 (1987): 57-83; “Against Gullibility,” in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. B. K. Matilal & A. Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 125-161; and “Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony,” *Mind*, vol. 104, no. 414 (April 1995): 393-411.

¹⁴⁵ C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁶ In this respect, reductionism regarding testimony makes similar claims as evidentialism regarding ET.

this war of attrition.¹⁴⁷ Instead, I shall mention what I consider a main driving motivation for each account.

Reductionists give their account of testimony to avoid being ‘duped’ or misled by false testimony. So, if we analyze proper testimonial belief in terms of independent evidence, then we can avoid widespread the gullibility that appears to result from belief without evidence—as non-reductionism seems to permit. If my acceptance of testimony is *prima facie* acceptable without any consideration of (positive) evidence, then I am open to all kinds of cognitive gullibility. Thus, reductionists are concerned with evidence as a prevention of gullibility. Non-reductionists, however, are concerned that reductionism leads to skepticism. Consider a chain of testimony linking my knowledge of the term ‘cat’ to actual cats. In particular, let us consider my belief that “furry beings of this sort (in reference to felines) are named ‘cats’.” I doubt we can find any non-testimony based evidence for the simple linguistic knowledge that *this* three-letter term denotes *this* type of furry being. Or, one can think about my argument regarding the necessary testimonial basis of historical knowledge. The chains of justification for beliefs such as these do not and cannot terminate in non-testimonial justification. But, on reductionism, if we cannot reduce these beliefs to non-testimonial grounds, the beliefs lack warrant. Reductionism, accordingly, undercuts any cases of knowledge such as these. The non-reductionist moral is clear: we need to allow for cases where testimonial beliefs are (at least) *prima facie* warranted where we have no independent positive evidence for those beliefs. So, the reductionists are worried about gullibility and the non-reductionists are worried about skepticism.

¹⁴⁷ See Duncan Pritchard, “The Epistemology of Testimony,” *Philosophical Issues*, vol. 14 (2004): 326-348, for a good overview of the worries that face each view.

I suspect that the difference between these theories also turns upon how one construes the rationality of justified testimonial beliefs. Reductionists, by making possession of positive evidence necessary for such justification, want to ensure that testimony-based beliefs are positively rational. On the other hand, non-reductionists, insofar as only negative or defeating evidence features into the account of testimonial justification, want to ensure that one is *not* being irrational in accepting testimony. We can see the reductionist/non-reductionist disagreement as one reflecting the difference between being rational and not being irrational when it comes to testimonial justification.

On my (virtue) account of ET, it can allow us to talk about well-formed (here, virtuous) belief without talking without reducing this epistemic standing to the evidence for that belief. If ET is in epistemic good standing, then beliefs it causes are *prima facie* good, too. Hence, we can capture a core intuition from the non-reductionist camp. However, we must not forget that other virtues, some dealing with evidence, must be in operation—at least as a limiting condition or disposition. Hence, we must be concerned with evidence *in some respect* with regards to testimony (preserving some of the motive behind reductionism). If I place my ET in someone when I could have good defeating evidence by using other virtues, then my ET will not be good in this case.¹⁴⁸ We can preserve some motivations from both reductionism and non-reductionism, while giving a nuanced account that fits a virtue-theoretic approach.

When we are young and have not developed sophisticated virtues that govern how we process evidence, ET will function with a broader reign.¹⁴⁹ Later, we can develop

¹⁴⁸ It is one thing to trust; it is yet another to trust *well*. Not all instances of ET are epistemically appropriate or justified displays of ET.

¹⁴⁹ Since virtues are *acquired* excellences, children will not possess them. But, we can still account for a child's actions or beliefs as good (morally or epistemically) by following Aristotle here. He says that

more sensitive ‘eyes’ to the testifier as well as the epistemically pertinent features that surround the testimony, in addition to a large catalog of inductive evidence that can guide our ET. Thus, the proper epistemic status of ET is highly context sensitive to the evidence we have and virtues we use in those circumstances, which we should expect on some accounts of testimony.¹⁵⁰ Since both reductionism and non-reductionism disregard such sensitivity in favor for necessary and sufficient conditions for all cases of trusting in testimony, they cannot allow for this kind of approach. In short, a virtue approach to ET shows us that the epistemology of testimony requires a more nuanced approach than either reductionism or non-reductionism.

I see the debate between reductionists and non-reductionists as an epistemological or philosophical see-saw. Both views struggle to gain any kind of argumentative advance on the other, but neither side can make any decisive headway. This is why I call this debate a ‘war of attrition.’ The moral we should learn from it, I suggest, is that neither side provides the right answer for *every* case of testimonial justification. There are some situations where reductionism gives the right answer (i.e. the agent should have positive evidence for one’s belief) and we see this in cases where the trusting agent appears gullible. My account of ET can handle cases like this, for plausibly, the gullibility is really an expression of excessive—and hence vicious—trust. Non-reductionism seems to

“actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man *would* do...” (*Nichomachean Ethics*, II:4, 1105b5, *italics mine*). Thus, people who have not yet acquired some virtue by habit can do virtuous actions, so long as they are what the person with that habituated virtue *would* do in those circumstances. Hence, so long as children act and believe as virtuous adults would in their same situation, those actions and beliefs count as virtuous actions. Zagzebski, I suspect, has this issue of children’s possession of virtue and the Aristotle’s answer here in mind when she says that “even young children can perform acts of virtue before they are old enough to acquire the intellectual virtues...[a]s long as they are old enough to imitate the behavior of intellectual virtuous persons...young children can have knowledge...” (*Virtues of the Mind*, p. 280). Zagzebski’s ‘imitation of virtuous adults’ and Aristotle’s ‘doing what a person with virtue would do’ seem to be sides to the same coin—ways to account for good actions done by persons that are only in the *process* of acquiring virtue.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, Elgin’s Gricean account of testimony in “Take It from Me: The Epistemological Status of Testimony.”

provide the proper account for other situations, though. Obvious candidates are historical beliefs and my knowledge that ‘cat’ refers to certain types furry, four-legged mammals. Requiring positive evidence here undercuts knowledge that we, intuitively, want to maintain. Again, my account of ET can handle these cases because, *qua* epistemic virtue, ET can confer some kind of epistemic value on beliefs of this kind. Reductionists and non-reductions are engaged in a debate that neither can win since one side accounts for some situations correctly and some side for other situations. The mistake is to think that all of the sundry examples of testimony-based beliefs can fit some monolithic theory that does not account for the particularities of the situation of testimony at hand. Since my account is based in virtue theory, the epistemic context is vital to assess how one should express one’s virtue. Thus, it can handle both types of situations addressed well by reductionism *and* non-reductionism, since my theory accounts for the way that different testimonial situations call for different cognitive responses by responsible epistemic agents. If I am right in all of this, my approach to testimony via my theory of ET provides us with the flexibility one needs to make sense of how we accept the words of others.

Epistemic Trust and Disagreement

I shall discuss the epistemology of disagreement in the same manner that I discussed the epistemology of testimony above. Most examinations of the epistemology of disagreement focus on what is called “peer” disagreement in the literature. An epistemic or cognitive ‘peer’ is defined with respect to both a subject of disagreement (or difference in belief) and the general epistemic circumstances surrounding one and one’s

peer in this disagreement. So, consider some belief you may have about some proposition p . Your epistemic peer would be some person, S , such that S believes not- p or q —where q entails the negation of p —and S is in the same epistemic circumstances in which you find yourself. That is, you and S have the same evidence, cognitive function, epistemic abilities, or whatever else one wishes to specify that determine a belief's epistemic status. This last part of the definition of an epistemic peer is a kind of epistemological *ceteris paribus* or *mutatis mutandis* clause. Peter van Inwagen gives an example of this kind of peer disagreement in his disagreement with David Lewis concerning the truth or falsity of David Lewis' modal realism.¹⁵¹ I take as data both philosophers' equality of epistemic situations: both are extremely philosophically able, in excellent cognitive functioning, and know of the same reasons to accept or reject Lewis' theory. Thus, they are epistemic peers in disagreement with respect to modal realism. Thus, it would seem that such peer disagreement is just an epistemological fact or datum for philosophical analysis.

Like many philosophical issues, there are two main types of theories analyzing peer disagreement. I follow Jennifer Lackey's labels for these two theory types simply for ease of expression.¹⁵² Let us call a theory 'nonconformist' if it allows two (disagreeing) epistemic peers to hold their respective, inconsistent beliefs and, what's more, hold them *rationally*.¹⁵³ That is, for some two peers, A and B , A can rationally

¹⁵¹ Peter van Inwagen, "It is Wrong Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence," in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, eds. Eleanor Stump and Michael J. Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 274.

¹⁵² Lackey, "What Should We Do When We Disagree?" in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* Vol. III, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 274-293 and "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance," in *Social Epistemology*, eds. Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar, and Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 298-325.

¹⁵³ Examples of nonconformist theories can be found in: van Inwagen, "We're Right. They're Wrong," in *Disagreement*, eds. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 10-28;

believe that p where B can rationally belief that not- p on nonconformism. The core idea is that peer disagreement does not necessarily force two peers to revise either the beliefs each has or the strength with which they believe them. Conformism, on the other, hand denies this core idea behind nonconformism.¹⁵⁴ A and B above must engage in some kind of belief revision in order to preserve their respective rationality.¹⁵⁵ Conformism implies, in motto form: there is no rational disagreement between epistemic peers. The conformist/nonconformist debate regarding disagreement finds a close philosophical parallel in the reductionism/non-reductionism debate regarding testimony that we discussed above.

The debate here becomes seemingly intractable because both conformism and nonconformism each have a very unattractive result. Consider some idealized situation where A and B are exact epistemic equals except with respect to their belief of p . Given nonconformism, A and B are perfectly rational or within their epistemic rights in continuing to believe p and not- p , respectively. Neither must revise either the beliefs they hold or the degree to which they hold them. We have what Catherine Elgin calls a “symmetrical” situation regarding peers’ beliefs.¹⁵⁶ It seems to me rather more like a kind of epistemic ‘stand-off’ than a kind of symmetry. Both A and B can draw their

Thomas Kelly, “The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement” in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology, Volume 1*, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 167-196; and Richard Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, Chapter 4.

¹⁵⁴ Instances of conformism are: David Christensen, “Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News,” *Philosophical Review*, vol. 116, no. 2 (2007): 187-217; Adam Elga, “Reflection and Disagreement,” *Nous*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2007): 478-502; Richard Feldman, “Epistemological Puzzles about Disagreement,” in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 216-236; and Hilary Kornblith, “Belief in the Face of Controversy,” in *Disagreement*, eds. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 29-52.

¹⁵⁵ Some conformists, like Feldman, argue that the revision in question must be suspension of both peers’ beliefs whereas other conformists, like Christensen, require only a revision in the strength of each peers’ respective beliefs.

¹⁵⁶ See her “Persistent Disagreement” in *Disagreement*, eds. Richard Feldman and Ted A. Warfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55.

doxastic lines in the sand. Generalizing here, we end with a situation of doxastically and intellectually isolated individuals, unable to move past deep differences. I take this sort of situation to be quite unappealing. But, the situation is no better for the conformist. On this view, *A* and *B* must either suspend belief or else revise their relative strengths of belief. The first horn of the dilemma implies skepticism for any case of peer disagreement since both sides must relinquish their beliefs. The second horn implies a state of continual doxastic self-monitoring. Since peer disagreement could potentially occur for *any* belief, this implication means that there is no belief of which we can be really confident—even those beliefs that are deeply characteristic of oneself, one’s view of the world, and how one places oneself in the world. We end up being possible ‘doxastic nomads’ because we are never really ‘at home,’ cognitively speaking, when faced with the possibility of deep change in our doxastic commitments. These claims are not to endorse dogmatism or a dogmatic approach to one’s beliefs. Rather, I worry that conformism takes calls to belief revision too lightly. For instance, consider moral beliefs. These are typically deeply held and can usually be quite divisive. I can never commit fully to any moral theory because I can always come across a epistemic peer that disagrees. Since I take it that both horns of this dilemma imply unattractive results, we can conclude that both conformism and nonconformism are saddled with fairly nasty worries.

Now that we have examined the epistemological landscape of peer disagreement as well as the quagmires that such a landscape contains, let us examine how my virtue-theoretic approach to ET fits on this map. The first thing to notice is that my view is inconsistent with conformism. I have argued throughout this work that a virtue-theoretic

approach takes heed of the specifics of (epistemic) contexts. Thus, such a position cannot endorse a view that makes all cases of disagreement fall under the same restrictions, as does conformism. But my view cannot be nonconformist either. As with conformism, nonconformism makes claims about what should happen in any case of disagreement; namely, that each person is permitted to keep to their beliefs just as they are. Both views call for epistemic restrictions on belief that cut across all cases of disagreement; ones that cannot properly handle specific and epistemically vital differences in particular cases of disagreement. I endorse Lackey's analysis of this debate.

[N]either nonconformism nor conformism provides a plausible account of the epistemic significance of peer disagreement...[I]n some cases, nonconformism provides the intuitively correct result, and in other cases, conformism does. This leads to a rejection of [the thesis of] Uniformity: disagreement with epistemic peers does not function epistemically the same in all circumstances.¹⁵⁷

We find an exactly similar situation to the epistemology of disagreement as we do to the epistemology of testimony: the major sides of the debate get some cases correct but neither gets all correct. Thus, each view has some significant degree of plausibility but neither is plausible in its totality. The debate seems intractable because, so long as each view 'see-saws' regarding the same response to different cases, the debate *really is* intractable. Bound up with our reason to reject the either/or of conformism versus nonconformism is a natural explanation of why neither view manages to make philosophical headway against the other.

The crucial issue about disagreement here is when (if ever) one ought to keep to one's beliefs or change them in recognition of the epistemic authority of another. In short, how to we strike the proper relation between my epistemic confidence in myself—

¹⁵⁷ Lackey, "A Justificationist Account of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance," 305.

via my beliefs—and my epistemic confidence in others? If we put the situation in those terms, the problem of peer disagreement comes down to an issue about situations when self-ET conflicts with other-ET. I cannot in principle give an account of ET where it describes when to revise one's beliefs and when to keep them; much less give one regarding how one should revise. Giving such an account commits the same fundamental mistake lying behind both conformism and nonconformism; namely, trying to make all cases of disagreement, in all their specificity, fit the same (overly) general epistemological theory. But, even without this account, we can make a good case that my view of ET avoids the specific problems affecting conformism and nonconformism.

Recall that nonconformism's unattractive implication is a situation of epistemic 'stand-off,' wherein both sides to the disagreement dig in their doxastic heels and take no heed of the other side's claim. This results in a doxastic isolationism. I assume that, since such isolation is quite cognitive unattractive, it will not feature into either the epistemic 'good life' (epistemic *eudaimonia*) or something motivating the person of epistemic virtue. Indeed, I suspect it would be part of the epistemic 'bad life' and something that the person of virtue would avoid. It would be conceptually impossible here to display *proper* ET (either self or other) leading to such isolationism. One side or the other, then, fails to display proper ET—the proper diagnosis of which side and what way, of course, depending upon the context in which those peers find themselves. Similar considerations tell against conformism. As we saw above, conformism will imply *either* skepticism in cases of disagreement or a kind doxastic 'nomad' approach to one's beliefs. As with the isolationism implied by nonconformism, I take both results to contribute positively to the epistemic 'bad life' and motivations that the person of virtue

will avoid. As such, they cannot *in principle* be the result of proper ET even if we cannot describe *how* this works without the specifics of the situation.

In short, there is much work to do regarding ET as a solution to the problem of peer disagreement—my analysis is just a sketch that outlines what a view would look like in full. But, I think it is informative enough to make it attractive and, thus, a benefit to the philosophical problem of disagreement. Again, my analysis here mirrors that of testimony. Such broad and significant philosophical issues require more than a section or chapter but a manuscript-length analysis of their own. My only hope is to outline such an approach and make it philosophically appealing enough to give credence to my theory of ET.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given an account of proper ET based on the virtue theory I defended in Chapter 1. We see that it fits our definition of ‘epistemic virtue’ nicely; satisfying every condition in that definition plausibly. Also, such an approach to trust aligns well with different metaethical or metaepistemological approaches to virtue: grounding it in either the epistemic good life or the motivations the person of epistemic virtue has or would have. Finally, I end this chapter by discussing (in brief) ways that my approach to ET can answer some pressing worries in epistemology. Again, the idea is to give my view strength by showing its philosophical or epistemological advantages. If I am right in all of this, we have a strong cumulative case to model proper ET along virtue theoretic lines.

CHAPTER 4

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTS OF PROPER EPISTEMIC TRUST

In the previous chapter, I have argued for the claim that ET is an epistemic virtue and discussed various implications that such a view has for epistemology on the whole. But, my defense of this claim—i.e. that ET is an epistemic virtue—is not quite complete. Even though I have given my own approach to ET modeled on virtue theory, I shall give some other possible (non-virtue-theoretic) approaches and argue for the superiority of my account in each case. As I mentioned in the last chapter, there is a dearth of in-depth epistemological analysis on ET. Accordingly, I shall describe what I consider *possible* alternative accounts to mine rather than extant theories. Most of them are derived from epistemological theories of testimony. What counts as proper acceptance of testimony, I suggest, gives one an analogy to what that philosopher *would* take to be proper ET (since ET intimately involves acceptance of testimony). Thus, I may deviate from the precise letter of a theorist's position, but only to capture that position's spirit in a way directly pertinent to ET. I shall discuss some views, however, like Richard Foley's, Keith Lehrer's, Linda Zagzebski's, and Paul Faulkner's that do give accounts of proper trust itself. I shall discuss four broad types of theories (some have subtypes): reliabilism, evidentialism, universalism, and assurantism. Let us take them in order.

Reliabilism

In Chapter 1, we discussed (and eventually argued against) virtue reliabilists like Sosa, Goldman, and Greco. Virtue reliabilists argue that some disposition or skill of an agent is a virtue just in case that feature is reliable—i.e. tends (or would tend) to produce a high ratio of true beliefs over false. Reliabilism generates an obvious position on how to define or describe proper ET: ET is epistemically proper when (and only when) the beliefs that one's ET produces tend to be true, thus making ET a reliable cognitive process. Recall that virtue reliabilists count a large number of cognitive features as putative virtues: dispositions, faculties, processes, skills, etc. Certainly ET fits among this broad list and, thus, it will come under the account of virtue provided for these cognitive features by virtue reliabilists. So, the reliabilist account for proper ET follows immediately from the view itself.

The easiest argument against this view simply appeals to the arguments from Chapter 1. If virtue reliabilism is wrong *simpliciter*, then it is certainly wrong in the specifics of ET. This argument is sufficient, but there is another reason that counts against reliabilism here. Accepting a reliabilist account for proper ET is both too strong and too weak. That is, reliabilism will endorse some instances of ET it should not and denounce instances of ET that it should accept. For cases where reliabilism seems too strong, we can consider a cases where a person has reliable beliefs or makes reliable assertions based on abnormal or unnatural conditions. To pick an infamous example, consider the case of Norman the clairvoyant. Now, due to Norman's stipulated reliable clairvoyance, he has remarkably accurate beliefs regarding matters for which he cannot possibly possess evidence. But Norman is unaware of his own clairvoyance and its

reliability. Since Norman has reliable beliefs, it would seem that a reliabilist approach to ET would sanction placing trusting in Norman. But, intuitively, that seems too strong—mere reliability does not seem sufficient in Norman’s case for proper ET in him and his assertions. In contrast, reliabilism also seems too weak—disallowing ET where we think it proper. We can imagine cases where you place ET in a person that, by your lights, has an impeccable track record with respect to truth. However, this person is very clever and crafts a constant situation of deception around you. Again, it seems that ET is warranted here, but reliabilism cannot countenance this result since the deceptive person is totally (and intentionally) unreliable.

Considerations like these suggest that reliabilism is, at once, both too strong and too weak to provide a fully satisfactory account of ET. I am not arguing that, when one considers whether to trust someone, these considerations should not include concern with that person’s reliability. Instead, I am arguing for a weaker claim: that proper ET should be sensitive to more than mere reliability. Since reliabilism makes such reliability *both* necessary *and* sufficient for proper ET (given certain “no-defeater” conditions), reliabilism cannot provide a satisfactory account of proper ET.

While my view obviously eschews reliability as a *necessary* condition for proper ET, given my arguments against success components in Chapter One, my view can accept some reliabilist motive here without making it both necessary and sufficient. Typically, when we consider a person’s testimony in a particular instance or over the course of an acquaintanceship, we shall take some measure of his/her reliability intellectually, morally, pragmatically, and perhaps a host of other ways. Reliability may not be necessary for proper trust, but it can often be a very useful tool that we can use in

judging someone as trustworthy or untrustworthy. Reliability may be *one* important criterion that we can often use to assess someone even if one does not consider it necessary to proper assessment. Hence, we can find a role for reliability here—preserving some of its motive as a good criterion of trust—even if we deny that it forms the primary or sole criterion for proper trust. I take such a result to count in favor of my own view against a reliabilist approach to proper ET.

Evidentialism

An evidentialist approach to proper ET would analyze proper ET in terms of the evidence the truster has for his/her trust in the trustee. Generally speaking, the idea is that one's ET is proper or well-placed just in case one places one's ET in accordance with the amount and kind of evidence one has for the trustworthiness of the object of one's ET. Thus, the epistemic status of ET simply reduces to one's evidence; showing evidentialism to be a reductionist account of ET. We can make this general account more specific, though, by getting clear about what *kind* of evidence a theory makes necessary for proper ET. Some theorists argue that the evidence in question must be *a posteriori* evidence and others argue that the evidence is *a priori*. Let us begin with an *a posteriori* approach.

According to an *a posteriori* evidentialist view, proper ET occurs when the truster possesses adequate evidence or reasons *from the truster's own experience* to justify the confidence placed in the object of one's trust. Consider Elizabeth Fricker's view on proper testimony based beliefs:

One properly accepts that P on the basis of trust in another's testimony that P—her word that P—just if she speaks sincerely, she is epistemically

well enough placed with respect to P so that were she to have, or make a judgment to form, a conscious belief regarding whether P, her belief would almost certainly be knowledge; and she is better epistemically placed with respect to P than oneself; *and one recognizes all these things to be so*; and one is not aware of any significant contrary evidence regarding P (emphasis mine).¹⁵⁸

The crucial clause above for our purposes here concerns Fricker's claim that well-placed ET must occur when the truster has good reasons to think that the trustee has epistemic authority regarding the issue at hand. In short, one can only properly trust *S* for one's belief that *p* if one has good reason or evidence to think that *S* is worthy of one's trust. Proper ET is grounded in the evidence one has regarding the epistemic status of the person in whom one trusts. Furthermore, it should be clear that such evidence as Fricker stipulates must be *a posteriori*, since she requires that one must know that *this particular agent* is epistemically "well enough placed" regarding *this particular* belief to adequately ground one's ET in that agent. I take it that one cannot know such specifics about a particular agent in a particular context regarding a particular subject *a priori*.

This view has several strong objections. First, there is what we may call the Scarcity Objection. According to this, evidentialist views like Fricker's requires too much of an agent epistemically in order to have much knowledge. But, there appear to be situations where I can plausibly trust some agent without having done such epistemic backstopping. Suppose, for instance, that I travel to a foreign city and need directions to my hotel. Accordingly, I need to place ET in a person to obtain these directions. But, since I am totally new to this city, I cannot choose a person that I know to be sincere or competent or one that I have good evidence as to his/her trustworthiness. Evidentialist views like Fricker's seem to give too strong a requirement for proper ET here.

¹⁵⁸ Fricker, "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, eds. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 232.

Also, there is what we can call the Infant Objection. Infants do not have the epistemic sophistication to weigh and adjudicate evidence, so it seems like *any* instance of infant-trust runs afoul of Fricker's theory. This is a very unattractive and counterintuitive result. Fricker herself builds into her theory that there is a "developmental" stage in our youth when "simple trust" (i.e. trust that has no good basis in evidential considerations) is permitted.¹⁵⁹ The Infant Objection drives her to this aspect of her theory, but it seems *ad hoc*. What principled *evidentialist* grounds are there to suspend evidentialist requirements in youth? Such a maneuver seems included simply as means to avoid the nasty result of global infant-skepticism.¹⁶⁰ To put the point in a different way, Fricker wants her account to analyze ET or testimony in terms of evidence. But, here, the relevant epistemological work does not reduce to evidence proper but features of the *person* possessing that evidence. Moving from evidence to person-based considerations moves one away from evidentialism in general. But, if she maintains her evidentialism and argues that such person-based considerations are not *epistemically* significant, then the move seems *ad hoc* and included simply to prevent skepticism. So, her view is faced with a dilemma: either it is evidentialist and *ad hoc* or first stages in our epistemic development (as children) should not be analyzed in evidentialist terms.¹⁶¹

Finally, and what I think is most damaging, Fricker's evidentialist approach suffers from a parallel version of the Epistemic Circularity problem we discussed in Chapter 2. On Fricker's view, I must have good evidence or reasons to believe that the trustee is actually trustworthy. But, many times I know of a person's trustworthiness

¹⁵⁹ See her "Telling and Trusting," 401 and "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy," 225-226.

¹⁶⁰ I take this to be a problem for any evidentialist relaxing of standards for children, simply as a means to avoid skepticism.

¹⁶¹ And, hence, evidentialism as a *general* epistemological theory is false.

only because of some other person's telling me about this person. Historical knowledge, in particular, becomes problematic here. I cannot *in principle* know that Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B.C.E. by anything other than the words of others (whether contemporary or historical). If we generalize on this example, Fricker's evidentialism implies a wide swath of skepticism. The moral of the story is this: testimony is infected with epistemic circularity in precisely the same way as perception, memory, etc. I cannot get 'outside' of my ET in testimony to check the overall reliability of some instances of testimony.

Fricker might respond to my last worry by appealing to what she calls "local" reductionism.¹⁶² A non-local, "global" reductionist account requires that agents have good evidence for the general reliability of testimony *on the whole* or *in general*. However, a "local" reductionist would say that I do not need evidence for the whole of testimony but only for that individual's testimony to which I am presently directing my attention. But, as we saw above with historical knowledge, even if I can marshal evidence for the general trustworthiness or reliability of an individual, often times there will be other testimony based beliefs among that evidence.¹⁶³ But, in this case, we are left in the same position as our first criticism of evidentialist (or reductionism)—it requires far too much backstopping to make a robust system of testimonial beliefs feasible. Fricker's weakening of reductionism to require that only one's 'local' testimony

¹⁶² See, for example, her "Telling and Trusting."

¹⁶³ Indeed, it seems to me that the only persons for which one could have sufficient, *non-testimonial* evidence would be persons with whom one has spent a considerable portion of each person's lives. This includes, I imagine, only the closest of friends and relatives. We just do not spend enough time around others to adequately judge the *whole* of his/her utterances and statements as to their overall reliability—on pain of rampant hasty generalizations.

have an evidential backstopping will not prevent a slide into a worrisome skepticism regarding a large portion of our testimonial beliefs.

But global reductionism fares no better. One might think it an improvement, since inductive and anecdotal experience can give us some reason to think that *in general* people are reliable due to their track record over the course of our lives. Our whole social experience, one might argue, gives us the reasons we need upon which to base our ET properly. While this sounds very nice, I think there are (at least) two serious considerations weighing against it. First, the view assumes that we can be in an epistemic position to track the general reliability of people *from a non-trusting attitude* from the outset. But, the Cognitive Function Argument from Chapter Two shows that our lives are interpenetrated with ET from very early on in our lives and indispensable in our earliest language and skill learning functions. Without *already* displaying ET to become intellectually sophisticated in the first place, we cannot be in a position to obtain, weight, and maintaining the general evidence necessary for the global reductionist picture.

Second, global reductionism seems to suffer from a generality problem of evidence. If we consider our experience with testimony, it should be obvious that we encounter a tremendous variety of testimony types, from different sorts of persons, and large difference in the manner in which people testify. That is, testimony occupies a large variety of types: types of persons, claims, methods of communication, etc. What type(s) turn out to be epistemically significant? Each instance of testimony involves many separable types: who does the testifying, to what is s/he testifying, how is /she testifying, when is s/he testifying, etc. What features of the testimony factor into our appraisal of its reliability and what features are irrelevant? I see no principled answer to

this question because all testimony is imbedded in a complex situation involving times, places, persons, and a host of other details. Without some way to pare down the particularities of testimonial instances *in a principled and epistemologically enlightening way*, it seems hard to form the appropriate generalization from these instances, as global reductionism requires. Thus, we have several good reasons to reject evidentialist views of ET like Fricker's, whether these views be local or global reductionisms.

But, other positions can ground ET in arguments from an *a priori* basis. C.A.J. Coady gives an argument based on Donald Davidson's approach to the interpretation of a language with which one is totally unfamiliar—i.e. 'radical' interpretation. Such interpretation works by determining T-sentences of the form, "'S' is true in L iff *p*" where 'S' is a sentence in L (i.e. the 'alien' language to be interpreted) and '*p*' is a sentence in the interpreter's language with the same truth conditions as 'S.' However, for Davidson, determining these T-sentences requires that we

determine what the aliens 'hold true' in making their utterances. But it is only against a background of shared belief that we can embark upon this enterprise and make sense of their supposed affirmations...Elsewhere [Davidson] writes: "if we want to understand others we must count them right in most matters."¹⁶⁴

We must invoke a Davidsonian 'principle of charity' whereby we assume that most speakers of a language generally speak the truth in order to understand them at all. But, as is obvious, there is a massive difference between my taking a group of people to be generally truthful and that group actually being truthful. Some have taken Coady to take Davidson's position from the former to the latter.¹⁶⁵ But, Coady's argument for the general validity of ET does not require this stronger view. What we have, in effect, is a

¹⁶⁴ Coady, op. cit., 156.

¹⁶⁵ See, for instance, Catherine Elgin, "Take It From Me"

transcendental argument for the general validity of ET based upon the conditions of understanding another's language. Davidson, to Coady's lights, has shown that such a principle of charity is necessary to understand a language (other than our own) and, given the plausible premise that we do in fact understand others, this gives us a strong reason to accept the implication of this principle; namely, that we take others to be generally trustworthy. Coady's view, then gives reason to think ET is generally well placed, based upon the *a priori* considerations of radical interpretation and Davidson's principle of charity.

Coady's view turns upon the claim that we must take the beliefs of others to be generally true. Even if this is correct, though, it is not the right sort of claim needed to ground proper ET. Consider this criticism by Catherine Elgin.

Coady's use of [Davidson's solution to the problem of radical interpretation] to vindicate testimony fails. Even if Davidson's argument establishes that most of the sentences a speaker holds true are true, it does not follow that most of the sentences a speaker *utters* are true. Nor does it follow that most of the sentences that comprise her testimony are true. For a speaker utters only a small subset of the sentences she holds true, and only a subset of these qualify as testimony.¹⁶⁶

The problem with Coady's account is that it ends with claims about the beliefs of others when it must end with the assertions of others. Elgin's criticism turns upon this gap in Coady's theory. We can easily strengthen her criticism. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Coady is correct in the strongest version of the Davidsonian position possible; namely, that *all* of the beliefs of *every* person is correct.¹⁶⁷ Even then, he has *not* shown that agents do not generally lie or that agents are generally competent in the assertions of their beliefs. Coady needs these further claims to make his argument about

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 296-297.

¹⁶⁷ Such a position is ludicrous, counterintuitive, counter the evidence, and absurd but I am assuming the strongest possible case to show how even it fails.

the general trustworthiness of people go through and, such claims would require a great deal of philosophical work to support.

Tyler Burge gives a slightly different kind of argument for the (general) validity of ET based on *a priori* considerations. Burge defends what he calls the ‘Acceptance Principle’: “a person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so.”¹⁶⁸ At first blush this does not appear to be an evidentialist approach, for Burge seems to account for ET without it coming down to evidence. However, once we determine the justification for the Acceptance Principle, Burge gives us *a priori* reasons to accept the general trustworthiness of others’ words. Recall the Cognitive Function argument from Chapter 1. According to it, ET underpins our proper cognitive function in a variety of ways—one of which is our language. We saw in that argument Burge’s view that basic language acquisition requires some acceptances (via ET) of others insofar as we learn what terms denote what objects or concepts. The reasons to hold the Acceptance Principle, then, are reasons rooted in our fundamental ET placed at the beginning of language development. If we are to learn how to speak, then we must accept (read: trust) others for the terms and concepts used in language.¹⁶⁹ Thus, Burge concludes that

[a] person is *apriori* entitled to accept a proposition that is presented as true and that is intelligible for him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so. Because it is *prima facie* preserved (received) from a reliable source, or resource for reason; reliance on rational sources—or resources for reason—is, other things equal, necessary to the function of reason. (italics his)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Burge, “Content Preservation,” 467.

¹⁶⁹ We need not think that “accept” must be equivalent to “trust.” But, I am concerned here to analyze other possible accounts of ET and, if we read “accept” as “trust,” then we find such an account here. Even if Burge does not intend anything like “trust” in his account, we can simply say that we are offering a Burge-inspired account providing a theory of proper ET.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 469.

Like Coady, we have what I think is a transcendental argument: given that we are deeply committed to our use of language and reason, we have good reason to think that the ET we place in others is generally well-placed. We begin with a principle that sounds like credulity, but we end up with an argument from *a priori* grounds that such credulity must, on pain of losing our language, have a reliable basis in truth. Whereas Coady grounds his argument in our ability to understand others, Burge grounds his in our ability to speak ourselves.

Burge's argument relies on two problematic generalizations. First, the original class of ET that forms the basis of his argument appeals to situations involving trust in our early caregivers for language. While I agree that such situations are epistemically vital, I have worries in generalizing this particular kind of trust to trust on the whole. He needs a further argument: one showing that early ET involving language acquisition correlates positively to other kinds of ET. That is, Burge needs to give an argument that infant ET works cognitively and epistemically like adult ET to move from the epistemic propriety of the earlier stage to the later. Since the argument he gives relies upon its *a priori* status, this second argument should appeal to *a priori* bases. Otherwise, his account would turn into a straightforward evidentialist approach like Fricker's above. I suspect that such an argument would be *very* difficult to make, especially on an *a priori* basis. Second, Burge's claim not only generalizes the object of ET, but he seems to assume that ET functions the same across agents as those agents grow and develop. But, it is clear that our intellectual development changes how we trust. An adult person does not trust a random stranger as a toddler trusts his/her primary caregiver. We should not expect one's ET to remain the same either and, thus, Burge should not assume the

homogeneity of ET across ages and cognitive developments. The lessons we learn about infant-trust are vital and necessary in a proper account, but they are not the primary basis to establish the account of ET *on the whole*. Burge's theory gets a large part of the story about ET and language-acquisition right, but the theory on the whole moves too quickly from those lessons to ones about ET in general.

I have fairly serious reservations about an *a priori* approach to testimony or ET, but my view can preserve some of the appeal to an *a posteriori* evidentialist approach like Fricker's. Since I am no evidentialist, I see epistemic virtues as necessary and sufficient for the positive status of a belief. But just because I deny that evidence is necessary, that does not entail that evidence cannot be epistemically significant. Many virtues, I expect, deal with how to obtain and weigh evidence and, thus, evidence can play a major role in the justification of very many beliefs—including those based on ET. My view can give evidence a significant place while maintaining enough flexibility to deny that *all* instances of ET-based belief simply reduce to evidential considerations. Therefore, my theory can accept the intuitive positive role that evidence often has vis-à-vis justification, while avoiding the claim that *only* evidence has that role. I understand the appeal of evidence to views like Fricker's, but I can accept this appeal without the problems involved in making it strictly necessary.

Universalism

If a theory of ET counts it as properly placed just in case the truster lacks evidence against the reliability or trustworthiness of the trustee, then I call this theory a type

of universalism.¹⁷¹ My usage follows Richard Foley¹⁷² and Zagzebski's¹⁷³ on the issue. In short, ET is epistemically proper when (and only when) the confidence thereby placed has no defeaters. I shall discuss two ways that universalist theories account for proper ET: both grounding proper epistemic other-trust in proper epistemic *self*-trust.

Keith Lehrer's account of ET stems nicely from his general coherentist approach to epistemology.¹⁷⁴ Let us see how he sets the issue up. He begins with the truism that "[t]he first step in the life of reason is self-trust" because one "cannot reply to an external sceptic nor to the sceptic within my own head without self-trust."¹⁷⁵ Further, he makes the following (rather Moorean) claim regarding the specter of skepticism:

[t]here are objections about demons and deceptions, but they are less worthy of my trust than my acceptance of these simple things [that I exist and that I see my hand before me]. It is these simple things and not the things about demons and deceptions that I accept, because the former and not the latter are worthy of my trust. They are not the foundation of what I accept, they are but examples of what I accept."¹⁷⁶

The question remains, though: how do we epistemologically ground the rejection of skepticism based in self-ET? Lehrer gives the following argument:

- (1A) I accept that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept.
- (2A) I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept.
- (3A) I am worthy of my trust concerning my acceptance of the premiss that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept.
- (4A) I am reasonable to trust my acceptance of the thesis that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept.

¹⁷¹ Other philosophers have called this view 'universalism' (since ET is granted universally, restricted by defeaters).

¹⁷² *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, 87-89.

¹⁷³ *On Epistemology*, 88.

¹⁷⁴ Coherentism provides an account of justification. According to this account, a belief is (epistemically) justified just in case that belief fits securely into a coherent system of beliefs. There are no privileged beliefs that obtain justification directly or outside of a belief-system (as foundationalists affirm) but, rather, all justification comes about by how well the beliefs in that given system 'hang together' to form a tightly-knit, coherent set.

¹⁷⁵ Lehrer, *Self-Trust: A Study of Reason, Knowledge, and Autonomy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

(5A) I am reasonable to accept that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept.¹⁷⁷

However, there is a worry here regarding (2A). That seems to be the conclusion all along; namely, my actual trustworthiness. Lehrer accepts that this argument provides no proof against anyone skeptical of (2A) but that is not the point. Rather, this serves to explain his original proper acceptance of his trustworthiness. Thus, he claims that

[o]f course, in appealing to the things that I accept, I am assuming that I am worthy of my trust in these matters, and, consequently, as [2A] is supported by the other things I accept, so my trust in my acceptance of those other things depends upon premise [2A]. Premiss [2A] is thus not a foundation, for it is supported by the acceptance of those things whose worth depends on premiss [2A]. The correct figure is that of a keystone, a circular or looping keystone supporting the arches of a building.¹⁷⁸

My epistemic self-trust has its proper epistemic status because of its role in supporting my system of acceptances and preferences. This forms what Lehrer calls the ‘loop of reason;’ one that “tie[s] the system up, that tie[s] the system down, that tie[s] the system together.”¹⁷⁹ Self-trust ties my noetic system together coherently and, accordingly, provides for epistemic rationality and justification. Epistemic self-trust, then, is *proper* trust when it does this looping function coherently, so that my noetic system is tied down appropriately. And, finally, accepting my own trustworthiness remains part of this system that it ties together.

We might wonder, however, how all of this regarding *self*-trust concerns proper *other*-trust. Lehrer argues that “[i]f I am trustworthy for me, worthy of my own trust, concerning my evaluations of trustworthiness, I may extend the sequence of self-trust to

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 26.

the trust of others...”¹⁸⁰ The idea is that, since I am trustworthy myself, I should trust my own judgments about the trustworthiness of others. Thus, my epistemic self-trust grounds my epistemic other-trust. Lehrer’s view, therefore, implies that one does not need to obtain positive evidence for one’s ET so long as there is no negative fit, via defeating evidence, of that extension of trust to one’s coherent system of acceptances and evaluations.

Richard Foley’s account of trust begins similarly to Lehrer’s; particularly with concerns about skepticism. He motivates considerations of ET by claiming that “[w]e must instead acknowledge that skeptical worries cannot be utterly banished and, as a result, inquiry always involves an element of trust, the need for which cannot be eliminated by further inquiry...”¹⁸¹ Further, it would give rise to dangerous gullibility to have unrestricted trust, so we must have some criteria for epistemically good and epistemically bad trust. His general view is that “trust in one’s opinions ought to be proportionate to the degree of confidence one has in them and to what [Foley] call[s] the ‘depth’ of this confidence.”¹⁸² However, without a good account of Foley’s “deep confidence,” then *any* belief could be held properly so long as one believes in it strongly enough. Foley says that, regarding the depth of confidence, “[t]he rough rule is that the more confidently and deeply held an opinion is, the more invulnerable to self-criticism it is and, hence, the more one is entitled to rely on it...”¹⁸³ In his talk about rationality, Foley explicitly links this invulnerability to self-criticism with what, on reflection, an

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 127.

¹⁸¹ Foley, *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others*, 25.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 27.

agent would think promotes the goal of having a robust noetic structure of true beliefs.¹⁸⁴ So, ET is epistemically proper—here, ‘rational’—when the beliefs it produces are immune to self-criticism; that is, when one’s own trust-based beliefs are not defeated via self-criticism. Effectively, ET has positive epistemic status just in case one’s trust satisfies a no-deafer condition.

One might wonder again how he moves from self-trust to *other*-trust. The crux of his argument regarding trust comes as one recognizes how similar human cognitive functioning and environments are across the species. Here is the major argument for proper other-trust.

Given that it is reasonable for me to think that my opinions have been thoroughly influenced by others and that my intellectual faculties and my intellectual environment have broad commonalities with theirs, I risk inconsistency if I have intellectual trust in myself and do not have intellectual trust in others...Trust in myself radiates outwards to others.¹⁸⁵

Like Lehrer, Foley accounts for proper other-trust by grounding it in proper self-trust. The key difference between the two views is this: Lehrer takes the thesis of self-trustworthiness as fundamental for one’s noetic structure while a part of it at the same time. Foley, on the other hand, seems to take self-trust as the bedrock guarantee against skepticism and, *from there*, conceptualizes the rest of one’s noetic system. On Foley’s view, self-trust does not ‘loop’ anything—rather it forms the foundation for the other beliefs built upon top of it. Foley complains that *classical* foundationalism has failed to rebut or refute the skeptic, but he keeps a foundationalist structure in the role he gives for proper epistemic self-trust. Lehrer and Foley are both concerned with the rationality of

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 106.

ET and how it responds to radical skepticism, but they view its relation to one's noetic structure in very different ways.

Foley and Lehrer's views, though, suffer from the same problem. Consider this passage from Foley:

[i]n our childhoods, we acquire beliefs from parents, siblings, and teachers without much thought. They constitute the backdrop against which we form yet other beliefs...We are not intellectual atoms, unaffected by one another. Our views are continuously and thoroughly shaped by others...*For, insofar as the opinions of others have shaped our opinions, we would not be able to be reliable unless they were.*¹⁸⁶ (emphasis mine)

I find nothing wrong in this passage except that it does not go far enough. If we recall the Cognitive Function Argument from Chapter 2, the ET we extend in our cognitive development state does not concern mere *beliefs* but the general intellectual abilities, skills, dispositions, virtues, etc. by which we think well on the whole. Foley emphasizes just how dependent we are at all points along our lives, but what he seems to miss is that such a dependence cannot be neatly grounded in self-trust. The justification procedures he lauds in moving from self-trust to other-trust occur *only if* we have already properly trusted others for the conceptual and intellectual framework we begin learning as children. The self-trust that Foley thinks we extend to generate proper other-trust already has other-trust underpinning it. From the quote, it seems that Foley catches a glimpse of the depth of trust we have in *others*, but he does not seem to recognize that, given all of this, the way he bases other-trust on self-trust becomes untenable. The ET we place in others is bound inextricably with the ET we have in ourselves and vice versa. His theory relies upon making a definite and neat relation going from proper self-trust to other-trust. But, if we consider the depth of this own comments as well as the lessons learned in the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 102.

Cognitive Function argument about the fundamental basis of other-trust early on, then it seems clear that such a neat relation makes no sense. Both kinds of ET are thoroughly enmeshed with each other and such an interweaving seems necessary. In short, Foley takes self-trust as the basis or foundation for other-trust, but we have very good reason to think both kinds of ET are fundamental for each other. Neither is the foundation for the other, since the epistemic growth he mentions relies upon other-trust as much as self-trust the entirety of our development. Thus, the foundation-picture he cannot provide an accurate account of proper ET. Really, the foundation (=self-trust) has a foundation in the very thing it is supposed to support (=other-trust).

Since Lehrer eschews this sort foundationalist approach to ET, one might think his view escapes this kind of criticism. After all, self-trust can support itself without any problems on his general coherentism background. However, even though the justification of self-trust turns back on itself and the rest of one's noetic system in good coherentist fashion, he makes it plain that the justification for proper other-ET lies in self-trust. His picture may be coherentist rather than foundationalist, but his theory of proper ET *simpliciter* relies on a relation of justificatory or epistemic priority extending from self-trust to other-trust. Thus, it still cannot account for the deep epistemic role other-trust plays as we develop into the cognitive agents that can do things like justify our epistemic practices. Accordingly, Lehrer's theory cannot do service to the temporally and intellectually co-temporal and congruent roles that other-trust and self-trust play in our cognition and the proper development thereof.

Although these issues are, to my lights, decisive, there is another argument that affects not only the specifics of Foley and Lehrer's views but that of any universalist

approach to ET. Universalists affirm that ET is proper ET when it is placed without there being negative or defeating evidence against the claim or trustee in question. The problem, in Duncan Pritchard's words, is that "[i]t takes experience to be good at detecting defeaters, and this is something that children lack."¹⁸⁷ Certain types of people, young children and adults that either suffer from cognitive defects or severe cognitive limitations, cannot *in principle* determine defeaters as one would hope for certain beliefs. In Pritchard's example, young children are not proficient at determining or weighing the proper defeaters for a belief in Santa Claus. If young children, then, cannot have defeaters for such belief, then a child's trust in St. Nick will always count as proper ET in principle and no matter the circumstances. For the record, I am more than willing to accept that some children's ET in Santa Claus has epistemic merit, at least I can imagine a set of circumstances in which such ET has intuitive plausibility. However, such trust should not count as proper just because children tend to be bad defeater-recognizers. Their ET should not count as proper *in principle* for some reason beyond their epistemic control or merit. Universalists, then, grant ET epistemically good status too easily in this case. Following Jennifer Lackey, such children satisfy the 'no-defeater' condition at the heart of universalism, but they satisfy it in a trivial way that makes light of it as a criterion for good epistemic standing.¹⁸⁸ Thus, in some situations, there must be more to proper ET than lacking a defeater and, so universalism as a general theory of ET cannot succeed.

There is one final argument against universalism that bears a resemblance to the argument above regarding the triviality of no-defeater universalist accounts. Consider,

¹⁸⁷ Pritchard, "The Epistemology of Testimony," 337.

¹⁸⁸ For Lackey's discussion of substantive and trivial satisfaction, see *Learning from Words: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 7, section 2.

for instance, a case modeled on John Wisdom's famous thought experiment of the Gardener.¹⁸⁹ Suppose that two people go into an unpopulated section of jungle and find an expertly maintained garden in its midst. The garden is such that, due to the kinds of flowers found and their maintenance, it would be *extremely* unlikely were this garden to spring up as a natural effect of its surrounding flora. Upon seeing this unlikely garden, one of the visitors concludes that there must be some expert gardener that keeps it. They set watch and no gardener comes to visit the garden. We, thus, have a defeater for the gardener-thesis. But the Believer offers what we can call a defeater-defeater—a defeater for the defeater itself. Let's suppose that the Believer modifies the claim to include the existence of an invisible gardener. Again, they test for body heat, footprints in mud, etc. and, again, they find no evidence that even an invisible gardener visits the garden. After each failed test, the Believer offers a reason to think that the failed test does *not* defeat belief in the gardener. Each failed test serves as a defeater for belief that there exists a gardener but, due to the Believer's cleverness, we also have a defeater for each defeater. The moral of the story is this: if one can be clever enough to think of (consistent) defeaters for each piece of negative evidence against the object of one's trust, Foley-styled ET is always rational. Provided that one can always rely on (consistent) defeater-defeaters, one can always satisfy the no-defeater (or, in this case, a "no undefeated defeater") condition for the rationality of ET. We have trivially rational ET but, this sort of trivial rationality can apply to people that have normal or even excellent cognitive function.

My view agrees with the universalist point that not all instances of proper ET come down to having positive evidence in favor of one's trust. Since I do not define

¹⁸⁹ Wisdom, "Gods," in *Logic and Language*, ed. Antony Flew (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952): 187-206..

proper ET in terms of possessing positive evidence, it would seem that my view counts as a kind of universalism. However, this is not the case, for it seems that *some* instances of proper ET will require evidence, even if not all such instances require it. This is because evidence plays a role in the function of many epistemic virtues, some of which work to obtain evidence, assess its force, and integrate it into one's general function. When circumstances call for the operation of these sorts of virtues, then evidence plays a huge role in the positive epistemic standing of ET. Universalism, then, is right to suggest that some instances of ET do not require positive evidence but the theory is wrong to claim that *no* instances of proper ET have such a requirement.

Both universalism and evidentialism, then, fail for the same reason: they get certain cases right about the possession or lack of positive evidence but they falsely apply this lesson to *all* instances of ET. My view accepts the need for evidence in *some* contexts but not all contexts—providing my account with a partial motive for each view but enough flexibility to account for situations where these theories break down. Thus, my view can accommodate where they get things right but also deny them where the view has difficulty.

Assurantism

There is a set of views on proper ET rising out of certain considerations regarding testimony from the philosophy of language.¹⁹⁰ These theories see testimony and, thus the ET grounded in it, as based upon an assurance a speaker gives in communicating some claim to the hearer. The reason, then, to place ET in this speaker comes down to the

¹⁹⁰ Indeed, it seems natural to think of philosophical concerns about testimony lying at the intersection of epistemology and philosophy of language.

assurance granting role in communicating rather than some evidence-based related (either positive or negative). Since it is the linguistic act of assuring upon which these views focus, I shall call theories of this type ‘assurantism.’

Richard Moran gives a Grice-based assurantism. He claims that

on the assurance view, dependence on someone’s freely assuming responsibility for the truth of P, presenting himself as a kind of guarantor, provides me with a characteristic reason to believe, different in kind from anything provided by the evidence alone.¹⁹¹

This passage makes several key points to Moran’s assurantism. First, the hearer/audience, by virtue of their dependence on a speaker, generates a kind of linguistic-cum-epistemological *responsibility* on the speaker/asserter that s/he make only true assertions. While my proposed account construes the ‘ethics of testimonial belief’ along virtue-theoretic lines, Moran’s view seems to work along deontological lines—by accounting for certain responsibilities or duties under which a speaker finds him/herself in making assertions. For Moran, the speaker *qua* “guarantor” has certain obligations to the audience that have epistemological significance. Second, the communication in question must not be just any instance of someone saying some declarative sentence. As Moran clarifies, “[t]elling someone something is not simply giving expression to what’s on your mind, but is making a statement with the understanding that here it is your word that is to be relied on.”¹⁹² Thus, Moran’s assurantism applies to a fairly restricted class of claims and beliefs. Finally, Moran clearly intends his view to have epistemological import: the speaker’s assurance provides the audience with a “*reason to believe*” that speaker’s words. Thus, when a speaker provides his/her assurance for P, then any hearer

¹⁹¹ Moran, “Getting Told and Being Believed,” in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, eds. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 279.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 280.

has some ‘reason’ (which I take to be an epistemic rather than pragmatic reason) to accept that speaker’s claim that P. Therefore, my ET in the speaker has some epistemic basis that is assurance-based rather than evidence-based. However, we need to see how the linguistic act of ‘telling’ actually generates some kind of responsibility for the teller.

Moran introduces Grice’s ‘non-natural meaning’ to make this case. For Grice, there is an important difference between ‘telling’ someone that P and “deliberately and openly letting someone know” that P.¹⁹³ On the latter instance, the speaker plays the epistemic role of conduit or guide—simply leading the audience to evidence for the truth of P.¹⁹⁴ But when this occurs, the speaker’s communication “isn’t doing any epistemological work of its own.”¹⁹⁵ However, Moran relies on the Gricean distinction between this evidence-based sort of communication and a genuine ‘telling’ (=‘non-natural meaning’).

For Grice, however, nothing can count as a case of non-natural meaning if the relevant belief could be expected to be produced whether or not the intention behind the action was recognized. The speaker must not only intend that the audience recognize his intention, but this recognition must itself *play a role* in inducing the belief in question, and that means that the recognition of the speaker’s intention must not be just as a matter of fact help in bringing about the relevant belief, but must be *necessary* to its inducement.¹⁹⁶ (emphasis his)

Thus, in a speaker’s ‘telling’ that P, s/he must recognize that by offering a Gricean ‘assurance’ of *p*, s/he plays a special role in the audience’s belief that *p*. That is, because the speaker has committed a certain assurance based act—that of ‘telling’—the speaker generates an obligation on him/herself to the object(s) of that act—the audience. Asserting or telling that *p* implies that the speaker *assures* the audience of the truth of P

¹⁹³ Ibid., 285-87.

¹⁹⁴ This is how Moran seems to view evidentialist approaches to ET.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 286.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 287.

in that assertion or telling. As a speaker takes on this role of ‘assurer,’ this role has certain obligations for the assurance itself. And, since the audience recognizes this role as ‘assurer’ *qua* ‘asserter,’ the audience has reason to accept the assertion itself. Therefore, we have a way to account for the ET an audience places in a speaker that does not rely on evidence, either positive or negative, or external reliability of the speaker.

Yet Moran’s account has a major problem: how to assess when the speaker *properly* gives assurances or when the speaker *appropriately* takes on responsibility for telling. Suppose that a visitor to a mental hospital hears a patient assert that all of Earth will be put under the rule of robots in two decades time. Now, the mental patient in question knows that s/he is a mental patient but, even so, asserts the apocalyptic claim with the clear intention that the visitor believe it. This certainly counts as a ‘telling’ on Moran’s view since, the speaker adopts an ‘assurer’ role in freely asserting some proposition with the intent that some audience accept it. I take it as obvious, though, if the visitor places ET in the mental patient’s dire warning, then such ET does not have much merit or value, epistemically speaking. Since speakers can either lie or make assertions incompetently even when they genuinely assure us of the truth, Moran’s “reason to believe” cannot distinguish such assured incompetent from assured competence. I can place my ET in the assurances of liars and incompetent speakers just as easily as competent, reliable assertors. And, Moran’s theory cannot distinguish my improper ET in the former from my (presumably) proper ET in the latter. Finally, I assume that if his theory cannot distinguish bad ET from good ET *in principle*, such a failure gives us more than adequate reason to reject his theory.

Paul Faulkner also gives an assurance-based account; one that aims to remedy this fault in Moran's. He accepts the assurance-based approach to 'tellings' but he thinks one needs to extend Moran's account by giving an account of when it is reasonable to trust in another's 'tellings.'¹⁹⁷ Faulkner offers an account of what he calls "affective trust." Here is his analysis:

A trusts S to ϕ (in the affective sense) if and only if
 (1) A knowingly depends upon S ϕ ing and
 (2) A expects S's knowing that A depends upon S ϕ ing to motivate S to ϕ
 (where A expects this in the sense that he expects it of S).¹⁹⁸

In extending trust to some speaker, one's dependence on him/her provides a motivation to act appropriately with respect to this dependence. In the case of ET, this dependence generates a motive to speak the truth (competently). Thus, on Faulkner's view, when I place ET in another, my ET itself carries with it a "presumption" that the trustee will speak truthfully and competently as a response to my dependence in so trusting.¹⁹⁹ Thus,

the claim is that the attitude of affective trust implies the presumption that the trusted is trustworthy: one cannot adopt this attitude without making this presumption. Since this presumption then makes the attitude of trust reasonable, through implying a presumption of trustworthiness affective trust gives rise to a motivating reason for itself, and in this limited way its reasonableness is *self-supporting*. (emphasis his)

Any extension of 'affective' trust, then, will imply a presumption that the trusted will satisfy the truster's dependence appropriately. When considering ET, the hearer's dependence (via ET itself) provides a motive for the speaker to be actually trustworthy as well as a presumption in the hearer that the speaker is trustworthy.

This presumption provides a motivating reason for accepting the speaker's telling in exactly the same way that the belief that the speaker is trustworthy would do. Affective trust, in providing a self-supporting

¹⁹⁷ Faulkner, "On Telling and Trusting," 878.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 882.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 888.

reason for itself, thereby provides a reason for accepting what a trusted speaker tells us.²⁰⁰

Since trust provides a presumption to believe the speaker, we always have some reason for this ET. The epistemological grounding of proper ET relies on the linguistics of the ‘telling’ and the motivation that my dependence has for the speaker. It is almost like my ET in *S* generates an obligation for *S* to speak the truth through my dependence.

Moran works through an assurance-based approach from the obligation that a speaker places on him/herself in taking on the role of ‘assurer.’ Faulkner, on the other hand, works through a presumption-based approach from the responsibility that a hearer’s dependence places on a speaker to “make good” on that speaker’s assurances. Both views, I suggest, want to analyze the epistemology of testimony (and, by extension, ET) through the assurances that a speaker gives in ‘telling’ someone something, but they differ on how the ‘telling’ generates epistemic responsibilities on the speaker to speak truthfully and with competence.

Jennifer Lackey has argued that assurantist views like those we see in Faulkner and Moran are “non-epistemic.”²⁰¹ This is because she thinks that “[t]aking responsibility for the truth of *p*, however, doesn’t affect reliability, proper functioning, truth-tracking, evidential relations, or any other feature relevant to the truth of *p*.”²⁰² Lackey is correct in her assessment of assurantism but not quite for the reasons that she gives. She mistakes the proper target for her charge of assurantism being non-epistemic. Responsibility can certainly be non-epistemic and, perhaps even non-epistemic for an epistemological theory, so long as it eventually terminates in some decidedly epistemic

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 888-889.

²⁰¹ *Learning From Words*, 226-228.

²⁰² Ibid., 228.

standard, condition or criterion. Assurantism seems to do so: the real basis of the account is the “reason for belief” that a speaker’s responsibility for the truth generates. On both views above, it is not responsibility *simpliciter* that does the work in the epistemology of testimony but, instead, it is the way that such responsibility gives an audience a reason for belief. And, certainly a “reason for belief” must be an epistemic standard, at least as assurantism would propose. But, here is where Lackey’s *real* target should lie. We must ask: in what way are these reasons for belief *epistemic*? What kind of *epistemic* value can these reasons have such that this value does not imply that assurantism will not reduce to some other theory? The reasons here cannot be evidential or simply truth-conducive, for then assurantism would simple reduce to evidentialism or reliabilism, respectively. These reasons, if they are to function in an *epistemology* of testimony, must be some hybrid epistemic-cum-pragmatic-cum-linguistic feature and, if so, it seems remarkably hard to see how they relate to standards appropriate for knowledge or justification without appealing to the purely epistemic criteria (e.g. evidence, reliability, and so on) that these views explicitly eschew. Thus, I conclude with Lackey that assurantism is non-epistemic but for reasons slightly different than her own.

Conclusion

We have thus determined that these other views of ET (or ET-related features) do not succeed. Reliabilist accounts of ET fall victim to the anti-luck arguments in Chapter 1 against reliability or success conditions. Reliabilism will also permit cases of ET that are intuitively inappropriate and reject instances that are intuitively appropriate. Evidentialist approaches to ET either have problems with skeptical worries or tenuous linguistic bases

for the *a priori* grounds for proper ET. Universalist theories have problems with self-trust/other-trust relation and the trivial satisfaction of no (undefeated) defeater clauses. And, assurantism has problems moving from linguistic accounts of testimony to providing decidedly epistemic bases for testimonial beliefs. So, it would seem that my account of ET gains traction not only in the positive arguments for it but also in the worries that inflict its competitors. Accordingly, we have good reasons to accept that a virtue theoretic model of ET provides not only a *plausible* account of ET but an *attractive* one as well.

CHAPTER 5

FAITH AS A SPECIES OF EPISTEMIC TRUST

The previous chapters in this work have all lead up to my next two chapters, providing the background, conceptual foundation, and required argumentation for the main thesis I shall develop here and the central claim in Chapter 6. Thus, Chapters 5 and 6 will presuppose and incorporate the major concepts (e.g. epistemic virtue, ET, etc.) and the major arguments found in earlier chapters. I shall defend one major thesis in this chapter: religious faith is a *species* of ET. The overall goal in this work is to develop and defend a virtue-theoretic account of faith. To accomplish that I need to establish faith's connection to ET and, using that connection, argue that faith is an act of epistemic virtue. Thus, my claim in this chapter provides a necessary component to my contention that faith is an act of epistemic virtue in the next chapter. So, I shall motivate such a virtue-theoretic approach to religious epistemology and lay the framework of this chapter by providing some general comments on faith. From there, we can clarify the relation of having faith-in to ET—arguing that such faith is a species of ET. Finally, I shall argue for the adequacy of my view of faith and defend it from alternative accounts inconsistent with my own. Since this chapter begins my virtue-theoretic approach to religious epistemology, let us investigate what motivates such an account.

Need for a Virtue-Theoretic Account of Faith

There is a crucial role this work plays in the discussions of religious belief, faith, and religious epistemology in general. One can see large parts of contemporary religious epistemology reflecting debates in non-religious epistemology. The intellectual ‘war’ between Reformed epistemologists and religious evidentialists, to my lights, tracks the debate between evidentialists (*simpliciter*) and epistemic externalists.²⁰³ Debates among philosophers of religion about various topics in religious epistemology have either tracked or inspired/informed various topics in epistemology proper (e.g. the epistemology of testimony, disagreement, pragmatic considerations involving belief, and a host of others). My point here is rather simple: religious epistemology is a branch of epistemology proper and, thus, the developments of the latter spur (or are spurred by) developments in the former. Thus, one should expect, and perhaps even *require* from a theoretical point of view, a devoted and systematic virtue-theoretical approach to religious epistemology. The rise of interest in and work upon virtue epistemology, one would expect, should give rise to interest in and work on a *religious* virtue epistemology. But, such an account (like I develop herein) is lacking.

This not to say that no philosopher argues that faith is an epistemic virtue, for two contemporary philosophers, Kenneth Kemp and Paul Moser, have made just that claim.²⁰⁴ These two philosophers aside, most of the talk about faith as a virtue has focused on *moral* or (usually following Aquinas) *theological* virtues. However, even though Moser

²⁰³ For collections of articles used as ammunition in this ‘war,’ see: *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991) and *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, ed. Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

²⁰⁴ See Kemp’s “The Virtue of Faith in Theology, Natural Science, and Philosophy,” *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 4 (October 1998): 462-477 and Moser, *The Evidence for God: Religious Knowledge Reexamined* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 106.

and Kemp claim that faith can be an intellectual virtue, neither gives a *systematic* approach that is modeled on a *distinctive* virtue epistemology. Kemp's point of departure is a straightforward Aristotelian/Thomistic virtue theory and Moser's claim that faith can be "cognitively virtuous" simply reduces to claims about an agent possessing evidence for that belief. And, I take it that, if some theory accounts for epistemic virtues only insofar as it reduces such virtues to evidence, this hardly counts as a *virtue* epistemology. Rather, it is an evidentialism that simply defines what counts as intellectual excellences. And even though Kemp offers no evidentialist approach, his arguments offers no systematic approach to faith *qua* (act of) virtue. His view accepts the tradition uncritically and does not inform his account by an *epistemological* considerations—only those from the generic virtue theories of Aristotle and Aquinas. Thus, neither Moser nor Kemp offer us a virtue epistemology of faith—Moser lacks the 'virtue' aspect and Kemp lacks the 'epistemology' aspect. So, even when we find philosophers explicitly stating that faith is cognitively or intellectually virtuous, these claims do not satisfy the gap in religious epistemology that we should expect a decidedly virtue-theoretic approach should fill. This work is my attempt to fill in that gap by providing a systematic and robustly aretaic approach to epistemic considerations regarding faith. But before we can do *that*, we must clarify 'faith' to some extent.

General Comments about Faith

Let me be clear about a few points at the beginning. I do not think and would argue against the view that any alleged or self-proclaimed act (or belief) of faith necessarily satisfies as genuine or robust faith. If faith really is an act of virtue, as I argue

in Chapter 6, then one's beliefs, dispositions, motives, etc. must satisfy certain criteria (discussed earlier) in order to have that status. Not all alleged acts of trust are in fact good and not all beliefs based in ET *simpliciter* have positive epistemic status. In both a moral and epistemic sense, one can place trust inappropriately as well as appropriately. Hence, not all claims to trust (in either sense) will entail that such trust is *well placed*. We should expect the same result for faith, too.

No doubt, the general term "faith" is ambiguous.²⁰⁵ So, I want to do a bit of stipulating in hopes of avoiding potential confusions. My account concerns *religious* faith. Some thinkers play somewhat loose with the term "faith" and use it in a sense that has no real religious content. I am thinking of Karl Jasper's "philosophical faith,"²⁰⁶ Santayana's "animal faith,"²⁰⁷ Schubert Ogden's "existential faith,"²⁰⁸ and Annette Baier's "secular faith,"²⁰⁹ among others. Typically, these uses of the term "faith" work more like uses of a deep trust in some person, position, attitude, conceptual framework, or something else deeply significant for a person. As we shall see below, the close connection between certain uses of 'faith' and 'trust' make non-religious uses of the term 'faith' intelligible, it is nevertheless prudent to avoid against conceptual slippage. So, let me stipulate that by the term 'faith'—in any senses used herein—I mean '*religious* faith.' But we shall have cause to discuss the 'religious' modifier in more detail later.

Another major point comes directly from Chapter 2. At the beginning of that chapter, I wanted to be clear about what sense of the term 'trust' I did *not* intend. There,

²⁰⁵ For an introduction into just *how* ambiguous, see William Lad Sessions' catalogue in *The Concept of Faith: A Philosophical Investigation* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), 7-10.

²⁰⁶ Developed in his *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, trans. E. B. Aston (London: Collins, 1967).

²⁰⁷ Developed in his *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy* (New York: Scribner's, 1923).

²⁰⁸ See his *On Theology* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1992), Ch. 4 and *The Reality of God* (Dallas: SMU Press, 1992), Ch. 2.

²⁰⁹ Baier, "Secular Faith," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1980): 131-148.

I distinguish between trust-*that* and trust-*in*; the former, ‘thin’ use reducing to propositional belief and the latter having a ‘richer’ content that includes an affective/attitudinal element.²¹⁰ We see a parallel usage in the term ‘faith.’²¹¹ We can say that *S* has faith that *p* as well as *S* has faith in *H*. Many philosophers will call this former usage “propositional faith,” and I shall follow their lead here.²¹² My view of faith, like my view of ET, will include a belief component but, also like ET, it would be a severe mistake to think that faith *simpliciter* is exhaustively propositional or simply reducible to a set of propositional beliefs. There is an affective/attitudinal component to faith-in precisely as there is to trust-in and, therefore, the ‘thinner’ sense of faith-that will not suffice for faith *simpliciter* just as trust-that will not suffice for trust *simpliciter*. In what follows, my use of the term ‘faith’ is restricted to the ‘richer’ or ‘thicker’ notion of faith-in (unless explicitly stated otherwise). People may use the ambiguous term ‘faith’ however they wish, but I want to make clear that *I* mean only the specific (and I think, more philosophically/religiously interesting) usage of the term as having faith-in whenever I use the term ‘faith’ in what follows (unless explicitly stated otherwise).

But there is another sense of ‘faith’ at odds with my intended usage here—a usage that philosophers are also apt to distinguish from faith-in. Often we can say something of the form: “Jones is a member of X faith.” This usage identifies Jones (or a person in general) as a member of some religion, religious group, or sect. We might call this

²¹⁰ That affective/attitudinal element became the dependence and confidence conditions we saw necessary in defining ‘ET.’

²¹¹ Indeed, we can bear in mind here the old distinction between *credo que* and *credo in*.

²¹² Though some philosophers use the term “propositional faith” in a way consistent with the person of faith holding no beliefs at all. See, e.g., Robert Audi’s “The Dimensions of Faith and the Demands of Reason,” in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 75; “Faith, Belief, and Rationality,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 5 (1991), pp. 215-218; and “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 63 (2008), pp. 92-93.

“creedal”²¹³ or “doctrinal”²¹⁴ faith. Creedal/doctrinal faith is simply propositional faith ‘writ large’ (so to speak). This use of the term simply locates one’s religious propositional beliefs pertinent to religious categorizing. Thus, to speak of one’s totality of religious beliefs (or lack thereof) still belongs to the ‘thinner’ sense of faith-that rather than the thicker sense of faith-in. Josef Pieper says of this that the “man [who has mere propositional faith] would then regard the content of...religious doctrines as true, but...in a different way from that of [faith].”²¹⁵ Creedal faith simply denotes sets of propositional faith and, as such, does not suffice for our concerns here.

Faith and Epistemic Trust

Many philosophers (and, I suspect, most people) strongly associate faith and trust. And I think this is correct. In particular, I shall argue that (religious) faith (in) is a species of ET as we defined in Chapter 2. In order to show that faith is a species of ET, I must first show that trust works as the genus of faith (in). I have two sorts of procedures in mind here, but I do not think a direct argument for this claim can be given. The reason is that I find the claim, “faith (in) is a form of trust” *intuitively obvious* and I should not understand anyone’s use of either concept in a different way. But, I shall not let this major point rely upon my bare intuition or even bare folk intuition; too much hangs upon this claim. The first procedure I have in mind is an appeal to the general *philosophical* discussions about faith. I shall also discuss how seeing faith as a kind of trust can explain certain ambiguities of ‘faith’ that can be coalesced together. As far as philosophers of

²¹³ See Audi, “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” 92-93.

²¹⁴ See Audi, “The Dimensions of Faith and the Demands of Reason,” 75-76.

²¹⁵ Pieper, *Faith, Hope, Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 31. The English translation of the text puts the last term as “belief” rather than “faith,” but Pieper’s original German (*Glaube*) means either. And since the context of his discussion is explicitly *religious*, I find “faith” more precise and appropriate here.

religion go, they tend to connect faith and trust conceptually.²¹⁶ The claims from the philosophical literature might be viewed as data inviting explanation and the explanation would just be the close conceptual connection between faith and trust. Instead of a mass of citations alone, I shall emphasize just a view specific claims that are particularly pertinent.

In, “Two Levels of Faith and Reason,” Charles Hartshorne claims that “faith in general is trust, and this means, doing our part in the system of things with confidence that the rest of the system will do its part.”²¹⁷ Hartshorne’s explicit claim here places ‘faith’ under the general heading of trust and, as further evidence for my own account, connects them both to confidence. I have clearly defined ET using confidence (in Chapter 2) and, if I am right that faith is a species of ET, then confidence will feature prominently in faith as well.²¹⁸ Paul Moser also remarks that “we may treat ‘faith in God,’ ‘trust in God,’ and ‘belief in God’ as *interchangeable phrases*...” (emphasis mine) with the implication that his view, like my own, draws a very close conceptual connection between faith and trust.²¹⁹ Even Robert Audi, who is careful to distinguish

²¹⁶ For others who closely link trust and faith, see: Robert M. Adams “The Virtue of Faith”; Keith E. Yandell’s ‘monotheistic faith’ in “The Nature of Faith,” *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 4 (October 1990): 451-469; William Lad Session’s ‘personal relationship model’ in *The Concept of Faith*; Terence Penelhum in *Reason and Religious Faith* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 72-74; Bernd Lahno in “On the Emotional Character of Trust,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, vol. 4 (2001): 171-189; Eric O. Springsted, *The Act of Faith: Christian Faith and the Moral Self* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002); Annette Baier in “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 233; F.R. Tennant, “Faith,” in *Faith*, ed. Terrence Penelhum, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1989), 99; C. Stephen Evans, *Faith Beyond Reason* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 4; Josef Pieper, op. cit., 31; John Bishop, *Believing by Faith: An Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 105; Kenneth Kemp, op. cit., p. 466; H. Richard Niebuhr, “On the Nature of Faith,” in *Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 97-98; and William P. Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith” in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality*, eds. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1996), 13.; among many others.

²¹⁷ Hartshorne, “Two Levels of Faith and Reason,” *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 1948), 30.

²¹⁸ More on the relation between faith and confidence below.

²¹⁹ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 91.

discrete kinds of faith, claims that the “term ‘fiducial’ goes with the notion of trust. Trust has been rightly considered an important element in faith. You cannot have faith in a person you do not trust.”²²⁰ It is telling that trust seems present in all of Audi’s usages of faith, especially when he claims that these different kinds of faith are distinct. In a similar vein, J. L. Schellenburg argues that “trust...must be present in all forms of religion. Whenever the religious person acts in pursuit of a religious way, she necessarily trusts in the ultimate reality she associates with its destination...”²²¹ Finally, and most pertinent for my own concerns here, Paul Helm says that

religious trust, the fiducial aspect of faith, is *univocal with trust in other contexts*. What distinguishes religious faith from faith in other things is the distinctive object of such faith, and the reasons that one has for exercising such faith and that alone.²²² (emphasis mine)

Now, I am not certain about the differences between faith and (non-religious) trust he gives,²²³ but the way he views the generic relation of faith and trust here aligns perfectly with my own—faith is simply a *kind* of trust or, alternatively, trust is the *genus* of faith. Thus, I take it we have good *philosophically* intuitive grounds to think that trust forms the genus of faith.

My view here also explains how the term ‘faith’ can be ambiguous in the first place. Consider an extended example—one widely known and upon which many philosophers have commented: the threefold distinction of “faith” into Latin as *fides*, *fiducia*, and *fidelitas*.²²⁴ If I am right about the relation of trust and faith, we can explain how the single English term can be rendered as any of these three terms in Latin or all of

²²⁰ Audi, “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” 96.

²²¹ Schellenburg, *op. cit.*, 123.

²²² Helm, *Faith with Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 119.

²²³ In fact, I shall argue for a somewhat different set of differentiae below.

²²⁴ I am not giving an argument by etymology here. Rather I am simply appealing to a cluster of concepts that my view about trust and faith can explain (if I am right).

them at once. *Fides* has roots in both belief and trust. This makes perfect sense if faith is a species of trust. *Fiducia* has conceptual ties to certain notions like trust (quasi-explicitly), reliance and confidence, among others. Again, if faith is a kind of trust, we should see aspects of trust like reliance and confidence occur in the concept of faith, and *fiducia* confirms this. Finally, *fidelitas* is loyalty, faithfulness, or fidelity. To have *fidelitas* is to be loyal or faithful to someone or something and, if you trust *in* someone, you have a kind of loyalty to him/her. If the trust is *moral* in the sense then, if I trust you to *do* something, I am faithful to your competency and motives with respect to the action in question. If the trust is *epistemic*, then I am loyal/faithful to you as an epistemic authority with respect to the topic in question. *Fidelitas qua* loyalty connects closely with trust/faith through the key notions of having confidence in the object of one's trust (or loyalty). So, again, if we take these Latin distinctions as data (as we took various philosopher's comments on faith and trust), we find a very plausible explanation in my view that faith is a kind of trust.

Now, we can move on to the second procedure to argue that faith is a kind/species of trust. We can simply reflect on our account of ET from Chapter 2 and determine if faith can satisfy it. Thus, we will ensure that the conceptually necessary components in ET will be present in faith as well. And, *a fortiori*, faith satisfies the sufficient conditions for ET as well; implying that it is (a kind of) ET. Let us remind ourselves of the analysis of ET there to see if faith fits it. Recall from Chapter 2 that:

H places ET in *S* that *p* iff:

- (1) *H* believes that *p*.
- (2) *H* takes *S* to communicate that *p*.

(3) *H* depends upon *S*'s (perceived) communication for *H*'s belief that *p*.

(4) *H* takes *S* to be in a (good epistemic) position to communicate that *p* with warrant.

From this definition and its related discussion, we obtain a few conditions that must hold of faith:

(A) Faith is triadic or a three place predicate—i.e. of the form *Thsp*. (This follows from the general form of ET.)

(B) Faith involves propositional belief. (From condition (1) above.)

(C) Faith has a person as its object or faith treats its object *as though it were a person*. (From the trust in/that distinction and communicating subject of (2) above.)

(D) Faith involves a perceived act of communication from its personal object. (From condition (2) above.)

(E) Faith involves depending or relying on the object of faith. (From condition (3) above.)

(F) Faith involves being confident in the object of faith. (From condition (4) above.)

(G) Faith involves seeing the object as authoritative and that one comes under that object's authority. (From discussions of (3) and (4) in ET.)

Let us take these conditions one by one and apply them to having faith in someone.

Faith as a triadic property—(A)—does not seem problematic, provided that we keep the strict sense of faith-*in* clear. Merely propositional faith (i.e. faith-that) features only the person of faith and the proposition—making it a dyadic or two-place predicate.

But, faith-in includes more than just a person that has faith and a proposition; it includes an object of faith, too. Thus, faith will turn out to be a triadic property or three-place predicate just as ET.

(B): a propositional element in faith has a good track record from philosophers of religion.²²⁵ It is in this sense that faith-in *S*—much like trust-in *S*—requires some beliefs about the object of faith (minimally that the object of trust actually exists). And, I suggest, accepting (B) makes good sense because it explains how faith can have an epistemic, cognitive, or doxastic element. Faith is more than just a belief (as I argued in distinguishing faith-in from faith-that), but it seems quite plausible to think that there must be *some* kind of epistemic or doxastic component involved. Faith is, after all, a way accepting certain religious principles, views, frameworks, or what have you. In what or whom one places one's faith seems to mean a lot for one's cognitive and epistemic approach to the world. Of course, as with what seems to be all interesting philosophical claims, not everyone agrees. But, we shall bracket these non-doxastic views of faith (i.e. those that reject (B) here) for later on in this chapter.²²⁶

(C) expresses the idea that faith (in) must have a *personal* object. Not all kinds of objects suffice as proper objects of faith. Moser accents this implication of faith-in nicely: “[i]n particular, faith in God relates one to *God*, and not to just a judgment or a proposition about God” (emphasis his).²²⁷ And Moser is not alone in his acceptance of (C).²²⁸ In fact, I would argue that the personal-object criterion here motivates our

²²⁵ See, e.g., Anthony Kenny, *What is Faith: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47; Kenneth Kemp, op. cit., 466; and Moser, *The Elusive God: Reorienting Religious Epistemology*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 2008), 74; among others.

²²⁶ See pages 161-172 below.

²²⁷ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 93.

²²⁸ See Kenny, op. cit., 50 and Kemp, op. cit., 466.

distinction between trust-in and trust-that as well as faith-in and faith-that and we see this motive reflected in Moser's comment above. The personal-object element of faith-in just is what makes it richer than mere faith-that. So, given that we have good grounds to distinguish this 'thicker' from 'thinner' sense of faith, we have good grounds to accept (C).

And, I think (D), expressing the communicational element in faith, works nicely with our thoughts in accepting (C). If we have some *person* as the object of faith (or ET), then it makes sense to think of that person's (perceived) acts of communication as the ground upon which one places faith in the object.²²⁹ The act of communication here is what connects the person of faith to the person doing the communicating. And, again, we highlight a feature of which philosophers already take note. Thus, Anthony Kenny: "[f]aith...is a correlate of revelation; for faith to be possible it must be possible to identify something as the word of God."²³⁰ This seems a clear acceptance that faith involves an act of communication and explains how important the notion of revelation becomes to religious faith.²³¹

Now we begin the distinctively affective aspects of trust and ET; i.e., what we shall say about faith and reliance/dependence. Again, it seems that (E) looks exceptionally plausible. As with every other condition so far, we see a connection between faith and reliance/dependence occur frequently in philosophical discussions of

²²⁹ As with ET, I am not convinced that the object of faith must necessarily *intend* to communicate something in order for one to place one's faith in that person. I suspect this is far less likely than with cases of ET, but I at least want to leave the possibility open. Let the 'perceived' modifier work *sotto voce* when I speak of 'communication' *simpliciter* in what follows.

²³⁰ Kenny, *op. cit.*, 47.

²³¹ In fact, the topic of revelation will form a part of the discussion in Chapter 7. Let us bracket this important notion for the time being and leave a more sustained examination for then.

faith.²³² I shall only use a couple of particularly interesting comments. Moser explains that faith is “a receptive response of volitional commitment to God’s call heard by a person. It includes the person’s *willing reliance...on...God*” (emphasis his).²³³ I cite Moser here specifically because he connects reliance with the act of communication we discussed in (D). If we accept an act of communication, then it makes sense to say that we *rely* or *depend* upon the communicator for that act. Hence, if we accept (D), we have good reason to accept (E) as well. Paul Helm connects reliance, faith, and trust together.

Belief becomes faith when...the one who has these beliefs actually entrusts himself, *relying* upon the one the evidential beliefs identify and characterize, and engages in trust for the goods in question.²³⁴ (emphasis mine)

Whereas Moser’s comments connect reliance and faith, Helm’s analysis connects all of the major concepts we have discussed so far. Again, we have very good reason to accept (E) as an important aspect of faith.

Confidence forms a large part of our analysis of ET in Chapter 2 and, if I am going to make my claim here about the relation of faith to ET stand, I must be able to show that confidence forms a large part of faith as well. I think we can make an excellent case for (F). Typically, philosophers’ discussions of faith get merged with talk of authority (our next condition), but there is a good bit of discussion about how faith requires attitudes of competency, goodwill, and supposing the object of faith as trustworthy—which I take to be various ways of cashing out an attitude of confidence

²³² See, e.g., Pieper, *op. cit.*, 45; Sessions, *op. cit.*, 31; Schellenburg, *op. cit.*, 110; and Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, 98; among others.

²³³ *The Evidence for God*, 110.

²³⁴ *Faith with Reason*, 16

towards someone.²³⁵ Robert M. Adams, in particular, emphasizes the point here: “[t]he certitude of faith has much more to do with the *confidence*, or freedom from fear, which is partly an emotional state, than it has to do with judgments of certainty or great probability in any evidential sense” (emphasis mine).²³⁶ I cite Adams’ comments because they connect faith via confidence to the affective or attitudinal element in faith-in (beyond mere propositional faith). We discussed the emotional core of confidence in Chapter 3 as a kind of affectively-loaded way of “seeing” someone or something. It is that emotional basis that provides the affective component to ET and, following Adams, we see the same component in faith as well. I conclude that we good reason to accept (F).

(G), our final condition, lies at the juncture of reliance/dependence and confidence. In Chapter 2, we saw that confidence relates to seeing someone as *epistemically authoritative*—i.e. a person of expertise appropriate for believing and trusting. And the reliance aspect of ET, combined with the confidence aspect, leads us accept this person as authoritative *for us*—i.e. we come ‘under’ his/her epistemic authority insofar as we depend upon this person’s (perceived) expertise or authority. Thus, talk about authority is just the intertwining of the reliance and confidence aspects of ET. And, since we already have reason to accept the same of faith, we have reason to accept the close connection between faith and authority. This is another conceptual relation often recognized by philosophers of religion.²³⁷

²³⁵ See, e.g., Schellenburg, op. cit., 110-111; Audi, “Faith, Belief and Rationality,” 217; and Niebuhr, op. cit., 99.

²³⁶ Adams, op. cit., 18.

²³⁷ E.g., Sessions, op. cit., 31; Pieper, op. cit., 31; and Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 110.

The upshot from the all of this seems to be that faith adequately satisfies all of the important conditions and concepts involved in ET and, furthermore, this satisfaction is not trivial. Various parts of the analysis of faith here hang together and lead to other parts in the same way that such conditions did for ET in Chapter 2. The close fit beyond mere satisfaction I take to be yet more evidence (and quite strong evidence, at that) for my main contention in this section: namely, that faith is a kind of ET. So, I shall take that point as established and move on to the next. Here, we need to ask the question: *what kind of ET is faith?* What differentiates faith from other expressions or instances of ET? Basically, now that we have the genus of ‘faith,’ what is the differentia?

What Kind of Epistemic Trust is Faith?

It might be tempting here to say that faith is simply ET with a *religious* belief occupying the first condition in the definition of ET from ET. This certainly seems to be Paul Helm’s view in a quotation cited earlier where he claims that the *only* difference between faith and trust in other context is that faith has a *religious* object. My response has some complexity to it. In general, I am apt to disagree here, but I can see myself agreeing depending upon what Helm thinks that the “religious” modifier means for trust (=faith). I shall propose two sets of differentiae here (*pace* Helm) but I shall not rule out that they remain separate on closer analysis—it all depends upon your philosophical analysis of what “religious belief” *qua* religious involves and I shall not delve too deeply into all of that.

One important difference—the first component of my differentia—agrees with Helm. There is something distinctive about faith as opposed to trust because the former

and not the latter necessarily involves religious content. At the outset of this chapter, I mentioned a few thinkers who would not agree with my claim here; arguing that there are instances of non-religious faith. But I think this is simply slippery use of concepts and terms—one can capture a great deal of what people mean by “secular” or “non-religious” faith by trust. That is, I think the close connection between trust and religious faith (for which I argued in the previous section) can often be so close that people tend to miss that there’s a difference at all. So, let us agree with Helm here and say that, in part, what differentiates faith from ET is that the former necessarily has a religious component to the belief in question. So stated, we see that this difference applies only to the propositional element of faith (and ET) and the problem is that there seem to be differences in more than just the categories of beliefs involved.

But faith differs from mundane ET more than by simply the *kinds of propositions* involved in belief. Appealing to “religious” as a difference above invites analysis regarding what *exactly* “religious” means. I do not attempt to define “religious” since that would require a definition of “religion.” This latter concern is far beyond the scope of the current work.²³⁸ But Audi emphasizes two features in the psychology of belief that have an important bearing here—entrenchment and centrality.²³⁹ These features give ways to differentiate faith from ‘run of the mill’ ET.

First, “entrenchment is a matter of how ‘rooted’ the belief is, where rootedness is understood in terms of how much is required to eliminate it.”²⁴⁰ That is, a belief is deeply entrenched when removing it from one’s noetic structure or system of beliefs

²³⁸ Though Schellenburg, *op. cit.*, 23-37 and Yandell, *op. cit.*, 451 do a nice job in their analyses of what a religion is.

²³⁹ Audi, “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” 89. He also has a third feature of belief—intensity—that I do not think distinguishes faith from ET. Hence, I omit it here.

²⁴⁰ Audi, *ibid.*

would involve a lot of work. We might understand this “work” in terms of strong evidence, indirect monitoring of one’s doxastic states, one’s cognitive dispositions, or some other such criterion. But, the salient point for us is that religious beliefs *qua* religious are typically deeply entrenched. There is an important point about what typifies a religion to explain entrenchment. Schellenburg characterizes a religion as “ultimizing.”²⁴¹ A religion presents a conceptual framework and/or a way of life that somehow claims to capture what is of *ultimate* significance about existence. Our religious beliefs (or lack thereof) tend to track the ultimizing work done by religious principles and, therefore, to relinquish these beliefs requires relinquishing one’s handle on what is ultimately significant. Those kinds of commitments, I would imagine, do not easily fade or change.

Given all of this, there seems no reason to think that all ET-based beliefs need be deeply entrenched. I can, for instance, ask for directions of a stranger when I am in a new city. I can place my ET in this person and believe what s/he tells me. But my belief in question might be easily shaken. If someone overhears the directions and remarks: “this person is wrong, you need to go *this* way...” my belief might be easily removed. So, we have reason to think that religious beliefs are typically (if not necessarily) deeply entrenched whereas this is not the case for all beliefs from ET whatsoever.

Audi also says that certain beliefs are “central” to our noetic structure. On his view, “[c]entrality is a matter of how influential the belief is in the person’s psychology, especially the belief system but also behavioral tendencies.”²⁴² A belief is central, in this sense, if its removal would wreak psychological and behavior instability. And, probably,

²⁴¹ Schellenburg, op. cit., 12.

²⁴² Audi, *ibid.*

the ultimizing aspect of religion makes religious beliefs typically central. That is, religious beliefs structure what you think is ultimately significant or valuable in life and what we find significant has tremendous implications for other beliefs, moral commitments, moral actions, and our general way of life. Removing our beliefs about what is deeply valuable, then, has wide-ranging impacts on our noetic structure as a whole as well as our dispositions and commitments. For these reasons, it would seem that one's faith leads to forming beliefs central to one's noetic structure.

As we see from the directions example above, not all ET-based beliefs need be central either. My belief in stranger's directions may be important but it is probably not central. I can remove this belief from my noetic structure without a tremendous amount of intellectual chaos, doxastic revision, and moral upheaval. Thus, we have seen that faith in typically (or perhaps necessarily) remains central to one's belief system and that this general centrality does not hold for all ET-based beliefs.

We have an explanation for all of this available to us from what we have already discussed. Faith *qua* religious involves a confidence in something (or, more precisely, someone) that gives one's life and all of existence significance—an "ultimizing" ground to keep Schellenburg's terminology. That confidence provides one with a belief system or conceptual framework by which one understands the whole of reality and a way of life by which one lives, judges, and acts in the most significant of ways. It would be far more surprising if this kind of confidence in an 'ultimate' did *not* give rise to entrenched, central beliefs. One's religion *qua* ultimate can often provide a large part of one's cognitive, moral, and emotional outlook and, because of the importance of that outlook, one's faith connects to one's deepest commitments and most fundamental sense of self.

It is easy to talk about entrenchment and centrality in terms of discrete propositional beliefs, but it is important to see just *why* beliefs like that tend to be central and entrenched. That ‘why,’ I am suggesting, works in the relation between the confidence of faith and the ‘ultimizing’ object of such confidence. This explanation accounts for *why* faith (in) is a *different kind of trust* than other ET-based beliefs and occurs as a consequence of those vital concepts we discussed earlier.

So, I suggest here that the addition of having a religious object, involving deep entrenchment, and centrality of belief distinguish faith from other instances of ET. They explain why one’s faith typically goes to the root of one’s belief system as well as being action-guiding in terms of ultimate significance. But, even when we put it in terms of simple beliefs, the emphasis should remain that the core explanation here comes from faith being a *deep way of placing one’s ET in a person* that serves as an ‘ultimizing’ ground. This depth of trust, placed in a religious object seems adequate to distinguish faith from other instances or expressions of ET. Now that we have (finally) arrived at our account of faith, we must determine if it is an adequate one.

The Adequacy of Virtue-Theoretic Faith

I shall argue in this section for the adequacy of the view above—namely, that faith is a kind of ET (expressed deeply with a religious object, etc.). I shall pursue two distinct lines of argument. First, I shall appeal to three criteria given by J. L. Schellenburg to determine the adequacy of any account of faith and show that my view satisfies these criteria. And, second, I shall survey some alternate accounts of faith and argue that they are lacking. Let me be clear about this second procedure: I am *not*

arguing that any adequate utterance of or sentence containing “faith” must conform to my view. I have already admitted that ‘faith’ is tremendously vague and often ambiguous. But, I do contend that my *philosophical* account of “having *faith-in*” (given the stipulations from the beginning of this chapter) is correct and other accounts face serious worries. Thus, my arguments there do not attempt to show anything about any usage of the term ‘faith’ (*simpliciter*) but only of the restricted usage I have given in this chapter.

John Schellenburg says that “we can identify three plausible criteria against which interpretations of that nature of faith can be assessed.”²⁴³ I take these as useful standards to judge the adequacy of an account of faith and I shall argue my view satisfies them. His criteria are:

- (1) “an account of the term ‘faith’ should make sense of, fit with, or accommodate the broad patterns...of that term’s ordinary usage.”
- (2) “an account of ‘faith’ should preserve in as robust a form as possible the notion that faith is voluntary and potentially meritorious.”
- (3) “an account of ‘faith’ should be religiously and philosophically illuminating and fruitful—that is, it should cohere with much else that we are inclined to say in philosophy of religion and help to clear up puzzling matters in this discipline, and it should also take or thinking about philosophy of religion further in interesting and important ways.”²⁴⁴

Aside from the obvious point that (3) is a nest of criteria rather than a single criterion, I find these criteria a useful place to begin a defense of my account. I take (1) to require that a decent account of faith should explain the relevant data well. And, in this case, the data in question would be how that term makes sense in its general use. If a theory can explain how a concept works in everyday use better than another, then I take that

²⁴³ Schellenburg, op. cit., 128.

²⁴⁴ Schellenburg, *ibid.*

explanation to could in favor of the theory.²⁴⁵ (3), too, functions as an explanatory criterion. I assume that if a theory explains the *philosophical* use of a term and can solve/illumine issues for the field at the same time, then such points also count in favor of that theory. The second condition has less universal of a background. The notion behind (2), I suggest, is that religious traditions typically consider having faith a *good* thing and something for which one is religiously praised. And, I would think, it is the notion of praise here that makes voluntariness important. Given these fairly minimal assumptions from the religious traditions, we have good theological reason to think that (2) can serve as an important criterion for the adequacy of a theory of faith.

Earlier, I argued that faith is a kind of ET and, in doing so, I appealed to a wide range of philosophical claims made about faith: e.g. it involves a personal object, confidence, reliance, and others. Also, I appealed to our common-sense connection of faith and trust—a connection that seems plainly obvious to me. So, it seems like I have already satisfied (1) for both common-sense usage of ‘faith’ as well as the ordinary *philosophical* usage of the term. (2) provides no difficulty for my view since faith is a species of ET *qua* epistemic virtue. Virtues are both voluntary and meritorious. Hence, if faith is a species of ET, we can easily satisfy (2).

(3) requires more work. If we read through (3), we really get the criteria that faith should:

(3a) cohere with what philosophers of religion are inclined to say about it

(3b) clear up “puzzling matters” in the field and

²⁴⁵ Of course, that does not entail that such explanations of ordinary use are the only or the primary criteria for the adequacy of the theory. Instead, it seems more plausible that such factor belong on the “pro” list of the overall considerations one might contemplate regarding a theory.

(3c) leads to new and interesting paths in our thinking about philosophy of religion.

Now, I devote Chapter 7 to the general issues and implications involving my view of faith as an act of intellectual virtue, so I shall leave (3b) and (3c) for my thoughts there. I shall argue that my account *does* clear up puzzles in the field and it *does* lead to interesting paths. So, let me bracket those questions and leave them as a promissory note for the next chapter. But, (3a) is important—my account must cohere with what philosophers of religion tend to say about faith. So, I shall look at some I shall call ‘faith desiderata’: important comments about faith that philosophers typically emphasize and argue that my view can account for them.

Faith Desiderata

First, many philosophers of religion claim that faith has two different kinds of elements that one could broadly term an epistemic or doxastic component and an affective or emotional component.²⁴⁶ To put the matter clearly, we find Scott MacDonald’s view:

I think it fair to say that the view that faith is essentially a compound state composed of both a cognitive and a non-cognitive element, of both belief and trust or love, for example, constitutes the mainline view of the nature of...faith.²⁴⁷

This seems to capture the dual aspects of faith that I wish to underscore here. And MacDonald is not alone in his assessment. Paul Helm argues that “faith, though doxastic,

²⁴⁶ See, e.g., Evans, *op cit.*, 5; Penelhum, *op. cit.*, 68; Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, 94-98; and Tim Chappell, “Why is Faith a Virtue?,” *Religious Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (March 1996), 34.

²⁴⁷ Scott MacDonald, “Christian Faith,” in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), 43.

does not reduce to a set of propositional beliefs...there is a fiduciary aspect, trust”²⁴⁸ and faith “is not solely epistemic, but also moral and fiducial in character.”²⁴⁹ Here, we have dual elements of faith: a doxastic/epistemic pole and a fiduciary/moral pole. I suspect he does include the ‘fiduciary’ aspect under the first sort of component because Helms views the fiduciary aspect of faith as a commitment involving more than simple beliefs.²⁵⁰ The notion of faith and commitment will concern us soon as well. Alston also notes that “faith essentially involves both cognitive and affective-attitudinal elements”²⁵¹ whereas Schellenburg echoes Alston in calling this second component “evaluative” (following H. H. Price) and “affective.”²⁵² Adams refers to the non-doxastic element as “[t]he emotional ingredient in faith.”²⁵³ Keith Yandell prefers the term “practical” to underscore the non-propositional, non-epistemic component of faith; meaning that faith has an element enriched by one’s actions and way of life. Thus: “[p]ractical faith without propositional faith is blind and propositional faith without practical faith is empty.”²⁵⁴

Hopefully, I have provided evidence that the dual epistemic/doxastic and emotional/affective elements of faith find resonance in the philosophical literature. Thus, we have a faith desideratum that my account should accommodate. Given the core of ET in my account of faith-in, I have no trouble accepting this desideratum and, going beyond mere acceptance, my view easily *explains* why philosophers are so keen to make this point. Faith *qua* ET has a proportional belief element and two elements that do not remain exhaustively epistemic. ET’s definition in Chapter 2 makes propositional belief

²⁴⁸ Helm, *Faith With Reason*, 4

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 15.

²⁵² Schellenburg, *op. cit.*, 68.

²⁵³ Adams, *op. cit.*, 17.

²⁵⁴ Yandell, *op. cit.*, 461.

the first condition, so I have no trouble with the epistemic pole. But the third and fourth conditions of ET (reliance and confidence, respectively) are non-epistemic conditions. In particular, I argued in Chapter 3 that the confidence condition provides the truster with an *affectively*-loaded way of seeing the world. So, my account of faith explains why philosophers so often maintain that faith is both epistemic and affective (or whichever variant of those concepts you prefer).

We have already touched upon the second faith desideratum. Many philosophers connect faith with obedience or loyalty. Moser is explicit: “faith in God is a kind of self-giving obedience”²⁵⁵ and C. Stephen Evans claims that a “factor present in...faith is that of obedience”²⁵⁶. Similarly, H. Richard Niebuhr maintains that

an analysis of the *phenomenon* of ‘faith’...leads us to a recognition of a structure in which trust and loyalty (or *fiducia* and *fidelitas*) are in reciprocal relations, yet not in the simple reciprocity in which trust on the part of a self responds to the loyalty of the other to this self, but rather in that more complex pattern in which fidelity is related not to one term only but always to two...²⁵⁷ (emphasis his)

I cite Niebuhr last and in-depth because I think his words are deeply sympathetic to the view I develop here. We find confirmation that my account of faith as trust confirms its relation to *fiducia* and *fidelitas*, as well as Niebuhr’s own explanation for linking faith with loyalty: *trust*. Given the view I defended above, I think his comments here fit the picture perfectly. Niebuhr clearly links trust and loyalty, and my account of ET can explain this connection. Insofar as trust involves confidence, we can speak about that confidence engendering loyalty. Suppose I am confidence in Jones in some respect, taking Jones to be an authority in that area. Thinking about loyalty as an *action* here

²⁵⁵ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 100.

²⁵⁶ Evans, op. cit., 6.

²⁵⁷ Niebuhr, op. cit., 99.

seems out of place, but we have a wider notion of loyalty as a kind of allegiance to someone, there seems room for a kind of epistemic loyalty here. Because I take Jones as authoritative, intellectually come under Jones' authority. And this "coming under" business seems similar to a kind of allegiance to the intellectual authority I recognize in my trusting of Jones. We need to work with a slightly different notion of loyalty other than a kind of action, but we still see a general intellectual allegiance involved in trusting someone as an authority for us. Trust, then, connects to loyalty and thereby explains the connection between faith and loyalty as well. Thus, I contend my account of faith has no trouble whatsoever in accounting for obedience because, following Niebuhr, it is the core kernel of ET in that account explaining the connection between faith and loyalty or obedience.

The second faith desideratum—loyalty or obedience—often occurs in conjunction with our final desideratum; commitment. We find many philosophers echoing a connection between faith and commitment: Moser, "[t]he self-entrustment central to faith in God requires a definite commitment to God"²⁵⁸; Helm, "'[t]he *faith*' is what is believed, *faith* is the personal attitude of commitment to what is believed"²⁵⁹; and John Bishop, "[f]aith is not just a matter of holding faith-beliefs...[f]aith involves commitment."²⁶⁰ Finally, Eric O. Springsted argues that "faith [is] in persons and [is] the self-involving commitment of a person" so that "[f]aith is a matter of the heart, an engagement of the whole person."²⁶¹ How can we account for this desideratum? Our account provides several promising options. First and what is most obvious (I think): if

²⁵⁸ Moser, op. cit., 100.

²⁵⁹ Helm, *Faith and Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 11.

²⁶⁰ Bishop, op. cit., 105.

²⁶¹ Springsted, op. cit., 6.

my account of faith easily accommodates and explains a connection to loyalty or fidelity, we have an easy relation to commitment. To be loyal involves a commitment to the object of one's loyalty.²⁶² Second, in our discussion faith as a deep trust in what is ultimately significant, it seems plausible to think that such depth of trust would engender a commitment to what is trusted—especially when the object of trust is something or someone finds deeply significant for one's whole life. That is, once you deepen trust, as we have claimed of faith (in), commitment seems a necessary consequence of how one views and acts toward the object of one's deepest trust *qua fidelitas*.

Clearly, I cannot discuss all claims that philosophers make of faith, but I simply mean to discuss some of the more important and reoccurring concepts linked to faith that we have not already discussed. I have demonstrated that philosophers of religion give credence to several desiderata: obedience/loyalty, commitment, and a dual epistemic/affective nature involved in faith. And I have argued that my account easily accommodates these desiderata and, further, explains why they remain important concepts in discussions of faith. I take it, then, that my account can satisfy Schellenburg's criterion that an adequate account of faith must accommodate and cohere with what philosophers want to say of faith. And, supposing that I can show in Chapter 7 that my view helps with certain puzzles and illumines interesting avenues of philosophical thought, I take it that my account is adequate by Schellenburg's standards. Now, I shall argue that alternative accounts of having faith in someone suffer from grave worries, providing more evidentiary force for the adequacy of my own theory.

²⁶² In fact, if one wanted to put 'commitment' under the broad conceptual umbrella of loyalty or fidelity, that would not strike me as implausible or inappropriate.

Alternative Accounts of Faith-In

My main claim so far contends that faith (in) is a species of ET. Several philosophers propose theories of faith inconsistent with this claim and they form the target of this chapter. I shall divide these rival accounts into three broad types (depending upon how they are inconsistent with my own): non-fiducial faith, non-doxastic faith, and neither fiducial nor doxastic faith. Non-fiducial accounts of faith deny that faith is a kind of trust, although they accept that it is an *epistemic* concept (i.e. faith is not a species of epistemic *trust*). Conversely, non-doxastic accounts of faith deny that there is a propositional belief component to faith, accepting that faith relates to trust (i.e. faith is not a species of *epistemic* trust). And finally, some accounts deny that faith involves either propositional belief or trust.

I want to reemphasize something here that I discussed at the very beginning of this chapter. I take as my targets here putative accounts of *religious* faith-*in* rather than any account of whatever one may plausibly call “faith.” As I said from the beginning, there is no doubt that the term “faith” is ambiguous and I focus entirely on robust religious faith. I restrict my comments, claims, and arguments to that stipulated usage of the term and focus only on it. In no way do I intend my comments to apply to just any usage of ‘faith’ but only in the narrow sense above.

Non-Fiducial Faith

One might be inclined to find the phrase “non-fiducial faith” a contradiction in terms and, given my view on the close connection between faith and trust, I am quite

sympathetic to that assessment. But let us see what these theories might look like and show where they go awry.

A straightforward version of non-fiducial faith would deny what I stipulated at the outset—namely, that propositional faith provides an overly ‘thin’ account of faith. Instead, one may argue that propositional faith—i.e. belief that some religious proposition(s) is/are true—does adequately capture a robust sense of faith-in. Several philosophers seem to echo this view. John Locke, for example, makes the infamous claim that: “[f]aith...is the assent to any proposition, not thus made out by the deductions of reason; but upon the Credit of the Proposer, as coming from God, in some extraordinary way of Communication.”²⁶³ In a more contemporary context, Raphael Demos echoes Locke’s view in affirming that faith is “the acceptance of belief without evidence, demonstrative or empirical.”²⁶⁴ And, finally, Richard Swinburne claims this view as that of Aquinas; namely that “to have faith in God is simply to have a belief-that, to believe that God exists.”²⁶⁵ Swinburne even goes so far as to call what I term ‘propositional’ faith “Thomist faith.”²⁶⁶ I have two responses here of varying strength.

First, I think I have given ample evidence earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2 that mere propositional belief cannot capture the robust notion of either trust-in or faith-in that we take as targets. Mere (propositional) belief cannot account for the life-guiding,

²⁶³ Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Bk. IV, Ch. XVIII, Sec. 2.

²⁶⁴ Demos, “Religious Faith and Scientific Faith,” in *Religious Experience and Truth: A Symposium*, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 131.

²⁶⁵ Swinburne, *Faith and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 105.

²⁶⁶ I have *serious* worries about the adequacy of this label with respect to the richness of Aquinas’ view on faith. But, since my concerns here are my view of faith rather than clarifying what I consider Swinburne’s misinterpretation of Aquinas, I let the usage stand. It is the *view* I make my target here—not whether such a view adequately describes that of Aquinas.

action-disposing, commitment-grounding, and conceptual framework-providing work that deep religious faith does. I rely on Moser's assessment of propositional faith.

[T]he notion of faith "in God" is not reducible to the idea of faith "that God exists." If faith that God exists is just the belief that God exists, it is merely a psychological attitude towards a judgment or proposition. That is, it is simply *de dicto*, related to a propositional dictum: namely, to the statement that God exists. In contrast, faith *in God* is best understood as having a *de re* component...that is irreducible to a judgment or proposition.²⁶⁷ (emphasis his)

This is the weaker sense of my argument—that faith-in cannot be reduced to faith-that. However, there is a stronger sense of this connection; one that accepts a reduction thesis but in the *opposite* direction that the proponent of propositional faith contends. Some philosophers give reason to think that propositional faith (i.e. faith-that) is actually reducible to faith-in (at least in several important situations).²⁶⁸ To this point, we find Alston:

[i]t seems plausible that wherever it is clearly appropriate to attribute "*faith that*," there is a "*faith in*" in the background. If I have faith that Joe will get the job, I thereby have faith in Joe, of some sort. If I have faith that the church will rebound from recent setbacks, I thereby have faith in the church and its mission.²⁶⁹ (emphasis his)

Alston does not merely deny that faith-in reduces to faith-that but rather he seems to affirm the reverse: faith-that reduces to faith-in. So, if either Moser's weaker point about non-reducibility or Alston's stronger point about the reducibility of faith-that hold, then the proponent of propositional faith cannot stand firm.

²⁶⁷ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 92-93.

²⁶⁸ See, e.g., Pieper's claim in *Faith, Hope, Love*: "the reason for believing 'something' is that one believes 'someone'." (p. 30). (Again, let us remember the ambiguity of the German "Glaube" as either 'faith' or 'belief'.) This seems to argue that having faith-that something is the case ultimately turns out to be some faith-in someone being worthy of belief.

²⁶⁹ Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 13.

John Hick also provides an account of faith that I would classify as non-fiducial.²⁷⁰ Faith, according to Hick, works as a kind of “total interpretation [of reality], in which we assert that the world as a whole (as experienced by ourselves) is of this or that kind, that is to say, affects our plans and our policies in such and such ways.”²⁷¹ This interpretation is a kind of prism by which we view the world or, as Hick terms it an “experiencing-as” and, accordingly, our place in it.²⁷² And, in fact, his account of a “total interpretation” bears a somewhat striking resemblance to a kind of conceptual framework or Wittgensteinian language-game.²⁷³ In particular, Hick is careful to warn that

the primary religious perception, or basic act of religious interpretation, is not to be described as either a reasoned conclusion or an unreasoned hunch that there is a God. It is, putatively, an apprehension of the divine presence within the believer’s human experience.²⁷⁴

To be sure, this ‘interpretation’ guides action and how we see the world, but it does not feature any concepts involving trust. It is epistemic insofar as it makes propositional “assertions” of the world that persons of faith presumably believe, but it still remains inconsistent with the fiducial or trust-based aspect of my account.

Hick’s account might gain traction as a theory of how one’s religious beliefs work in one’s conceptual framework or how they might work as far as one’s cognitive outlook on the cosmos. But, I doubt this account can work to underpin a really robust account of faith (in). First, it lacks the intuitive appeal of connecting faith and trust. Second, and more importantly, it offers none of the theoretical explanations for how we frequently associate concepts like reliance, loyalty, confidence, authority, etc. with faith (in). One

²⁷⁰ At least, such a view comes out in Hick’s *early* work.

²⁷¹ Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipft & Stock Publishers, 2009), 114.

²⁷² Hick, “Seeing-as and Religious Experience” in *Faith*, ed. Terrence Penelhum (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1989): 183-192.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ *Faith and Knowledge*, 115.

can connect interpretation to reliance, confidence, loyalty, et al., but I do not see the close conceptual connection. My argument has been that such conceptual connections become obvious on analysis and strengthen the account connecting them as mine does. Hick could give ways that one's interpretations color how one relies on others, seems them confidently, remains intellectually loyal to them, and so forth, but his account requires work to make these connections. Interpretations do not entail these concepts and so it would take additional argument to make them. But, my account does so by the concepts themselves and has an advantage over Hick's in terms of its theoretical and explanatory simplicity. So, I conclude that Hick's theory of faith as "total interpretation" and accounts of propositional faith will not suffice. Non-doxastic versions of faith are more common and prove a harder target. Let look at a few influential non-doxastic approaches in detail.

Non-Doxastic Faith

I call these theories non-doxastic because they are unified in rejecting that faith in *S* involves *any* propositional beliefs at all (even that *S* exists). I shall discuss three major theories of non-doxastic faith: those of Richard Swinburne, Robert Audi, and William Alston.

Swinburne adopts what he calls the "pragmatist" view of faith.

[O]n the Pragmatist view, a man *S* has faith if he acts on the assumptions that there is a God who has the properties which Christians ascribe to him and has provided for men the means of salvation and the prospect of glory, and that he will do for *S* what he knows that *S* needs or wants—so long as *S* has good purposes.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ *Faith and Reason*, 116.

There are a few things to note here. First, his view is non-doxastic. To have faith in God requires primarily that you “act on the assumption” that there is a God of a certain sort that does certain things, and so forth and so on. Swinburne clarifies what this means: “to act on the assumption that *p* is to use *p* as a premise in your practical inferences, whether or not you believe *p*.”²⁷⁶ Thus, ‘acting on an assumption’ requires no belief and, therefore, having faith in God does not require having *any* beliefs regarding God’s existence, plans, character, etc. Second, one might question whether this view comes under the ‘fiducial’ moniker. There is no explicit reference to ‘trust’ or anything like that in the definition given, so why classify this as a theory involving fiduciary concepts? Seeing how Swinburne’s view relates to trust explains the non-fiducial nature of his account. He claims that

[t]o trust a man is to act on the assumption that he will do for you what he knows that you want or need, when the evidence gives some reason for supposing that he may not and where there will be bad consequences if the assumption is false.²⁷⁷

Once this becomes clear, we see immediately that his account of trust directly informs the substance of his definition of pragmatist faith above. Given his definition of ‘trust,’ he will claim that faith certainly is a kind of trust; in particular, faith is simply trusting God.

Swinburne’s account faces a rather obvious flaw in the fact that one can “act on the assumption” that *S* exists, has a good character, and will “do for you” *even if you actually disbelieve that S exists*. Suppose that someone tells me that if I pat myself upon the head thrice every morning when I awake, then Zeus will bless me throughout my life. Now, being a prudent sort of person and knowing that patting my head causes me no real harm, it seems possible that I “act of the assumption” of Zeus’ blessing by patting my

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 112.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 111.

head even though I strongly disbelieve that there is such a being as Zeus. My point is this: you can act on all sorts of assumptions that are consistent with *severe* doubts about the beings involved in those actions. Let me add what I consider to be an obvious point: one cannot have faith in X if one believes that there is no such being as X. Even if I am wrong that faith (in) does require some beliefs, I think it obvious that such faith is inconsistent with *disbelief*. Swinburne's view of faith makes it possible that a strident atheist (i.e. someone who holds the strong belief that there is no God or divine being) be a person of faith—which I (and I suspect most everyone will) find *extraordinarily* counterintuitive. I take this as a decisive criticism of Swinburne's view.

Robert Audi gives a cluster of non-doxastic views. In the latest tally, he gives seven different types of faith:

- (1) Propositional faith: “faith *that* something is so”
- (2) Attitudinal faith: “faith *in* some being (or other entity, such as an institution)”
- (3) Creedal faith: “*a* religious faith, the kind one belongs to by virtue of commitment to its central tenets”
- (4) Global faith: “the kind whose possession makes on a *person of faith*”
- (5) Doxastic faith: “believing something ‘on faith’”
- (6) Acceptant faith: “when someone is said to accept another person, or a claimed proposition or proposed action, ‘in good faith’”
- (7) Allegiant faith: “fidelity, as exemplified by ‘keeping faith’ with someone”²⁷⁸

Let us throw out doxastic faith—(5)—immediately, since this simply reduces to propositional belief lacking sufficient evidence.²⁷⁹ (5) just becomes what I have called ‘propositional’ faith from the outset—simply reducible to believing a proposition. Furthermore, Audi himself takes (1)-(4) as the “basic kinds of faith” where acceptant faith (6) and allegiant faith (7) are “largely reducible to some combination of the

²⁷⁸ “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” 92-93.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 94.

others.”²⁸⁰ So, we can omit these for the sake of brevity. And, as I argued at the very beginning, my account of faith-in should be distinguished from what Audi calls “creedal” faith—(3). (3) works as a generalized account of propositional faith: i.e. (1). It is faith-that towards a set of propositions. Creedal faith offers us nothing beyond propositional faith, so I shall simply let my comments about (1) suffice for an analysis of (3). Thus, I shall stick to (1), (2), and (4) for the sake of brevity.

Audi’s use of the term “propositional faith” in (1) tends to be confusing, since he uses that term counter to the typical usage of many philosophers of religion. When most philosophers say “propositional faith” they typically mean (5) rather than (1). On Audi’s use of the phrase, “propositional faith” means having “a certain positive disposition towards the proposition that this is so” and that ‘positive disposition’ need not be as strong as actual belief.²⁸¹ Further, he *explicitly* denies that having ‘propositional faith’ that *p* (on his usage) entails having the belief that *p*.²⁸² However, this “positive disposition” is “incompatible with a pervasive or *dominating* doubt that God exists,” so Audi avoids the problem with Swinburne’s account above.²⁸³ My problem with (1) concerns just how vague the “positive disposition” in question becomes. All we know from Audi is that: (1) involves some kind of pro-attitude towards some proposition and (1) requires no belief regarding the proposition in question. That is a tremendously thin account of faith; which is a concept that we take to be pretty rich and robust.²⁸⁴ Since we are focusing on faith-*in* rather than the thinner faith-*that*, Audi’s view here will not work.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 95.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 93.

²⁸² “Faith, Belief, and Rationality,” 216.

²⁸³ “Faith, Belief, and Acceptance,” 93.

²⁸⁴ Assuming, of course, that (1) generates an account of faith-*in*. If not, then (1) is not relevant to my account or discussion here.

Intuitively, it would be very odd indeed to claim that one has faith *in* a proposition. That sort of language and the attitude it reflects finds a much better home in the thicker, more robust account of faith (in) I am developing here than in Audi's propositional faith. In the same way that propositional belief provides too 'thin' of a concept for religious faith-in, Audi's vague claims about "positive dispositions" towards propositions offer a view that is no thicker.

Now, let us move on to attitudinal faith (2). (2) looks like the view I have provided: we see the notion of "faith-in," it has an attitudinal component, and Audi explicitly connects one of the attitudes involved with trust.²⁸⁵ But we see the appearance of agreement vanish when he distinguishes attitudinal faith from propositional faith:

[a]ttitudinal faith differs much from propositional faith. A true attribution of faith *in* God in some sense *presupposes* God's existence, in that...we cannot have faith in a non-existent being. But this ontological presupposition permits a person of faith to have associated cognitive attitudes as modest as presuming, rather than unqualifiedly believing, the relevant truths...Presuming the truth of a proposition does not require holding it in the way characteristic of belief.²⁸⁶

(2) is non-doxastic as well, since Audi's use of "S's attitudinal faith in *H*" does not require any beliefs of *S* with respect to *H* in any respect. At that point, his account and mine clearly diverge.

The problem with (2) is that Audi does not actually distinguish it from (1) to the extent that he thinks. One might think that attitudinal faith differs from propositional faith insofar as the former and not the latter imply that one have certain *attitudes* towards the proposition in question. But this is not the case. Audi: "[r]eligious faith, whether

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ "Faith, Belief, and Rationality," 218.

propositional or attitudinal, implies certain attitudes.”²⁸⁷ In that case, the only difference I can determine between (1) and (2) is the addition of a “presupposition” involved in attitudinal faith. I suppose this means that one takes a stronger cognitive disposition to the proposition than we find in (1), but that seems fairly shallow of a distinction. One may have attitudes and dispositions and presumptions, but both accounts lack a cognitive backbone or framework to guide those attitudes. Presuming that *p* does not seem tremendously less vague or thin than having a “positive disposition” towards the truth of *p*. More to the point, presumptions and positive dispositions need not be all that central or significant for one’s belief system. We need more than dispositions and presumptions for the central and entrenched role that faith plays in our noetic structure. To put it another way: one’s faith is *deep*—cognitively speaking—in ways that our dispositions and presumptions need not be. Thus, Audi still focuses on cognitive states that are too ‘thin’ or ‘shallow’ to ground robust faith (in).

Audi seems particularly fond of global faith. This gives him a richer view of the life of faith and the centrality of one’s commitments. If any of his different kinds of faith can provide the overall depth I have argued necessary, then global faith remains his best chance. Let us develop his notion of global faith. Audi’s primary point here is that “what constitutes being a person of faith need not be mainly one’s beliefs.”²⁸⁸ We can characterize global faith by five components. First, there is a “fiduciary perspective.” The person of global faith has a “pattern of attitudes and dispositions” involving religious principles, propositions, and commitments.²⁸⁹ Like attitudinal faith and propositional faith, the “fiduciary perspective” denotes one’s cognitive relationship to religious

²⁸⁷ “Belief, Faith, and Acceptance,” 93.

²⁸⁸ “The Dimensions of Faith and the Demands of Reason,” 78-79.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

propositions, tenets, and belief systems while not entailing beliefs in these regards. Next, there is one's "practical commitment," that is, one's tendency "to be regularly motivated by, and when necessary remind [oneself] of, religious attitudes and principles..."²⁹⁰ *Qua* practical, this aspect of global faith provides one's motivational structure that guides one's actions. Third, there is "evidential receptivity" whereby one "remains open to evidences of God's governances" short of entailing belief in such governances.²⁹¹ Presumably, "evidential receptivity" defeats dogmatism and in doing so makes actual belief possible (but certainly not required). Fourth, there is what Audi calls the "attitudinal-emotional responsiveness." A person has this responsiveness when

in everyday human relations [one] asks what the Christian thing to do might be; and if [one] thinks of a deed as what God would wish, this tends not only to motivate [one] to do it...but also to feel approval or disapproval, joy or sadness, or other attitudes or emotions, in ways characteristic of Christians.²⁹²

Thus, we find global faith detailing that one must have the set of core emotions or attitude-dispositions true of the religious believer even if one lacks the relevant beliefs in question. Finally, there is the person of global faith's "institutional engagement" such that one "engages in religious practices, such as attending services and discussions, that help to sustain and mature [one's] understanding of [one's] religious commitments and the concepts they require [one] to grasp."²⁹³ Thus defined "institutional engagement" simply underpins and engages the "practical commitment" aspect of global faith.

My first comment points out inconsistencies here with what Audi says of global faith. He says, of global faith, that "[o]ne must also have normative beliefs, for example

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 80.

²⁹² Ibid. I presume that what Audi says holds of Christians or Christian faith will hold *mutatis mutandis* for other religions as well.

²⁹³ Ibid.

that God is wholly good and should be revered. It is only existential beliefs about God that are not part of this conception of faith.”²⁹⁴ This seems explicitly contradictory. One must believe that God is good without having any existential beliefs about God. That is, I must believe something of the form “X is *F*” where this does not entail me believing that there actually is any such X. But, that sounds flatly absurd: part of believing that X is *F* just is a belief that there really is such an X (that can be *F*). Instead Audi should say something like this: normative beliefs about God are not required but only the attitude/disposition comments from before. The person of global faith could have a belief like: “if God exists, then God is good and should be revered.” That preserves the non-doxastic feature here.

But this modification brings us to my second comment. I question the depth of the commitment of the person of global faith. At least, I question a *certain kind* of commitment. One can non-doxastically ground one’s moral commitments and behavior dispositions, but what Audi misses is some kind of *epistemic* commitment to one’s faith. Global faith is ‘thicker’ than attitudinal and propositional faith in a moral, emotional, attitudinal, and practical sense, but *qua* non-doxastic, global faith remains on the same shallow level of *epistemic* or *cognitive* commitment. Faith, on Audi’s view, requires no *total* commitment (in the sense of the whole of oneself) to one’s religion. One can “get by” (so to speak) by committing oneself in *every* way but epistemically. But, if we analyzed faith in terms of commitment and depth of trust and acceptance of authority, to leave one’s epistemic commitments, trusts, and authority out of faith is to neglect massive part of what we think faith involves in the agent. Audi’s global faith does provide a ‘thicker’ account but not in any epistemic sense—it is still *epistemically* or

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 78.

cognitively ‘thin.’ And that sort of thinness seems in tension with the kind of cognitive depth of faith we have been discussing.

William Alston also gives a non-doxastic account; one based on *accepting* religious claims rather than *believing* them. But, if we get a bit clearer on things, I am not sure that our accounts differ as much as a cursory reading suggests. Alston argues that “[t]o accept [religious doctrines] is to perform a voluntary act of committing oneself to them, to *resolve* to use them as a basis for one’s thought, attitude, and behavior” (emphasis his).²⁹⁵ The key term here is “voluntary.” This is because Alston says that “to believe [religious doctrines], even if not to the fullest confidence, is to *find* oneself with that positive attitude toward them...” (emphasis his).²⁹⁶ So, one ‘accepts’ some proposition voluntarily whereas belief is something that happens to you (involuntarily). Thus, “at bottom, [the difference between belief and acceptance] is a difference between what one finds in oneself and what one has deliberately chose to introduce into oneself.”²⁹⁷ Doxastic involuntarism (i.e. the view that our beliefs are formed without our voluntary control) motivates his view that religious faith does not involve *beliefs*. Acceptance grounds religious practices, moral commitments, and a general outlook in the same way as beliefs but with the saving grace that acceptance comes under one’s volitional control.

Alston worries about the involuntariness of belief because some devoted, serious, and highly motivated religious persons just *cannot* come to religious belief. He says of these persons that

²⁹⁵ Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 17.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

[a] sense of the obvious truth of these articles of belief does not well up within them when they consider the matter. They *are* troubled by doubts...They take it as a live possibility that all or some central Christian doctrines are false.²⁹⁸

Emphasizing acceptance over belief allows these kinds of religious person's full-fledged membership among the 'faithful.' He and I agree that his description here adequately captures persons that should be counted among those that have faith and we also agree that beliefs are not under our direct voluntary control. However, I am not convinced that we cannot exercise *indirect* or, to use Richard Feldman's terminology, "nonbasic" control over our beliefs.²⁹⁹ Alston seems right to suggest that, when we consider the belief itself, it can just sort of "happen to" us. But viewing only the belief is a mistake—many philosophers are careful to note that there are *actions* and *desires* that bear upon the beliefs we "happen upon" and those actions (unlike) beliefs can be voluntary. Consider Grace Yee:

Doxastic voluntarism is not about believing what one wants. Rather, it is about how one's wants influence what one beliefs. Voluntarists focus on desires and how these contribute to believing, maintaining that the role that desires play in belief is sufficient significant to justify calling beliefs voluntary.³⁰⁰

Our desires influence our actions and, if the indirect control thesis stands, those actions can influence our beliefs. Thus, as Mark Leon notes, "[t]here are things that we can do that can affect what we believe."³⁰¹ Yee's emphasis on desire's indirect influence over belief and Leon's emphasis on our actions' influence over belief provide a few different ways that one can account for one's indirect or "nonbasic" control over one's beliefs.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 16.

²⁹⁹ Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 60, no. 3 (May 2000): 667-695.

³⁰⁰ "Desiring to Believe," *The Monist*, vol. 85, no. 3 (2002), 446.

³⁰¹ "Responsible Believers," *The Monist*, vol. 85, no. 3 (2002), 423.

And those desires and actions can bear complicated and non-uniform relations to those beliefs. Thus, it seems plausible to think that different beliefs or belief-types lie on a scale from complete non-voluntary to quite voluntary (but always short of immediate, direct control).³⁰² So, we can take measures to change our belief system even if those measures do not exert direct, immediate control. Or at least, I consider *indirect* control a serious and live option regarding our beliefs.

But, if all of this talk about indirect control works, then there is a deep sense that we can accommodate Alston's worry here. A weak sense of belief, connected with an indirect state of control over it looks very much like what Alston attempts to capture with his notion of "acceptance." Beliefs need not be held with extreme force or to a very high degree to count as a belief, I take it. So, if we can think of a belief including an attitude short of near-certainty or with less than compelling force, Alston's views and my own draw closer and closer together. We avoid his worries about doxastic involuntarism and beliefs in *our* sense can be used in praxis, attitude, and behavior in a parallel way as Alston's acceptances. So, I conclude that there is not much of real substantive disagreement left between Alston's account and my own, given the indirect control arguments, modifications, and suggestions of the previous paragraph.³⁰³ So, we have seen in the case of Swinburne's and Audi's non-doxastic faith that their accounts present serious worries and in Alston's case, a view not terribly dissimilar from the one I propose. I conclude then, that non-doxastic approaches either face grave difficulties (as satisfactory accounts of religious faith) or else prove consistent with my own view.

³⁰² See Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 66, for a similar view.

³⁰³ Furthermore, in general, Alston's account of faith (the 'acceptance' business notwithstanding) parallels mine. He emphasizes trust, reliance, confidence, loyalty, the personal object of faith, and several other key concepts my account includes.

Hence, they offer no real rivals. Let us move on to views of faith that are neither fiducial nor doxastic.

Non-Fiducial and Non-Doxastic Faith

Again, the notion both non-fiducial and non-doxastic faith might seem counterintuitive just by the name alone (and I share that notion). But, there are certain philosophers who account for faith without any element of trust or belief involved. First, there is the account of faith given by F. R. Tennant and, second, there are accounts of faith modeled of the notion of hope. Let me begin with Tennant.

At the outset, Tennant claims that

[b]elief is assent to data; faith, in the first instance, is not confronted with data, but creates its objects, which are ideas, just as the mathematician posits the entities with which he deals—for instance, spaces of different numbers of dimensions. By practical activity, or living as if its ideal creations were also real, faith may go on to discover their actuality.³⁰⁴

We find several features of note in this account. First, faith (at the beginning) does not begin with “data.” Second, the objects of faith are “ideas” as opposed to real entities of some sort. The person of faith treats those objects as idealized entities akin to the mathematician’s treatment of ideal mathematical constructions. Third, faith only involves “living as if” the objects of faith are real. And, finally, it is possible to confirm one’s idealized objects of faith through “practical activity.” I find only the last claim even remotely plausible.

The first point about the non-data approach to faith may be true of some religious persons but it certainly does not hold for all. Very many persons of faith (across all religions and religious denominations) think of his/her faith “confronting” the data of the

³⁰⁴ Tennant, op. cit., 99.

world, with a theistic commitment being the best response to such confronting. Even if this person's faith is misguided, it is nonetheless true that persons of faith do take this attitude of existential doxastic commitments, beliefs, acceptances, or what have you. Regardless to the metaphysical truth or falsity of theism, very many theists think of their beliefs as making serious metaphysical commitments regarding what does or does not actually exist rather than non-actual, idealized, or hypothetical conceptions of the world. So, Tennant is wrong to suggest that faith works in this manner.

Second, I suppose that some persons of faith may have faith in an idea but, as in the previous claim, Tennant's comments do not track a large swath of actual faith. Non-realist accounts of faith have been popular at various points in history among certain philosophers or theologians.³⁰⁵ Examples abound: R. B. Braithwaite's account of faith as expressing attitudes rather than existential beliefs,³⁰⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach's notion that faith is simply the projection of one's idealized humanity,³⁰⁷ or Don Cupitt's reduction of Christian faith to following certain religious practices and ethical commitments,³⁰⁸ to name a few. But, these non-realist accounts of faith—including Tennant's claim about 'ideas' being the object of faith—do not adequately describe the faith of many religious people (regardless of religion or denomination). Unless this is a claim about how faith *ought* to work, rather than a descriptive claim about the actual attitudes of religious persons, this part of Tennant's view will not stand.

³⁰⁵ I take a 'non-realist' account of faith to be one where the object of one's faith depends upon one's actions, beliefs, or concepts—i.e. faith in an object that is not *metaphysically real*.

³⁰⁶ "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," in *The Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971): 72-91.

³⁰⁷ "God as a Projection of the Human Mind," in *The Existence of God*, ed. John Hick (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1977): 191-204.

³⁰⁸ See, e.g., *Taking Leave of God* (Norwich: SCM Press, 2010) as the first among numerous expressions of his general non-realism.

Tennant views faith as a relation to its object the way that a mathematician views an idealized mathematical concept or idea. That is, Tennant takes faith to relate to the world as a hypothesis that, perhaps through eventual praxis, one might be able to verify or falsify. Thus, “faith which is neither belief nor trust, but *venturesome supposition*, also has a natural kinship with hope, but is not to be identified with it” (emphasis mine).³⁰⁹ We shall have reason to discuss hope next, but it is the “venturesome supposition” here that I find essential. Faith is a kind of metaphysical hypothesis that one uses to view the world and one’s place in it. But as he notes himself, his sort of hypothesis is not like trust—accepting a non-fiduciary account of faith. However, we must assess whether his “venturesome supposition” thesis adequately describes many instances of religious faith. It seems not. Perhaps a religion can be a theory that one may use to explain certain features of the world, but it is false that many religious persons hold their religion simply as an intellectual hypothesis. Tennant cannot explain *at all* many of the important concepts we have discussed: reliance, confidence, loyalty, depth/centrality of belief, etc. by appealing accounting for faith with as thin of an intellectual notion as “supposition.” That just does not describe how many persons of faith view the world through their faith. Leaving trust out of the account here leaves out so much of what we want to explain.

Finally, Tennant connects faith *qua* hypothesis to “acting as if” we believe it. This is the non-doxastic part of his theory. But, as we have seen with Swinburne and Audi, simply ‘supposing’ that *p* cannot capture the depth of religious faith and its centrality into one’s overall belief structure. Like them, Tennant may be able to explain how faith relates to one’s actions or behaviors in a deep or ‘thick’ way (*pace* propositional faith), but (also like them) he cannot explain faith having an *epistemically*

³⁰⁹ Tennant, *op. cit.*, 112.

deep or ‘thick’ role in one’s conceptual framework. And, therefore, his account will not suffice. By making it both non-fiduciary *and* non-doxastic he opens his view to the criticisms we have developed for both theories.

Other philosophers will offer hope-based accounts of faith. Louis P. Pojman offers such an account. He offers the suggestion

that there is at least one other attitude which may be adequate for religious faith even in the absence of belief, that attitude being hope...I shall develop a concept of faith as hope as an alternative to the usual notion that makes propositional belief that God exists a necessary condition for faith.³¹⁰

We find here both of the denials necessary for a non-doxastic and non-fiducial faith: it is hope *rather than trust* that characterizes faith and, in using hope as the basis, one requires no beliefs to have faith. Thus, Pojman’s hope-based theory is both non-fiducial and non-doxastic. In line with non-doxastic theories, “[t]he person lives *as if* the proposition were true or would become so” when one considers faith regarding some religious proposition (emphasis his).³¹¹ The key point is that Pojman sees “no good reason to exclude the possibility of coming to God *in hope rather than belief*” (emphasis mine).³¹² Thus, Pojman seems to suggest that faith has all of the religious benefits of (doxastic) faith but without the business of including propositional belief.

He gives four characteristics in his theory of hope. First, “hope involves belief in the possibility of a state of affairs obtaining”; which means that “[w]e cannot hope for what we believe to be impossible.”³¹³ Second, “hope precludes certainty.”³¹⁴ I suspect

³¹⁰ *Religious Belief and the Will*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 212-213. Compare with other hope-based accounts like Sessions’ “hope model” of faith in, op. cit., 114-128 and James L. Muyskens, *The Sufficiency of Hope: The Conceptual Foundations of Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).

³¹¹ Pojman, op. cit., 224.

³¹² Ibid., 228.

³¹³ Ibid., 217.

Pojman thinks of this condition as his way to accept the well-versed comment that what one knows and what one has faith in cannot coincide. Third, “hope entails desire for the state of affairs in question to obtain or the proposition to be true.”³¹⁵ The point here simply seems that faith *qua* hope involves some kind of pro-attitude towards its object. Finally, “[i]f one hopes for *p*, one will be disposed to do what one can to bring *p* about, if there is anything one can do to bring it about.”³¹⁶ This last condition is vital—it is what allows Pojman to ground actions, behaviors, and commitments in one’s faith.

To begin our criticism of Pojman’s theory, consider a comment from Audi: “hope is also a cognitively weaker attitude than faith, as indicated by its compatibility with a higher degree of doubt.”³¹⁷ We have a good argument against Pojman’s hope based account if we develop this line of thought. Pojman argues that hope only requires belief that the object is *possible*. Therefore, faith and hope have an essential difference in their respective tolerance of doubt. Let us look carefully at this point. I take a doubt to be a seriously considered ground that inclines one to disbelieve some proposition. But doubts do not imply disbelief—one can have serious misgivings about a proposition even when one does not actually *disbelieve* it.³¹⁸ For instance, I have serious doubts that there exist precisely 3 planets in the universe containing life. If life is not unique to Earth, then it would seem surprisingly fickle to find it on only two other planets scattered thought the trillions upon trillions that exist. But, even though I think this state of affairs would be tremendously unlikely, it certainly does not seem *impossible* to me. While I may not

³¹⁴ Ibid., 218.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 219.

³¹⁷ “Faith, Belief, and Rationality,” 219.

³¹⁸ Thus, I take “having a doubt about X” and “doubting that X” to differ insofar as the latter but not the former implies disbelief regarding X.

actively disbelieve this proposition, I recognize that my doxastic position with respect to it must be extremely weak due to the presence of these significant doubts.

Now, I do not want to argue that faith precludes all possible doubt; indeed, if that were the case then no one would have faith and it would probably sanction too much excessive, vicious faith/trust. However, having faith-in X does seem inconsistent with having serious, persistent doubt about X's existence, for instance. Pojman's view implies that the following assertions have genuine religious sense:

(a) "I have faith in God but I have significant doubts that God exists."

(b) "I have faith in God but I think it tremendously unlikely that God exists."

I have a hard time making sense of either (a) or (b), and the natural explanation here is that faith, unlike hope, cannot tolerate either a high degree or the persistent existence of doubt(s)—*even if that doubt always falls short of disbelief*. One can hope for things that one thinks almost certainly will not obtain, but this cannot hold for the object(s) of one's faith. Therefore, insofar as hope can tolerate more doubt than faith, Pojman's account cannot suffice.

We can sharpen Audi's point as well. Recall Pojman's first characteristic of hope: "[it] involves belief in the possibility of a state of affairs obtaining. We cannot hope for what we believe to be impossible."³¹⁹ In this first necessary condition, we find Pojman's account of the doxastic criteria for hope; namely, belief that the object of hope is possible. We saw above that such belief is consistent with persistent and serious doubt. But, as I shall argue here, Pojman's account allows even more counterintuitive implications. In particular, Pojman's theory makes hope, and therefore faith, consistent with *disbelief* in the object of one's faith/hope.

³¹⁹ Pojman, *op. cit.*, 217.

Pojman requires that one believe that an object is possible for hoping in it. And that requirement entails that one cannot believe that an object is impossible if one hopes for it. For instance, consider the possibility that I become president of the United States. I actively disbelieve this will happen, but I do not think it *logically* impossible. I could find a genie in a magic lamp, hit the lottery and buy my way into office, or some other such tremendously unlikely scenario. The point is this: disbelief that *p* is often consistent with belief that *p* is logically possible. So, let us apply these lessons to religious concerns. If I am right about Pojman's view, it makes these further assertions coherent:

(c) "I have faith in God, but I do not think that God exists."

(d) "I have faith in God, but I disbelieve that God exists."

Like (a) and (b) above, I find (c) and (d) nonsensical. Since Pojman only prohibits disbelief in the *possibility* of the hope-object's obtaining, his view makes faith consistent with disbelief in the *actuality* of the hope/faith-object's obtaining. And, if faith cannot coexist with serious doubt, then I take it that faith cannot coexist with an even weaker doxastic attitude: active, though weak, disbelief.

What we have seen in the arguments above is that faith cannot tolerate certain doxastic attitudes that hope can accommodate. Hope does not preclude persistent, serious doubt whereas one cannot have faith when plagued by constant, serious misgivings. And, Pojman's account of hope requires only belief in the possibility of that state of affairs obtaining. But, I can believe that X is possible even if I disbelieve in X. And I take it as obvious that one cannot have faith in X while one also disbelieves in X—i.e. believing that there is no X. Pojman's view makes faith too cognitively weak insofar as it becomes consistent not only with severe, sustained doubt but also active disbelief. Thus, given

Audi's comments and our development of them, we have good reason to reject Pojman's hope-based approach to faith.

Thus, we have seen that non-fiduciary accounts of faith fail to account for the depth of *affective* or *attitudinal* aspects we have analyzed in concert with faith, non-doxastic accounts cannot account for the deep *epistemic* or *cognitive* elements that faith-in presupposes, and views including neither component fail for the same reasons combined. Therefore, I conclude that an adequate account of faith must look remarkably like the one I have defended in this section: it must have both a deep epistemic as well as affective element—features captured by ET *qua* epistemic and trust (*fiducia*). The inadequacy of these theories in conjunction with my positive arguments in the previous section, then, I take it provide strong evidence for the adequacy of my account of faith (in) as a species of ET.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have defended my account of faith by showing its relation to ET as a species-genus relationship and how faith satisfy the definition of 'ET' found in Chapter 2. From there, I argued for the adequacy of my account of faith by showing that it satisfies J.L. Schellenburg's criteria and for the plausibility of my account over rival theories of faith. I take it, then, that we have established the thesis of this chapter; namely, that faith is a species of ET. Now, let us move on to the claim for the next chapter: faith as an act of epistemic virtue.

CHAPTER 6

FAITH AS AN ACT OF EPISTEMIC VIRTUE

I defend one major claim in this chapter: that faith is an act of epistemic virtue.³²⁰

I shall give three main arguments for my claim that faith is an act of epistemic virtue: one argument dealing with genus-species relations, one argument using a parity of reasoning approach, and an argument drawn directly from Chapters 1 and 3. For the sake of brevity, let us call them (unimaginatively) the Genus-Species Argument, the Parity Argument, and the Act of Virtue Argument. All three of them rely upon the major claim from the previous chapter that faith is a species of ET. After giving these arguments, I turn to a discussion of a few interesting implications of my view as well as an examination of some possible objections to it. Let us begin with the Genus-Species Argument, since I think it the most straightforward of the three.

The Genus-Species Argument

This argument begins with the claim I defend Chapter 5, that faith-in is a species of ET, and an observation about genus-species relationships. If we think about genus-species relationships, I contend that we recognize a fairly intuitive principle regarding them. This principle is what I shall call the Principle of Generic Predication (PGP):

³²⁰ More precisely, the idea is that faith *can be* an act of epistemic virtue depending upon its context. In what follows, I use ‘faith’ to express the tremendously unwieldy: ‘faith as an appropriate expression of ET in such context’. This usage parallels my earlier usage between ET *simpliciter* from well-placed, appropriate, or virtuous ET. To be precise one has need to use such clumsy and cumbersome language. But, like my use of ‘ET’ throughout, I shall simply use ‘faith’ or ‘faith in’ as short for the fuller sense of having virtuously expressed faith appropriate to an expression of ET in one’s context.

whatever is predicated of a genus *qua that particular genus* is predicated of each member of each species of that genus.³²¹ Alternatively, whatever is non-trivially true of a genus is true of each member of each species of that genus, or whatever properties a genus *as such* has each member of each species of that genus has as well. I use the various modifiers “*qua that genus*,” “non-trivial,” and “as such” to avoid problems with irksome (potential) properties like “X is a genus of Y.” Certainly if genera possess those properties, none of their species will have them since no species can be its own genus as well. I modify my claims about the PGP therefore to avoid that sort of logic-chopping counterexample.

One might offer the general claim that birds fly as a counterexample to PGP here. We know that *most* but not *all* birds fly. Hence, it follows from PGP what we cannot say of birds that they have the property of flying substantially. While some might find this implication counterintuitive, I do not. PGP is consistent with saying that “*in general*, birds fly” or “*most* birds fly” but the unrestricted “birds fly” has no force with me. Flying is clearly not necessary to birds by reference to penguins and ostriches, so if one says “birds fly” without a restriction or implicate that one intends *most* birds, this statement will be false, strictly speaking. I intend the PGP to capture what is necessary or essential about genera, species, and their relations: not whatever can be said of any X at all. Thus, I do not see this sort of counterexample as fatal to the PGP.

I shall not give too much argument for PGP, for it seems (to me) obviously true. Consider some species *S* of some genus *G*. The intuitive idea is that *S qua species* bears a certain metaphysical relation to *G* with respect to certain properties that *G* possesses. Insofar as species “come under” a genus, the essential or, perhaps non-trivial or

³²¹ Here, I follow Thomas Reid: “whatever can be truly affirmed of a genus can be truly affirmed of all the species and all the individuals belonging to that genus.” See his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* Essay VI, Chapter 6, in op. cit.

substantial, properties of the larger, more inclusive set must ‘trickle down’ for the smaller, included set of species ‘in’ it. Consider an example from natural science. Human beings are a species of animal. And everything we predicate of animals non-trivially we predicate of human beings. Human beings, *qua* animals, respire, digest, reproduce, etc. And, we can narrow our focus. Human beings are also a kind of mammal and what we say non-trivially of the larger class, we say of the smaller as well: giving birth to live young, having fur/hair, having vertebrae, and so forth. Consider another example from elementary logic. Sound arguments are species of valid arguments. Now, according to PGP, it must be the case that every substantial, non-trivial property that is true of valid arguments characterize sound arguments as well. This is just obviously true. When we define a sound argument as a valid argument where all of the premises are true, we necessarily imply that all sound arguments possess the necessary features of all valid arguments—this is just what it means to define soundness in terms of validity and what it means to say that sound arguments are a *species* of valid ones. Finally consider an example from epistemology: (propositional) knowledge is a species of belief.³²² That is, we think that, necessarily, any instance of knowing is also an instance of believing, for belief is the larger genus by which we define knowledge. Thus whatever we say about belief we say about knowledge as well. Generalizing on these cases, we should recognize the PGP is an intuitively strong principle and, thus, I propose that it holds for all genuine species-genus relations.

PGP, thus, applies to ET (and faith) only if ET is non-trivially or substantively virtuous. So, do we have good reason to think that ET is not substantively virtuous? Are

³²² Assuming, of course, that Timothy Williamson is wrong. See, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). But even if he is right and my example fails, the point behind the example remains.

there plausible cases where ET does *not* promote the epistemic good life or feature into the motivation structure of the person of epistemic virtue? One might think so and, if that holds, then the PGP might not apply in this case. How might such cases proceed? Well, one might complain that ET will not promote the epistemic *eudaimonia* because it is not truth-conducive in all worlds. Epistemologists love their skeptical hypotheses and it would seem that, were I to use ET in an evil demon world, my ET-based beliefs would fail to be true and, thus, my ET usage would never get me reliable beliefs. But, this line of argument works only by assuming that virtues must be truth-conducive; which is a claim against which I argued in Chapter 1. Now, I would think it unlikely that ET never gave one true beliefs, but such is not *required* by my account. Thus, if one were in an evil demon world where one's ET-beliefs always prove false, that would not count against my view. So, even if ET is not truth-conducive across worlds (and even *close* worlds), that fact will not count against my claims here.

What else could one propose to think that ET does not promote the epistemic good life? Well, I suppose that one could argue that, in some worlds, human beings are equipped with a different cognitive structure or have different intellectual faculties, skills, dispositions, or what have you. For example, if we suppose that there are worlds where human beings' *a priori* reasoning has much wider reign and deeper extent, one might think that relying upon others has no place. Why rely on *S* for my belief that *p* when I could just 'see' through the Cartesian natural light of reason that *p* (for whatever *p* you wish)? ET *qua* dependence makes very little sense as a cognitive *excellence* if our cognition were more excellent in the first place.

However, I think this line of reasoning fails if we consider what makes virtues what they are. Virtues are virtues only by relation to circumstances of the agents of whom they are traits. That is just what we mean when we define virtues (of either type) as an *embedded trait of character*. Virtues *qua* virtues are, accordingly, indexed to the agents *of whom they are excellent traits*. Radical change in agents means radical change in their epistemic aims, procedures, and motives. We see this effect in the Cartesian paradise. No longer is *a posteriori* knowledge sufficient when all things can be known *a priori*. The change in the cognitive apparatus of agents changes their epistemic ends, motives, and procedures. And changing all of those important epistemic considerations change the traits involved in those aims and motives. Thus, one cannot neatly excise *any* virtue—including ET—from beings like us, with *our* motives and epistemic aims/ends and 'paste' them into radically different agents. *Qua* virtue, "cutting and pasting" some virtue *qua* character trait from beings like 'us' into beings with radically different cognition means radical change for the traits themselves. Hence, placing ET in a different context involving profoundly different agents requires change in ET itself. Thus, in order to keep the sense of ET as we have defined it here, one must restrict oneself to worlds with intellectual agents like us and, if so, they will have similar aims and motives. But with similar aims and motives, ET counts as virtue. Hence, ET is either substantially virtuous or else must radically change conceptually in order to make it non-virtuous. That is: either ET counts as substantially virtuous and the PGP applies or ET fundamentally changes in the argument and the objection founders on an equivocation.

So, let us apply the PGP to the claim that faith is a species of ET. The argument becomes very simple and straightforward at this point:

- (1) Faith is a species of ET.
- (2) PGP.
- (3) Thus, what we say substantially of ET, we must say of faith.
- (4) ET is substantially virtuous
- (5) Thus, faith is virtuous.

Chapter 5 defends (1) and I take it that (2) as extremely strong intuitive appeal in addition to the brief argument I gave for it earlier. And we have seen good reason to accept (4) as the upshot of our preceding discussion. Therefore, we must accept that faith is epistemically virtuous, given those modest premises. One might think that this argument proves too much—giving epistemic value and positive status to anyone’s trusting of a religious authority. But that is not the case, since virtues must have certain conditions, as I argued in Chapter 1, the faith that counts as a species of *virtuous* ET must satisfy certain conditions as well in order to count as a species of ET (rather than some kind of vicious trusting). We shall discuss those important criteria a bit later in this chapter.

Let me make a few remarks about my language in (4) and (5) above. Since faith is a species of ET, we must think of it as a particular expression of ET in certain ways. We have seen that those ways depend upon having religious content and having entrenched and central beliefs. But, *qua* species, faith is an expression or, alternatively, an *act of ET*. Thus, I do not claim that faith proper is a virtue because it is an expression or act of ET. To preserve this genus-species relationship as a distinction between virtues proper and acts/expressions of those virtues, I do not conclude that faith is a virtue. *That*

conclusion implicitly destroys the genus-species relationship at the heart of my analysis and this argument. Instead, faith is an *act of virtue* rather than a virtue simpliciter. That is, faith is virtuous rather than *a virtue*. The language and distinction the language preserves may seem nit-picky or inconsequential, but it is vital to sustain the genus-species relationship at the core of my analysis and account of faith.

Even with this distinction in mind, the conclusion here remains our target: we have shown that faith is epistemically virtuous via its connection with ET, considering some interesting facts holding for genus-species relationships. The genus-species argument, then, is quite strong. It is deductive and deals with claims that are either quite intuitive or form the target of sustained argumentation on my part. The next section, giving my Parity Argument, is neither deductive nor as strong. But that does not entail that such an argument is weak or that it is not convincing. Rather, its line of reasoning we find in other influential philosophers and other important arguments in the philosophy of religion. Let us turn to it now.

The Parity Argument

In this section, I shall argue that if we are going to accept ET as epistemically virtuous, we should accept the same claim for faith by parity of reasoning.³²³ Like the Genus-Species Argument above, the core premise here is the result of the argument in Chapter 5: namely, that faith is a kind of ET.

My argument in this section draws its inspiration from Augustine.

³²³ The use of parity-style arguments has some influential proponents in religious epistemology. For instance, William Alston argues that our ordinary use of sense perception lies on (roughly) equal footing, epistemically speaking of course, with what he calls “mystical practice.” Therefore, if we blithely accept the former, we should accept the epistemic standing of the latter, since neither claims any different justificatory stance or status than the other. See his *Perceiving God*, Chs. 1-5.

Now we ourselves are our own witnesses for the knowledge of things which are within reach of our senses, whether interior or exterior...And so we clearly need other witnesses for things which are out of reach of our sense, since we cannot base our knowledge on our own evidence; and we *trust* the witnesses of those who, we believe, have or have had, those things within reach of their senses. Thus, in the case of visible things which we ourselves have not seen, we believe those who have seen them...Hence, in respect of invisible things which are out of reach of our own interior perception, we ought likewise to put our *trust* in witnesses who have learnt of those things, when they have been once presented to them in that immaterial light, or who behold them continually so displayed.³²⁴ (emphasis mine)

Let us take his argument apart to see how it applies to the main thesis of this chapter. He begins with a claim about our knowledge and experience that we take to be obvious—we are not in the proper epistemic positions *ourselves* to justify all that we think we know directly.³²⁵ Thus we need “witnesses” for a great deal of our knowledge and we must trust them in order to ensure that we have a robust store of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and the like. Thus, we have an argument for the epistemic necessity and propriety of something very much like my ET (if not almost identical).

But Augustine’s next step is the focus since we already see the need and appropriateness of placing trust in others for non-religious beliefs; we have the same reasons for the need and appropriateness of placing trust in others for religious beliefs, too. We move from trust in others, through which we learn of “visible” things, to having trust in others; through which we learn of “invisible” things. I take the visible-invisible distinction to track, at least in part, a distinction between mundane matters and religious ones.³²⁶ What we have, I think, is an analogical/parity of reasoning argument by

³²⁴ *City of God*, Book XI, Chapter, 3.

³²⁵ In this claim, we see the core motivation behind my Transmission Argument in Chapter 2.

³²⁶ I intend my interpretation of the visible vs. invisible distinction here as religious vs. non-religious as an interpretive schema for Augustine’s use in this passage. It should not be read as an interpretation or

Augustine from the necessity and epistemic propriety of placing trust in others to the propriety of faith. One could view it as a sort of parity of reasoning procedure Augustine develops between trust in witnesses for visible things not present to us and faith/trust in witnesses for invisible things not present to us. And, since he argues for the epistemic aptness of the former, we should conclude with such aptness for the latter.

The general schema here fits my account nicely. I offer no modification of the reasoning above, but rather to draw the analogy closer or, to put it another way, to make the reasoning involved more equal. If we take the result from the previous chapter; namely, that faith (in) is a species of ET, we see just how closely ET in non-religious cases aligns with faith in religious cases. The genus-species claim simply strengthens and clarifies the general sort of argument and reasoning we find in Augustine.

But parity arguments are only as strong as the relations between their objects with respect to our capacity to reason about them equivalently. One might think that the move from ‘visible’ to ‘invisible’ objects of ET or faith makes the application of the reasoning illicit. In particular, one might object that *qua* visible one can in principle be in a position to know oneself directly what one takes on ET from another indirectly. But, *qua* invisible, one cannot in principle be in a position to know these religious beliefs directly. This suggestion fails in both of its claims.

First, there are some things that one cannot know in principle for which one must display ET if one is to know them. Augustine himself gives us an example; namely, the good will of a friend: “[t]herefore you will see acts, and hear words, but, concerning your

analysis of any distinction between invisible and visible either in general (or in any other places where Augustine may use these terms).

friend's will, that which cannot be seen and heard you will *believe*" (emphasis mine).³²⁷ I may have strong evidence for the good will of a friend shown in that person's actions, words, dispositions or what have you. But I cannot *in principle* ever have direct access to this person's will—such knowledge remains a matter of trust or belief to me. So, under the supposition (that I shall deny in the next paragraph) that religious beliefs are necessarily invisible—i.e. that one cannot know them directly in principle—such supposition will not distinguish all things we take on non-religious ET from that which one may take on religious faith. Hence, the first part of this putative objection fails.

Second, in assuming that one cannot, even in principle, be directly aware of the 'invisible' things of religious faith, one assumes something quite contentious from the outset. I suppose that it is a fact that many religious folks do not have direct contact with whatever religious object one takes to be authoritative but this fact seems *contingent*. Whether one thinks that God does not reveal God's self to everyone or that not everyone is in the proper moral or intellectual position to 'see' the divine reality or some other such reason, typically one *can* in principle become directly aware of one's religious object. Of course, this depends a great deal on the specifics of how one cashes out one's direct object, the method of revelation, etc. Thus, for a wide variety of religious persons, one may say that direct 'seeing' of one's religious object *is* possible in principle; i.e. that it is not a *necessary* fact that one must always rely on faith. So, the second part of the objection above proves false, too. We can dismiss it, in that case.

I take it, then, that the Parity Argument here provides us with good *prima facie* reason to think that faith is an act of virtue, based primarily in its close relation to ET *qua*

³²⁷ Augustine, *Concerning the Faith of Things Not Seen*, Chs. 2-4, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, Vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. C. L. Cornish (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 338.

species. I use the term '*prima facie*' here to note that, while I think this argument does a fine job in proving the main thesis, it still remains less rigorous *as a proof* than the deductive argument above. Let us now move on to the next argument, the Act of Virtue Argument.

The Act of Virtue Argument

I shall contend in this section that faith is an act of epistemic virtue because it satisfies the definition of "epistemic virtue" that I analyzed and defended in Chapter 1. Recall that

an act *A* is an act of virtue *V* if and only if *A* arises from the motivational component of *V* and *A* is something a person with *V* would (probably) do in the circumstances.

This forms the key criteria for my arguments in this section. Thus, defined we have two conditions that faith must satisfy to qualify as an act of virtue. In order to satisfy the first condition, faith must 'arise' from the motivational element of the virtue of which it is an act or expression; namely, ET. Accordingly, our first task shall be to determine the relation of faith to the motivation component of ET.

In Chapter 3, I argued that there is a distinctive motivation element to ET involving confidence. Specifically, I argued that ET characterizes a kind of confident 'seeing' of some object of ET that we deem worthy. ET is a response to cognitive risk with intellectual confidence and, in extending that confidence in ET, we 'see' the object of our trust as *worthy*. We find a kind of confident reliance or a kind of relying confidence when we consider how ET filters our perception (in a rather loose sense of

‘perception’) of the person in whom we trust. So much for the review of Chapter 3. Given our overall characterization of faith in Chapter 5, I see tremendously overlap here. When one has faith in *S*, one sees *S* as authoritative; such that one depends upon *S* and one is confident in *S*. Consider William Alston’s description of the object of faith:

[the term “faithful”] has to do with the object role. A *faithful* person is one who is *worthy* of faith being reposed in him or her, *trustworthy*, reliable, loyal, steadfast, constant, and so on. It is as if the genius of the language puts the emphasis on the characteristics that inspire one to have faith in another...³²⁸ (emphasis his)

Here, we see how Alston characterizes the object of faith—i.e. the person that is *trusted* or the person in whom one has faith. Now, clearly, one can actually place one’s faith in an object unlike Alston’s description due to an innocent mistake or devious deception. But the point I want to take from Alston here is not regarding the *object* (as he describes it) but about how the person of faith *views* that object. The person of faith views the object as trustworthy, loyal, steadfast, and so on. If we make explicit the epistemological side here, the point is that the person of faith views the object as *epistemically* trustworthy or reliable. In short, Alston describes viewing the object of faith with epistemic confidence. Thus, we find the same sort of “seeing-*S*-with-confidence” for faith as with ET. Faith accurately and closely captures the motivational aspect of ET. Faith, in that case, arises from the motivation component of ET.

But, what grounds do we have to think that a person with ET *qua* person of virtue will (probably) express that ET as faith? To put the question another way: is faith a plausible expression of ET for the person of virtue? This question needs precision. Which are we asking: *must* a person with ET have faith or *can* a person with ET have faith? The answer to the latter question seems to be a clear ‘yes,’ if we look at any

³²⁸ Alston, *Perceiving God*, 13-14.

possible list of paradigmatic persons of virtue. But, the definition above seems to suggest the former, stronger claim. However, I am not sure the question is as easy as it seems. The definition above says that an act of virtue is what a person with the virtue in question would probably do *in those circumstances*. The answer hangs upon how one describes and analyzes the circumstances.

Let us suppose that we have some exemplar of virtue, ‘Socrates’ to have a handy label, someone who possesses all of the virtues (moral and epistemic) whatever they may be. Socrates, thereby, has ET and uses it in a paradigmatically and practically wise manner. Must Socrates have faith? Well, the answer there is indeterminate and importantly so. Socrates’ expressions of virtue (i.e. his acts of virtue) are indexed to circumstances in the definition. That is, we cannot say, for any virtue V or act of virtue A, that Socrates must express V as A *independently of particular circumstances*—Socrates’ expression of V is indeterminate without a concrete context.

If faith is to be an act of virtue, then there must be some plausible set of circumstances whereby Socrates expresses his ET as faith. We cannot possibly hope to detail *all* possible circumstances to see which might or might not plausibly involve faith, so we are left with this question: are there plausible contexts in which a person of virtue displays ET as faith? The answer seems to be ‘yes.’ Consider Augustine’s *Confessions*. It contains an account of the moment and circumstances of his conversion. Until his conversion, he describes his desire to have faith, be chaste (eventually), to love God deeply, and all other attributes concomitant with conversion. But it took what he considers a divine message (“take it, and read”) to bring about the conversion.³²⁹ I use

³²⁹ *Confessions*, Bk. VIII, Ch. 12. This is not to imply that the “take it, and read” is the sum of what Augustine took to be God’s message since the message contains the content of what Augustine took and

Augustine here as an example; my point is not tied to the cogency of his response. But, my use is not arbitrary. I take Augustine to be a plausible candidate for a person of epistemic virtue. Like Aristotle, Newton, and others, he had many false beliefs but, as I argued in Chapter 1, that does not count against one's status as a person of virtue. So his responses to his circumstances are philosophically and epistemologically telling.

My suggestion is that we can conceive of circumstances in which a response of faith is plausible (even if one thinks that such a response is unlikely). To reject that possibility is to reject the epistemic plausibility of faith *tout court* and thus beg the question against my account. So long as there are some such possible circumstances where faith appropriately expresses ET then my account of faith can satisfy the definition of an act of virtue from Chapter 1. I am not trying to say that most acts of putative faith really are acts of virtue; only that *some possible* acts of faith can be putatively virtuous. There is no small difference between those two claims. Whether any given, particular expression of ET is or is not (virtuous) faith remains a contingent matter beyond the scope of my contention here. It might be more interesting (philosophically and theologically) to argue that some set of circumstances are *in fact* those that make faith an appropriate expression, but I do not require that strong of an argument here. All I need is some plausible set of circumstances wherein someone like 'Socrates' (or Augustine or whomever) plausibly expresses faith—not to describe some actual set of circumstances where faith should be expressed. The difference is subtle but it makes a huge impact upon the strength of my claim and, therefore, upon the strength of the argument necessary to make good on that claim. As a matter of contingent fact, it seems quite plausible that

read as well as God's guiding Augustine through the passage read. The best interpretation of the message, I would think, seems to be the whole of the experience: hearing the words, picking up the text, and having it impact Augustine *qua* medium of divine revelation.

there are instances of faith (*qua* ET) that satisfy my account here and, thus, are acts of epistemic virtue. But, there being such instances is not entailed by the theory. I am setting up the conditions for faith to count as an act of virtue, which is a different task than saying that *some particular* instance of faith really is an act of virtue. While the latter task is interesting, I lack the space and time here to pursue it adequately.

The circumstances that promote the expression of faith relate to truth. Faith, on any conception, is a way of an agent's relating him/herself to some kind of divine reality or religious truth about the deep structure of the world. If there are circumstances in which trusting a person helps us obtain those truths (in some deep way), then such circumstances provide us with grounds to express ET as faith. Thus, "faith is not only a habit of the mind, but one that will get us to some truths that would otherwise be inaccessible to us" by trusting someone more authoritative than us with respect to those putative truths.³³⁰ To assume that there are no such truths is, as I remarked, simply to rule out any epistemic role for faith *tout court*. So, accepting the possibility of these truths, we see some way to think about possible circumstances that call for faith.

Zagzebski herself acknowledges the role that circumstances must play in appropriate expressions of virtue; arguing that "[w]hat counts as a rational belief is what [paradigm exemplars of rationality] would or might believe *in the circumstances in question*" (emphasis mine).³³¹ Thus, what counts as 'appropriate' acts of virtue for any given circumstances depends upon what the paradigmatically rational person of virtue would do or believe in those same circumstances. Socrates *qua* paradigmatically rational determines what acts or beliefs count as appropriate in whatever circumstances might

³³⁰ Kemp, *op. cit.*, 467.

³³¹ "Phronesis and Religious Belief," in *Knowledge, Belief, and Character: Readings in Virtue Epistemology*, ed. Guy Axtell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 217.

find himself. The person of virtue, Socrates, determines appropriate expressions of virtue by possessing practical wisdom or *phronesis*. Thus we find in Zagzebski:

[p]hronesis is necessary because the virtues are many, but the self is one. It is, among other things, the virtue that permits a person to mediate between and among the considerations arising from all the virtues in any giving situation, and to act in a way that gives each its proper weight. *Phronesis* determines what is right or justified or praiseworthy to do or believe, all things considered.³³²

Insofar as we stipulate that Socrates possesses all virtues, Socrates must possess *phronesis* and it is *that* feature of him that accounts for his rationality. The person of practical wisdom (*phronimos*), on any broad Aristotelian account like Zagzebski's, becomes the standard for what counts as an appropriate expression or act of virtue in any given context. Recall that the definition offered in Chapter 1 for "act of virtue" *explicitly* refers to what a virtuous person would do *in the circumstances* in which that person finds him/herself. The context sensitivity to which the *phronimos* must attend, therefore, flows naturally the core definition of an act of virtue that informs this entire work. Talk of the *phronimos* provides a way to discuss exactly how the virtuous person flexibly responds to different contexts *qua* virtuous.

We asked the question as to whether Socrates would plausibly display ET as faith in some circumstances. Now, we have focused that question to become: will the *phronimos* express ET as faith? To focus the discussion yet again, we are concerning ourselves with the *epistemological* side of virtue and, so, we need more precision about what exactly appropriate beliefs or believing will involve. For Zagzebski, the questions of appropriate belief, belief based in *phronesis*, and 'rational' belief (from the earlier quotation) blend into the same issue. And we have seen why: paradigmatic persons of

³³² Ibid., 214.

virtue necessarily display *phronesis* which, in turn, determines what counts as appropriate acts of virtue. And, given our epistemological bent here, this becomes a question of appropriate acts of belief. What Socrates *qua phronimos* believes in some context determines both the rationality and epistemic propriety of that belief. So, we finally get to the last version of our original question: are there circumstances in which Socrates' faith-beliefs *qua* expression of ET turn out to be 'rational' (in the sense involving *phronesis* above)?

Zagzebski argues that there are such circumstances. Her affirmation results from one of her principles of rational belief, grounded in the discussion above. The first such principle is:

S's belief *p* in culture *C* is rational just in case a person with *phronesis* outside culture *C* might believe *p* if she were in *S*'s circumstances in culture *C*. To say that the *phronim*_ might believe *p* is just to say that it is not the case that she would not believe *p*.³³³

The key addition in her principle from our previous discussion is the role that one's culture plays. For any account of a virtue *qua* character trait, one's cultural framework remains vital. And since *phronesis* or practical *rationality* is a virtue, our being rational in that sense depends to a significant to degree on the culture in which one learns, habituates, and comes to express that rationality. Thus:

[r]ationality is something we all share as humans, but even though there is no *particular* culture that all humans have, it is nonetheless true that all humans have culture. No human thinks in a way that is not embedded in a culture. So the idea that a belief is rational only if it passes norms of reason that are independent of all culture misunderstands the sense in which rationality derives from what humans are like *qua* human.³³⁴

³³³ Ibid., 215.

³³⁴ Ibid., 208.

Insofar as all (or nearly all) humans possess some recognizable capacity to reason in certain ways, rationality cannot be tied to one particular culture or set of cultures. But since rationality is the rationality *of humans*, its acquisition and performance remains imbedded in each person's culture. Thus, Zagzebski explains Hilary Putnam's claim that reason is both immanent and transcendent (with respect to one's culture).

So, Zagzebski uses all of her theories of *phronesis*, rationality, and culture to affirm that there are plausible instances of rational *religious* belief. She says that

[i]t seems likely that when [this principle of rational belief is] filled out to be sufficiently useful and applied to Christian beliefs, it will turn out that most of these beliefs are rational for most Christians...I think it will also turn out that the same [principle has] the consequence that many beliefs of the other major religions are also rational...³³⁵

The whole discussion above accounts for her affirmation. Our idealized person of virtue in Socrates provides the standard for rational or appropriate belief *qua phronimos*. But, Socrates does this only if we are able to place him in some set of concrete circumstances and, included in that, we find the culture in which an agent finds him/herself. And when placed in the overall culture in which one finds himself, we can see plausible instances of persons of virtue having faith (in). We have said that differences in contexts are epistemically significant. Culture certainly forms a large portion of one's overall context. But why think that different beliefs of different *phronimoi* in different cultures are *epistemically* different? Perhaps they differ only because of moral or practical reasons where genuine epistemic reasons remain fixed.

We need, then, to see if there are any properly epistemic mechanisms than can account for these differences among *phronimoi*. Luckily, we seem to have various plausible examples of mechanisms that can explain how such cultural differences are

³³⁵ Ibid., 217.

epistemically significant. Different cultures might (and probably do) appeal to different kinds of religious evidence, different schemas for obtaining/weighing such evidence, or even different views about what religious evidence is in the first place. Clearly, such considerations are epistemically vital. But, there are more than just evidential considerations that apply here. Different cultures might have different notions of how one relates (cognitively) to the divine and (most forcefully, to my lights) differences in conceptual frameworks in which all of these questions are answered, posed, and formulated. The epistemic elements of one's conceptual framework can color what one thinks about our epistemic relation to the world (including the religious aspects of the world), its relation to us, and how those relations *ought* to be filled out in our beliefs and doxastic commitments. Thus, it can make a huge and decidedly epistemic difference for the agent living, developing, and believing in that culture. There will be differences—sure—but there will (probably, at least) be examples of virtuous/rational agents that have faith. And that is the claim that we require here.

Let us be careful. We are not saying that in all contexts, a virtuous person *must* express ET as faith. This would simply run afoul of the vital role that circumstances play in our cognition, virtue, and even rationality. But, when we include general notions about the *phronimos* in concrete circumstances, one's culture provides a framework that we can use to understand how there can be *religious* persons of virtue. Not all virtuous agents must possess faith, but if the idealized agent (à la Socrates) finds him/herself in certain epistemic and cultural contexts, we can expect that agent to express ET as faith. Faith turns out to be something that a person of virtue would (probably) do, but we must

restrict this to specific sets of epistemic circumstances embedded within human forms of culture.

Now, one might object here and think that such an overt appeal to culture simply results in some kind of epistemic cultural relativism that many philosophers (including myself) find implausible. But, I do not think that this implication follows for a few reasons. First, emphasizing culture remains *part and only part* of the overall story about acts of virtue. One's expressions of virtue are not simple responses to one's culture. One can reflect critically on one's culture and reject some of its values, commitments, or what have you. Second, we also appeal to an idealized, non-cultural agent in Socrates. Reason may come about and work within a culture, but it goes beyond culture as well. Socrates' acts are indeterminate without a context or culture, but Socrates *qua* some general notion of person of virtue has some sense to it. Were reason simply relative to culture, we could not make sense of any rational or virtuous agent in any ideal or non-cultural form. So, in emphasizing one's culture, one is neither saying that *only* culture matters or that there is no standards *at all* apart from one's culture. We can affirm *both* that culture matters a great deal for one's rationality and virtue, but also that there is more to such standards than culture alone. And, in affirming this latter point, we find a view inconsistent with relativism.

The upshot of the preceding is this: there are some plausible circumstances where faith adequately or appropriately expresses ET. This claim, combined with my previous argument that faith involves the motivation component of ET, shows that my account of faith here can satisfy the definition of 'act of virtue' from Chapter 1. Therefore, we come to the main point of this chapter: faith is an act of epistemic virtue (given the

circumstances).³³⁶ The arguments I have given in this chapter—the Genus-Species Argument, the Parity Argument, and the Act of Virtue Argument—all converge upon this same thesis. And it is this core thesis that forms the backbone claim of this whole work in giving a sustained, systematic account of religious epistemology from a virtue-theoretic position. The next chapter will address some of the overall implications, issues, objections, and problems to a virtue-theoretic account of faith. But, let us take some space to address some of the *specific* issues that follow from my particular account of epistemic virtue (and act of virtue). Chapter 7 deals with objections to the view that faith is epistemically virtuous on a generic account of virtue (defined however you wish), so I need to spend some time discussing implications and objections to the specific account of virtue I defend here.

Implications

In this section I shall draw some implications from my claim that faith is an act of epistemic virtue; with ‘act of epistemic virtue’ defined only in the sense from Chapter 1. The next chapter will consider implications of this claim from a more general point of view. But, the specific (modified) Zagzebskian account virtue I have provided has some interesting implications that other account of virtue need not provide.

Faith and the Doctrine of the Mean

First, Zagzebski and I both follow Aristotle in affirming that virtues occur as a mean state between vices of excess and deficiency.³³⁷ The doctrine of the mean is

³³⁶ Or, to put it without the qualification, faith *can be* an act of epistemic virtue.

³³⁷ See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 219-221, for a good extended discussion of the mean.

particularly important for proper religious belief. Given that ET is an epistemic virtue, then it follows that ET occupies a mean state between two vices or two extremes of excess and deficiency as we discussed in Chapter 3. Given that discussion *real* ET; that is, *virtuous* ET will exist between two extremes of what we can call ‘gullibility’ and ‘suspiciousness’ (excessive trust and deficient trust, respectively).³³⁸ These same lessons apply to faith *qua* species of ET. Thus, faith—when it really is an act of *virtue*—will admit of a mean between two extremes of excess and deficiency.

We have the religious analogues of ‘gullibility’ and ‘suspiciousness’ set against the true expression of ET as a virtue in faith.³³⁹ The former sort of extreme is easiest to see. Typically, we hear many different people claiming that actions are done in or that beliefs are based upon “blind faith.” Now, presumably, it is the ‘blind’ modifier here that does all of the nasty work.³⁴⁰ It seems that “blind faith” adequately describes what one would consider gullibility. I am gullible when I am too easy to convince or when I believe/accept something too quickly or too easily. Again, the “too” modifiers in the previous sentence reinforce the excessiveness involved in gullibility. But what makes “blind faith” *blind*? The ‘blind’ aspect of blind faith implies that the belief in question goes beyond what is appropriate (given the circumstances surrounding that faith). One has either placed one’s faith in an object one ought not to trust or one has trusted that

³³⁸ For another account of credulity or gullibility as a vice, see section 1 of James Ross’ “Willing Belief and Rational Faith” in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13-21.

³³⁹ Kenneth Kemp draws the same implication: “faith is a mean between the extremes of gullibility and excessive skepticism...[faith] is a virtue when it is a habit of making the right choice with respect to belief.” *Op. cit.*, 467.

³⁴⁰ Unless one assumes that all faith is blind faith which seems quite unlikely in the first place and tremendously speculative in the second.

object to an inappropriate degree or in an inappropriate way.³⁴¹ We shall discuss what “appropriate” means later in this chapter. So, on the way that we have construed what blind faith is and what makes it blind, we find that blind faith works as the religious parallel to gullibility (for non-religious ET). One has *blind* faith in *S* when one extends one’s faith *too far* in trusting *S* or trusting *S* to an inappropriately *excessive* degree. In either case, then, blind faith is simply excessive ET beyond that which is virtuous (i.e. genuine faith).

Once we distinguish *excessive*, blind faith from *virtuous*, appropriate faith, we see an immediate and tremendous benefit to my account of faith. Recall that, at the very beginning of our discussion of faith, I state that not all putative or alleged acts of faith really count as genuine or virtuous faith. Our discussion of blind faith and gullibility informs that statement. We have a ready-made argument *built from the conceptual tools of the account itself* to claim that some alleged ‘acts of faith’ are really vicious or, more precisely, acts of vice. The doctrine of the mean, in affirming vices of excess, allows us to rule out certain acts as vicious that we would find deeply troubling were they to count as genuine, robust faith. Let me consider only one example—Jim Jones and his followers in Guyana. In particular, let us address their mass suicide as a putative act of faith. I assume that Jim Jones was *not* an adequate religious figure or authority.³⁴² Thus, expressing ET in him to any religiously significant sense would count as inappropriate expressions of ET and, thus, non-genuine faith. Given the details of Jones’ history,

³⁴¹ Of course, what “appropriate” faith amounts to here remains tremendously vague, and I cannot offer much to make it less vague when one considers these issues in the abstract. But, I shall discuss below why one cannot in principle be precise when it comes to “appropriate” expressions of *any* virtue (including faith).

³⁴² I think that one could definitely *argue* for this claim if someone finds it intuitively implausible. But it seems to me plausible that Jim Jones was inadequate even without such an argument.

teaching, actions, etc., I think it plausible that members of his group *ought* to have known or realized that he should not be followed. Or, at the very least, they should have entertained *serious* doubts about his status as a genuine religious authority. Thus, in following him—including killing themselves—the actions of his followers do not express the right kind of trust in the right kind of object in the right way. Their suicide is not a *real* act of faith in any appropriate or virtuous sense. To kill oneself for Jim Jones, I would think, would not be a matter of merely lacking genuine faith, due to the severity and finality of the act. Instead, it seems possible if not plausible to think of their actions in the mass suicide as expressions of blind faith—i.e. excessive ET misplaced in the wrong object. My account provides a satisfactory answer to this putative act of faith in denying their actions as *genuine* or virtuous faith. In any decent account of faith, we need the tools to distinguish (at least theoretically) actions like those of Jim Jones' followers from that of Mother Teresa, for instance. The account I have defended here gives us those tools without adding any conceptual machinery. I take this all to be an important benefit of my theory.

Faith and Context-Sensitivity

But, in my analysis of the doctrine of the mean and its application, the notion of virtuous acts as *appropriate* acts does a lot of work. I remarked that a major criterion for what acts count as virtuous expressions and which count as vicious (or, minimally, non-virtuous) concerns a kind of appropriateness. This term is vague, but I shall argue here (given certain Aristotelian views) that it must be vague and, in fact, such vagueness provides a benefit for my account. For Aristotle, the mean is not simply a mathematical

average but it is notion of what is *appropriate* for an agent (relative to that agent's overall circumstances). The mean involved in virtue is a mean "relative to us," as he puts it.³⁴³ I take the upshot of this view to be that what counts as a mean and, thereby, what counts as virtuous depends to a very large degree on the *particular* circumstances in which that *particular* agent acts or believes.³⁴⁴ The point is this: what count as a proper (i.e. good) expression of virtue (either epistemic or moral) is highly *context sensitive* (as I shall call it).³⁴⁵ As we saw with our idealized agent, Socrates, what virtues he expresses and how he expresses them depends significantly and essentially on the circumstances in which we finds himself. Thus, his actions *qua* virtuous always index themselves to his context.

Thus, (epistemic or moral) appropriateness becomes a matter of being adequately sensitive to one's context. That context determines, in part, what actually is or is not appropriate in it. Independent of any such context, one has a difficult time determining just what is in fact appropriate or virtuous. The sacrifice of Jim Jones' followers seems to us vicious as an expression of blind faith whereas other religious sacrifices might not so, because of relevant differences in the object of faith and the general context in which any putative self-sacrifice might occur. (It is also important to note that the sacrifice of the Jones cult had a decidedly non-religious motive; namely, to avoid the authorities that were closing in upon them. The motives of an agent in a context are quite important, too.) Appropriateness works out as doing or believing the right thing at the right time to the right person in the right way and for the right reasons. And what determines the times, ways, and reasons is largely a function of the context in which that action or belief

³⁴³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, II:6, 1107a.

³⁴⁴ That is why my account of an act of virtue features the proviso that such an act must be one that a virtuous agent *would do if in those circumstances*. My language in that definition follows Zagzebski who, in turn, seems to be following the general idea of the mean "relative to us" in Aristotle.

³⁴⁵ The type of context might be epistemic, moral, or both—depending upon what exactly one analyzes.

occurs. That context-sensitivity is precisely why what counts as ‘appropriate’ remains vague.

I find this context sensitivity quite beneficial. It gives the account flexibility in order to avoid hard and fast rules. For instance, if some person *P* accepts some religious authority *A*, my view implies that *P* is not required (by *P*’s faith) to accept all of *A*’s claims or to accept them all to the same degree. If acts of virtue really are context sensitive, rules like “if you have faith in *X*, then you *must* belief in all pronouncements of *X* and believe them equally” turn out to be false. Maybe one does *in fact* belief all such claims, but this is not *necessary* on my view. And I take such an implication to be beneficial. It is possible that (certain) authorities err and, thus, we should not accept any rule necessarily implying otherwise.

Context sensitivity also offers a partial explanation of how people in different circumstances have different religious beliefs.³⁴⁶ Suppose that we have two persons, Smith and Jones, and suppose further than Jones and Smith are equivalent with respect to the virtues they possess. If they are in different contexts, then it seems likely that they will express those virtues differently. Were faith grounded in some sort of universal disposition to believe or some kind of cognitive faculty, we would be hard-pressed to explain the variety of faith-based beliefs we see expressed.³⁴⁷

Faith and the Reciprocity of Virtues

Also, given an Aristotelian background, we have what is called the reciprocity of the virtues. According to Aristotle, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) determines the proper

³⁴⁶ Differences in the agents themselves also form part of the overall explanation.

³⁴⁷ Plantinga’s *sensus divinitatis* would be the veiled target of my criticism here. More on his account of the *sensus* and Reformed Epistemology in general in Chapter 8.

expression of virtue by determining the mean in any given context.³⁴⁸ So, to possess any virtue, one must possess *phronesis*. But, if one has *phronesis*, then one has all of the virtues, since possessing it makes acting accordance with the mean possible.³⁴⁹ Hence, one has any virtue only if one has *phronesis* and if one has *phronesis*, then one has all virtues—this is the reciprocity of the virtues. So, if some person possesses ET, then that person must possess *phronesis*, which implies the possession of all virtues. How does this bear upon faith?

One immediate result is that faith cannot work in isolation. People cannot cognize by ET alone and, therefore, faith *qua* expression of ET must work in concert and conjunction with other acts of virtue. The person of practical wisdom (*phronimos*), when displaying faith, will not express it in isolation, either. We find relations to our previous discussions, faith must be appropriate for the context in question, but it must be appropriate for the context *all things considered*. Genuine expressions of faith do not generate beliefs without influence from other virtues. Some express other, non-religious sorts of virtues and this is what will disallow blind faith. One can easily trust too much (religiously or non-religiously) if one's ET/faith has no guidance from other important intellectual skills or epistemic virtues. But, use of them, according to the reciprocity doctrine, informs the use of ET and its expression in faith. To display blind faith is not just vicious itself, but part of what *makes it excessive* is the lack of other virtues as limiting conditions. Lacking the *phronesis* to guide ET as faith entails one lacking other virtues, so the *excessiveness* of blind faith—its epistemic badness—comes across in its misplaced relation to *phronesis* and other virtues. Blind faith is blind precisely because it

³⁴⁸ *Nichomachean Ethics*, II: 6, 1107a.

³⁴⁹ *Nichomachean Ethics*, VI: 13, 1144b30.

lacks proper guidance. The other epistemic virtues involved in *genuine* faith will almost certainly work to defeat putative acts of blind faith. Here, we can think of epistemic humility, open-mindedness, and certain virtues dealing with evidence (e.g. obtaining it, weighing it, maintaining it, and so on). If one is sufficiently open-minded, for example, it seems unlikely that one devote oneself to a person like Jim Jones to the extent that one kills oneself at his whim. Thus, *qua* act of virtue, genuine faith will involve criteria that make such excessive faith vicious and provide the agent with the traits conducive to avoid such excess in the first place.

Also, since virtues of any type work on the same structure, *phronesis* unifies moral virtues with epistemic virtues and vice versa. Morally vicious persons cannot possess the genuine virtue of ET (from the reciprocity of the virtues). So, it would be unlikely—though not impossible, strictly speaking—for such persons to express ET as a virtuous person would in any context; religious or not. Thus, it seems *very* unlikely that a morally vicious person will display virtuous faith in any particular instance or a generalized, dispositional version of such faith on the whole. Many philosophers argue that any decent account of ‘faith’ should make it impossible “that the perfect scoundrel may yet be a man of faith.”³⁵⁰ The unity of the virtues here makes tremendously implausible and probably practically impossible that a person with robust faith-in also have deep vices of character, which satisfies the intuition above. There are also those who, in classing faith as a theological virtue, argue that it involves other traits like love and hope.³⁵¹ Supposing that these are in fact virtues, we can explain how they occur together using the doctrine of the reciprocity of the virtues. The doctrine implies that acts

³⁵⁰ Swinburne, op. cit., 113.

³⁵¹ See, especially, Augustine in *Enchiridion*, Chs. 3-8 and Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.62.

of faith necessarily occur with acts of love and hope, given the right circumstances of expression.

Faith and Character

Finally, we find an implication that obviously follows my virtue-theoretic approach to faith; namely, that one's faith *qua* expression of virtue belongs to what is deeply characteristic of an agent. Recognizing this simply follows from the nature of a virtue, as I have defined it. Recall from Chapter 3 that virtues of the sort I have defended must be deep and enduring excellences of a person involving traits of character. Thus, when some agent possesses any virtue, that virtue *qua* character trait must exemplify or characterize that agent as such. If Jones possesses courage, then Jones *is* courageous; where 'courageous' works to describe what *sort* of person Jones is. Thus, Jones' expressions or acts of courage remain part of the particular moral agent that Jones is and deeply characteristic of Jones as a moral agent.

In the same way, one's faith must deeply characterize *who* the person of faith is *qua* moral agent. Again, this seems to confirm something that I consider to be fairly obvious: a person's faith characterizes something deep about him/her as the person that s/he is. One's faith *characterizes* one in precisely the way that we would expect if faith is an expression of some deep character trait. The depth of faith in a person as a vital characteristic of one *as a person* confirms what we should expect on my account and, given my view of faith as an act of virtue, we can explain why a person's faith characterizes him/her. My theory also explains a negative feature we notice about faith and character. We want to deny, I suggest, that a person can have robust faith (in) but

that person's faith not really characterize him/her as such. The embeddedness of virtues as traits explains this truism. If some person does not seem "a person of faith," then s/he does not possess the robust, genuine faith-in that my account here analyzes. Again, we find confirmation of my theory in considering persons of faith and find that it can explain why we think as we do about how one's faith relates to one's character.

I have mentioned and discussed some of the important implications that my particular account of virtue provides, and I have argued that these implications either prove beneficial or provide evidence to accept the view. In Chapter 7, I shall address general implications of the view, but let us turn now to certain possible objections or problems that follow, given the specific definition of virtue I have defended in my theory.

Objections

Like the implications section, I shall leave *general* objections to the notion that faith is an act of virtue for the next chapter. Here, rather, I want to address problems that inflict my account due to the specific definition of 'virtue' I offer at the core. Objections to the claim that faith is act of virtue *in general* will wait for Chapter 7.

Faith and Excess

We might consider an Aquinas-inspired objection to my claim that faith is a virtue lying between two vices of excess. Aquinas argues that the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) are not like non-theological virtues, in part, because the former and not the latter admit of a mean. Aquinas claims that

never can we love God as much as He ought to be loved, nor believe and hope in Him as much as we should. Much less, therefore, can there be

excess in such things. Accordingly the good of such virtues does not consist in a mean, but increases the more we approach to the summit.³⁵²

Aquinas' argument is succinct but powerful: due to the perfection of their object, theological virtues admit of no excess. And one can use this claim to criticize my view. Supposing that Aquinas is correct, theological virtues (including faith) do not work on the same philosophical framework as other virtues insofar as all non-theological virtues admit of a mean. But, if faith does not work like other virtues, I cannot use a non-theological virtue like ET as the model for faith. Hence, we lose all of the concepts underpinning faith and the arguments from the previous sections that faith can be an act of virtue. All of my arguments for this overall claim about virtuous faith rely upon the claim that faith is a species of ET.

My issue with this objection lies in the relative simplicity involved in saying that “there is no amount of faith in God *qua* God that is excessive.” The matter is more complex than this simple statement presents. I think that, were our intellectual faculties and cognitive context different, then Aquinas would be correct and *trust* would not be an adequate model for faith. But, if we accept our epistemic circumstances, I think we should say that there can be excessive faith. In making my point, I want to make certain connections between how a virtue works relative to the context of the agents possessing that virtue. Let us consider what I mean in an ethical sense, to make the epistemological point clearer.

Let us consider a virtue often repeated in our discussion: generosity. I assume that, if one is generous, one is motivated to give something to someone in order to make

³⁵² *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.64.4.

that someone's life better.³⁵³ And, as a virtue, one can give excessively; i.e., one can give too much of oneself to others. For instance, a person living at or below the poverty line can do *something* to benefit someone else (even if the giving is not monetary) whereas a billionaire can give quite a lot of money towards philanthropic ends. But, nevertheless, there are possible excesses involved. If the person in poverty gives too much of his/her time or money, then that person's family might suffer dramatically. Such could be excessive, non-virtuous 'generosity' or, rather, giving. And the billionaire can give excessively as well. That person could give so much that s/he comes to the point of poverty just like in our first example; thus obtaining the same result that (even for billionaires) one can give too much. The possibility of excessive and, thus, non-virtuous giving results from simple facts about the limits of one's resources. But suppose that one's resources had no limit. Simply to make the discussion more succinct, suppose that someone has an infinite amount of money, literally speaking. Could this person give excessively? I think the answer is 'no.' That is because such a person could give and give and give indefinitely and still have more than enough money to avoid serious harm to oneself and one's family. If you have an infinite amount of money, you can give infinitely with no harm done. Thus, in this fiscally strange world, there is no vice of excess for the person with unlimited resources.

Let us consider an epistemological parallel. Suppose you live in the Cartesian paradise mentioned earlier, such that all truths are open to your immediate, intuitive access. Thus, you know all truths *a priori*. Such a paradise would seem a close analogy to the unlimited resources in the generosity example. Now, suppose that God exists and, thus, you have immediate, absolutely certain knowledge of God's existence. In that case,

³⁵³ Leaving the type of gift (e.g. money, goods, time, effort, etc.) vague.

I would say that, like the unlimited resources world, there is no vice of excess. *Because you are absolutely certain with a priori knowledge* that God exists, you cannot possibly have an excess trust/faith. But, again like the unlimited resources case, we do not (unfortunately) live in that world. On any account of religious epistemology, God's existence is not laid out for human beings in the immediate, intuitive rigor described above.³⁵⁴ And because of that fact about the limits of our intellectual resources or state, faith does have an excess—providing the parallel to the generosity case. So long as one lacks the rigorous, Cartesian kind of certainty that God exists, the *mere possibility* of error should be enough to provide a limit on how much trust you can have in God, especially in light of the impact that religious beliefs can have for us, our immediate surroundings, and perhaps even the world at large. My view about faith is consistent with a person having a tremendous amount of faith in God virtuously (depending upon the context) but what I *am* denying is that such tremendous faith can truly really lack some possible limit or boundary.³⁵⁵

In both instances, the only way to claim with plausibility that there are no excesses possible is to have a strong, non-actual account of our financial/epistemic resources (i.e. the position in which one finds oneself). If one had unlimited money, then generosity could never be excessive and if one had unlimited intellectual prowess, then faith or love of God could never be excessive. But since our world is not like those worlds, we do have excesses. Virtues, as we discussed earlier, are indexed to the motives and aims of *our* world (and perhaps close ones, too). Radical change in the structure of the world (with respect to us) implies radical change in the structure of virtues in that

³⁵⁴ Even Alvin Plantinga's 'God faculty'—the *sensus divinitatis*—is clouded and obscured by sin.

³⁵⁵ Maybe there is no *practical* limit to the extent of one's faith but I rest with the stronger notion of epistemic possibility here.

world. Aquinas' claim about theological virtues having no excess works in certain worlds or viewed in certain ways regarding out (intellectual) relations to God, but when one views the claim set in our actual circumstances, it seems that excess is possible.³⁵⁶

Faith as a Gift

Aquinas offers another claim that one could craft into a possible objection to my theory. Another aspect of Aquinas' theory of theological virtues concerns their cause. In non-theological virtues, the cause of our having a virtue is our developing a natural potency we have via habituation to a developed good disposition. To a large extent, each agent remains significantly responsible for his/her possession of any given (non-theological) virtue. But this does not hold of theological virtues. Aquinas finishes a discussion of the cause of virtue by saying that "[i]t is therefore evident that all virtues are in us by nature aptitudinally and inchoately, but not according to perfection, *except the theological virtues, which are entirely from the outside*" (emphasis mine).³⁵⁷ Theological virtues are "infused in us by God alone"³⁵⁸ and that by "which God works in us without us."³⁵⁹ In effect, one's faith is the product of extreme epistemic or cognitive grace and, thus, it is something that we *receive* rather than something that we *develop* or

³⁵⁶ Importantly, Aquinas thinks that we (can) have certain knowledge that God exist. It is not intuitive or *a priori* as I detailed above, but claiming certain theistic knowledge remains a strong position to accept regarding our cognitive relation to God. A person holding such a view would, I think, be quite sanguine about the proper extent and amount of our faith, love, and hope placed in God. That is, Aquinas thinks that knowledge of God's existence is epistemically necessary and, thus, such necessity or certainty can ground an extraordinarily high degree of appropriate belief, love, and hope in God. If one accepts a weaker position about one's epistemic relation to God (and God's existence), then I one will find such a position unable to ground as high of an appropriate belief and love. For Aquinas' account of the certainty of faith, see *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae.4.8.

³⁵⁷ *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae.63.2.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1a2ae.62.1.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1a2ae.55.4.

habituate. Similarly, Augustine likes to call faith a “gift” of God, something that I take to be roughly equivalent to Aquinas’ point here.³⁶⁰

Like the objection above, Aquinas argues for an important difference between the theological virtues and those of the character and intellect. And, like above, if he is correct, then my connection between ET and faith fails; resulting in the collapse of my arguments that faith is an act of epistemic virtue. Thus, these comments require response. First, I shall suggest a tension for Aquinas rising in his account of the “infused” virtues and, second, I shall argue that even if Augustine is right that faith is a gift, it still fits our account of virtue.

Aquinas gives a famous distinction between “unformed” and “formed” faith. The former seems very much like belief and even demons appear to possess ‘unformed’ faith that God exists.³⁶¹ Formed faith, however, is closer to the concept of faith-in that I develop here. It goes beyond mere belief and, when “informed” by charity or love, becomes a virtue.³⁶² Such faith, therefore, can be meritorious. But, if *both* faith and love (*qua* theological virtues) are ‘infused,’ then they are meritorious for us even though they are only traits by which God acts *through* us, “without us.” I find this extraordinarily counterintuitive; namely, that one can be praised for something over which one has (evidently) no control *whatsoever*. How can our theological virtues be a credit to *us* if they are infused and maintained *only* by God?

So, let me suggest a modification to Aquinas’ doctrine. We may accept that God plays a major role in giving faith as a gift. But let us weaken his language to avoid references that God works in us *without us* or *from the outside*. If we keep his doctrine in

³⁶⁰ See, e.g., Augustine’s *Enchiridion* Ch. 31 for some of his characteristic comments about faith as a gift.

³⁶¹ For ‘demonic faith,’ see 2a2ae.5.2.

³⁶² 2a2ae.4.3-5.

those terms, our faith is *entirely* up to God's infusion and, thus, that we play no role in coming to have, maintaining, and using our faith. Now, since that implication seems worrisome, all we require is a removal of the "without us" 'and "from the outside" in his doctrine. We can keep the infusion and, following Augustine as well, we can maintain that faith is a gift. However, faith, if it is to be meritorious, must reflect some kind of cause in us as well. It must be *our* faith if we are to be praised for it. Faith may be a gift, but it has to be a gift that we *receive*. If God must infuse us for us to have faith, as Aquinas argues, then that infusion must be *accepted*. Otherwise, we are little more than religious marionettes or puppets where faith is nothing but God pulling upon our strings. Thus we find Moser echoing this argument: "we might think of faith in God as itself a divine gift...but in that case there would still be a crucial role for human volitional response in *willingly receiving* this gift."³⁶³

So, I contend that we can play a role in coming to possess faith and, if we have such a role, then we have the room to say that our acceptance works as a development of our character. Now, if one wants to follow Aquinas and Augustine, one can still accept that this development always works in concert with God and cannot occur without God's giving of faith, but that modification is not to remove God's responsibility for our faith. Instead, it simply makes our faith a *joint* venture. Now, I am not advocating this view, but rather I am suggesting it as a plausible way to maintain the Augustinian/Thomistic position here in a way consistent with my own theory.³⁶⁴ And, as such, we can disarm this objection. Let us move on to the next objection.

³⁶³ "Faith," in *Being Good: Christian Virtues for Everyday Life*, eds. Michael W. Austin and R. Douglas Geivett, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 22.

³⁶⁴ But my account of faith *qua* ET does require some (perceived) act of communication from the object of faith. Thus, if one has faith in God, then (typically) God must do something to communicate. God must

Non-Theistic Faith

Many religions come in theistic form. That is, many religions have some object or objects that occupy the role(s) of ‘divine reality’ (however that may be understood). According to my definition of ET and, thus, faith, there must be some *personal object* to one’s ET or faith. But, certain religious traditions—in particular certain strands of Buddhism—offer no personal object as the divine reality. Some religions may offer a non-personal object of faith and some may (appear to) offer no such object at all. Thus, my definition of faith (because of its relation to person-based ET) cannot capture the full depth and breadth of religious faith. J. L. Schellenburg provides us with two responses.

First, he remarks that

in certain nontheistic forms of religion the ultimate is thought of as in some sense *mediated* by personal beings, and so there is the possibility of reposing one’s trust in one or another of these beings as a way of relation to the (nonpersonal) ultimate.³⁶⁵ (emphasis his)

Hence, even if we consider nontheistic religious traditions, there is still room for faith in a person and in particular for faith-in as a way for the person of faith to move closer to the divine reality in question. But, even if the religion has no mediators to the ultimate, we still find a place for faith-in:

The trouble [with this objection] is that in nontheistic forms of religion it is typically not the *ultimate* that is thought of as the cause of salvation or liberation but *one’s own action* in uncovering the true self (or perhaps the truth that there is no self) beneath the distracting and misleading appearances generated by confusion and egocentricity.³⁶⁶ (emphasis his)

give something in this act of communication if we are to *receive* anything via faith/ET. Thus, we can make sense of the notion that faith requires some gift of God even on a non-Thomist/Augustinian account. There seems to be something about their account that is right but they take the inefficacy of the truster a bit too far, if my argument in this section holds.

³⁶⁵ J. L. Schellenburg, *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*, 120.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

So, even when there just is no ultimate object, we still find a crucial role for faith-in. In Chapter 2, I defined ET in such a way that is consistent with both self-ET and other-ET. So far, we have spoken about faith-in as faith-in-another but, if Schellenburg is right, then we can make sense of certain religious traditions as advocating faith-in-oneself. And, since ET is consistent with self-ET, faith-in will be consistent with faith-in-oneself as well. Thus, we can conclude that even in nontheistic traditions, we have a vital role for faith-in (of some sort). We can preserve the general account of faith defended in the previous chapter.

Faith as a Sui Generis State

Finally, one may object to my claim that faith is an act of epistemic virtue by attacking the faith-ET relationship in a different way. O. K. Bouwsma argues that religious faith is totally unlike any other non-religious state³⁶⁷. His explicit claims concern the total inapplicability of evidence (either positively or negative) for religious claims, arguing that faith has no concern with evidence, reason, or any other epistemic concept. Evidence cannot apply to God because of the utterly transcendent nature of a perfect Being set over all created things. We can put this talk in terms of trust. As Paul Helm notes, according to Bouwsma: “[b]ecause of who God is, trust in him must be unlike trust in anything else.”³⁶⁸ We cannot analyze faith as trust because, insofar as they divide the world between that which is transcendent or outside of it and that which is immanent or inside of it, neither can be like the other. Effectively, faith becomes a *sui generis* state on Bouwsma’s view—a state utterly unlike anything else that occurs only in

³⁶⁷ Bouwsma, “Faith, Evidence, and Proof,” in *Without Proof or Evidence: Essays of O.K. Bouwsma*, eds. J.L. Craft & Ronald E. Hustwit (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1-25.

³⁶⁸ Helm, *Faith With Reason*, 134.

response of obedience to a revelation. And if Bouwsma's claims hold up, then my entire account must fall.

I have two defenses against this sort of objection. First, I follow Helm's response to Bouwsma here. He claims that

[i]t seems to be that not only *could* Abraham have evidence but that, *pace* Bouwsma, he *did* have evidence...Bouwsma supposes that Jehovah said to Abraham, 'Get thee out...' Let us suppose that Abraham did not have sufficient evidence, separate evidence, that this was the voice of God; *nevertheless the voice itself was surely evidence.*³⁶⁹ (emphasis mine)

The point is that, given the grounds to which Bouwsma appeals, Abraham (or whichever 'hero of faith' you prefer) has some grounds to think that God has made a revelation even if those grounds are insufficient. If this is so, then Bouwsma must give up on the stronger claim that faith can have *no possible* evidence. But then that gets him playing in the same game as the evidentialist, and that is a game of which he wants no part. Thus, faith *can* be like ET, but it may be to a different degree, has a different basis, or something else. But, the likeness is all my account here requires.

I have another response to Bouwsma's general position. If faith really is totally unlike any kind of non-religious trust or cognition, then how are we to explain how we come to have faith at all? Supposing that Bouwsma is correct, even if faith is a *sui generis* state it is still a state. How can we explain how a state that is *totally unlike any other human state* comes to be in us? *Ex hypothesi* it cannot arise in any connection with any other human state of cognition, morality, or whatever. Explaining the genesis of faith, then, would seem quite difficult. It cannot be *causa sui* because we are talking

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 135.

about a state coming into being rather than simply accounting for its own being.³⁷⁰ And I cannot imagine that one would be happy that faith is *uncaused*. Faith, I presume, does not ‘pop’ in to existence ‘willy-nilly’ and even Bouwsma analyzes faith as a response to a divine revelation or command. So, it seems we are left with the doctrine from a previous objection: faith must be brought about in us by the direct and sole causal efficacy of God. And, as with that position, we have seen certain worries plague it. So, I take it that Bouwsma’s theory cannot adequately account for how one comes to have faith. And I would think that such an implication counts definitively against his *sui generis* approach to faith.

So, we have discussed some objections to features particular to my account of virtue here. In the next chapter, we shall have the space to deal with general objections (and issues) to the claim that faith is an act of epistemic virtue; where we mean ‘epistemic virtue’ in a broader sense than my specific account in Chapter 1.

Conclusion

I have defended, in this chapter, my claim that faith is an act of epistemic virtue. Using the conclusion from Chapter 5; namely, that faith is a species of ET, we have seen that faith satisfies the definition of ‘act of virtue’ from Chapter 1. And, because of the close relationship between ET and faith, the status of the former as a virtue implies that the latter can adequately express that virtue. Hence, we have good reason to think of faith as an act of epistemic virtue. Then, I develop some interesting implications of this view, utilizing the specifics of my definition of “virtue.” I contend that doctrine of the

³⁷⁰ And, of course, speaking from certain religious/philosophical traditions only a perfects being could be *causa sui* and faith is certainly not that.

mean implies that some putative acts of faith fail to qualify as acts of virtue because they prove excessive or deficient. Thus, we have a way to distinguish good faith from bad faith (especially blind faith) built into the basic concepts of the theory without need of any addition. Such simplicity, I think, provides more evidence for the adequacy of my theory. Further, acts of virtue have a necessary context sensitivity that gives them flexibility to deal with epistemically relevant differences in circumstances and my theory confirms the truism that one's faith *characterizes* the agent who possesses it. Finally, we develop some objections to my view: some from classical sources in Aquinas and Augustine as well as some ahistorical objections. And, in examining them, I defended my view against these charges. Thus, I submit a *partial* defense of my view that faith is an act of epistemic virtue, whereby the next chapter's discussion of general issues and objections shall form the remainder of such a defense.

CHAPTER 7

ISSUES AND OBJECTIONS

With the close of Chapter 6, we have finally completed the main thrust of the account. I have given my account of epistemic virtue, ET, faith, and how faith *qua* ET can serve as an act of epistemic virtue. We have, accordingly, tied together all of the threads necessary for the main contention of this work and its background. The final two chapters will serve to complete the account by addressing, in Chapter 7, important issues and objections to the theory I have defended and, in Chapter 8, how my theory can fit into the current landscape in religious epistemology. But this chapter concerns, first, what I think are key philosophical issues that have a bearing on my account and, second, a few general objections that I should address to ensure that my account has an adequate defense.

In the first part, I shall discuss certain problems in philosophical theology and argue that my view has interesting and plausible implications for them. In particular, I shall sketch a possible solution my virtue-theoretic account has for J. L. Schellenburg's hiddenness argument against theism, suggest that my view can mitigate worries about a "conflict" between faith and reason, and, finally, show how my view analyzes the problem of religious diversity. In each section, I content that my virtue-based account of faith can help address problems uncovered by each of these issues. Let us begin with Schellenburg's hiddenness argument.

Faith and Divine Hiddenness

The problem of divine hiddenness has become a hot topic in contemporary philosophy of religion. Schellenburg's *locus classicus*, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason*, provides philosophical fodder for many responses to his central claim—both positive and negative. In this work, he defends an argument for the non-existence of God from divine hiddenness. We can take “divine hiddenness” here to mean—roughly—the state of affairs where God's existence is not ‘obvious’ or ‘open’ to all (epistemically speaking). As Schellenburg notes: “[t]he notion of God's hiddenness can be interpreted...as referring to the obscuring of God's existence.”³⁷¹ But, so Schellenburg argues, God's existence should not be hidden if God is all-loving, all-powerful, all-knowing, etc. and desiring of a personal relationship with humans. Presumably, no one can have a personal relationship with X unless one has some reason to think that X exists in the first place. So, in order to promote this great good of a personal relationship with God's creation, God must make reasonable non-belief impossible. But that kind of non-belief is just what we come across in divine hiddenness. Thus, we obtain Schellenburg's argument from hiddenness:

- (1) If there is a God, he is perfectly loving.
- (2) If a perfectly loving God exists, reasonable belief does not occur.
- (3) Reasonable non-belief occurs.
- (4) No perfectly loving God exists.
- (5) There is no God.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Schellenburg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 83.

(4) simply follows from (2) and (3) whereas (5) follows from (1) and (4). And all traditional theists accept (1) and Schellenburg devotes an entire chapter to showing that there are cases of reasonable non-belief (3). Thus, premise (2) becomes the main focus of defense on Schellenburg's part and attack on the part of those disagreeing.

It is my contention in this section that my previous claim—i.e. that faith is (or, at least can be) an act of epistemic virtue—can give on the resources to respond to Schellenburg's argument here. If we think about faith in certain ways that I have suggested earlier, we shall have good grounds to reject (2) above, or so I argue. The first step here is to note that Schellenburg's argument works very much like the standard problem of evil. We have an instance of something bad or something with a negative value (i.e. non-belief) that Schellenburg argues that a perfect Being would probably not tolerate in the world. But since there is such an 'evil' (of non-belief), that disvalue gives at least probabilistic evidence against the existence of any such perfect Being. What we have, in effect, is the problem of *intellectual* evil; since the evil in question primarily affects the mind. Many philosophers echo such a claim. Schellenburg himself says that "it may be appropriate to refer to [the hiddenness argument] as a *special instance* of the problem of evil" (emphasis his).³⁷³

Seen in this light as analogous to or a species of the problem of evil, one can take traditional responses to the older problem and use them as a model for the hiddenness argument. In the remainder of this section, I shall modify John Hick's own famous response to the problem of evil—his "soul-making" theodicy.

In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick argues that our evil-ridden world is one of "soul-making." That is, we encounter evil, dealing with it and its effects on a near

³⁷³ Ibid., 7.

constant basis. Such ‘dealings’ play a big role in how our souls or characters come to be what they are. The evil we suffer and the evil that we do and how we interact with these evils over the course of our lives helps generate our characters. We can become vicious in afflicting evil or taking delight in seeing evil inflicted on others. Or we can develop courage in overcoming evil, kindness in trying to counteract it, and sympathy in attempting to help others through their difficulties. Assuming that such traits as courage, kindness, and sympathy are good traits of character, we can see that the evil in the world—while irreducibly bad (i.e. having a negative value in itself)—can often promote certain goods in humans, or so Hick argues. Put in more straightforward moral terms, evil can develop certain moral virtues in human beings and, in doing so, can take on a role in bettering humans and make them more like whatever religious exemplar one’s tradition sees as essential. It is my contention here that once we see faith as an act of virtue, we can extend Hick’s soul-making defense from the standard problem of evil to a response to Schellenburg’s argument from hiddenness *qua* problem of intellectual evil. Just as moral evil can promote the development and expression of moral virtues, the intellectual evil of God’s hiddenness can promote the development and expression of faith as an act of epistemic virtue—working to develop one’s *epistemic* character in a roughly equivalent way that Hick sees the development of one’s *moral* character.

Michael J. Murray has suggested a similar route; arguing that Hick’s soul-making response to the standard problem of evil can apply to the hiddenness argument as well.³⁷⁴

I have two points of criticism for his proposal even while I agree with his general approach. First, while I agree that the hiddenness argument is a version of the problem of

³⁷⁴ Murray, “Deus Absconditus,” in *Divine Hiddenness: New Essays*, eds. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul K. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65.

evil, one must bear in mind that it is a problem of *epistemic* or *intellectual* evil. We are not talking about moral evils or natural evils, as is typically the focus of the problem of evil, but we are focusing on a particular kind of *epistemic* badness. Murray's approach offers no modification of Hick's position to accommodate the distinct kind of evil in question. I aim to remedy this fault in what follows below. Second, (and perhaps relatedly) Murray's focus soon drifts into concerns about free will; moving away from talk of character or virtues or the like. Murray spends the vast majority of his argument dealing with what sort of coercion divine openness entails and how such openness leads a sort of practical compulsion for agents to do good. We lose the soul-making for talk of compulsion, coercion, and how God's open existence would threaten an agent's practical freedom in refraining from doing good. Thus, Murray's account effectively becomes a free-will defense as the soul-making aspect gives way to analyses regarding how divine hiddenness preserves our freedom to do what which is bad and avoid compulsion to do that which is good. Instead, I suggest that a soul-making account should keep the obtainment of the right character (or values) the primary focus and not simply the preservation of one's moral or intellectual freedom. That is my aim below.

A soul-making argument against (2) above—i.e. the claim that a perfectly loving God would make reasonable non-belief impossible—needs to make character formation essential as a response to Schellenburg's argument since it is the development of the soul/character that provides a reason to think that a perfect Being would (at least) tolerate evil. Such evil can promote the development of an agents' *moral* character. This is Hick's lesson for *moral* (and probably natural) evil. But, Schellenburg's argument deals with epistemic evil and, therefore, it requires response adequate for this different sort of

evil. Thus, we should turn to the *epistemic* or *intellectual* character of the agent involved. If we can find reason that divine hiddenness should promote the development of one's epistemic character/soul, then we have a robustly epistemic response to Schellenburg's argument insofar as we have reason to reject (2) on epistemic rather than purely moral grounds.

Given the arguments of the previous chapters, we see that faith is an act of epistemic virtue; which implies that the person of faith has a certain kind of epistemically virtuous character. *Qua* act of *epistemic* virtue, faith provides an epistemic value that we can use in a soul-making defense against the hiddenness argument since it is both character-based and distinctively epistemic. So, do we have reason to think that divine hiddenness can promote the development and expression of faith? The answer seems 'yes.'

In a world where God's existence is *not* obvious, faith *qua* trust becomes necessary. Faith has a core of reliance inherited from trust and such dependence can easily come about by the obscurity of God's existence, aims, works, etc. If there is to be faith, then there must be reliance and such dependence requires divine hiddenness. And if faith is an expression of epistemic virtue, then that expression must require certain kinds of context in which it is expressed. If we lived in a world where God's existence, plans, etc. were open to all, it seems difficult to imagine a context in which one could really have faith—there would be no real depth of (religious) dependence or reliance necessary in such a world. And, furthermore, if faith is (can be) epistemically virtuous, it must be developed. The trust at the root of faith needs development and such development requires time, effort, practice, and a host of other necessities involved in

habituation. Such development requires a consistent context where one learns to depend on persons consistently and acquires the right kind and level of confidence necessary for proper trust and, hence, faith. So, divine hiddenness promotes not only individual, discrete acts of faith in particular instances (requiring reliance) but also in a general, extended sense of making possible the acquisition of trust expressed as faith over the course of a person's life. Courage requires individual acts of evil to overcome and the *virtue* of courage also requires a world where such a trait can grow, develop, and become complete over time. Moral evils can make possible and promote the growth of moral virtues and the intellectual evil of hiddenness can make possible and promote the growth of epistemically virtuous faith.

Thus, divine hiddenness can promote faith and faith is a particular expression of virtue. Conjoining those two claims gives us reason to think that hiddenness can therefore promote the expression and development of a virtuous character—epistemically speaking. Hence, we have the epistemic soul-making defense to Schellenburg's hiddenness argument paralleling Hick's moral soul-making defense to the standard problem of evil.

But one might object: why, if this the case, think that faith is so valuable? If faith requires divine hiddenness, then so much the worse for faith. The world would be better with divine openness since we would be in a better epistemic position with respect to God in the first place. I suppose that, if by "faith" all I mean is "belief that God exists," I would readily agree with this criticism and concede the point. But, as I have tried to clarify at key points throughout this work, by 'faith' (and, equivalently my use of 'trust'), I never (or nearly never) mean something as thin as mere propositional belief. And I

think this is where a large part of Schellenburg's project is not simply wrong but wrong-headed. If God's aims concern a personal relationship, as Schellenburg contends, then just "belief that God exists" is a very small part of such a relationship. We are not simply talking about "evidence sufficient to produce justified belief" but a significant segment of an agent's character and how that character relates one to God if we *really* focus on a personal relationship as God's aim. The worry, then, would be that we pay only lip service to such a relationship as the overriding divine target and instead slip into talking about only propositional belief. A concern about reasonable *propositional* non-belief skews and diverts the self-admitted aim from the outset. Hiddenness—on Schellenburg's own theory—is not *really* about belief (that) but rather about a robust belief-*in* relationship obtaining between God and some person. Focusing on the "personal relationship" goal should weaken one's focus on mere propositional belief but it is that "reasonable non-belief" that remains the focus of Schellenburg's argument. What we need to respond to hiddenness is *not* reasons God may have to permit one to disbelieve that God exists but reasons that God may have—through being hidden—to promote a relationship with a person. If Schellenburg is right that God wants a personal relationship, then he is going about the problem of hiddenness in the wrong way.

I have argued that the "personal relationship" aim that Schellenburg cites at the outset of his argument comes into serious tension with the way he restricts his comments to mere "reasonable non-belief." And I have suggested that really focusing on a personal relationship model brings us closer to the character-based approach I have proposed in modifying Hick's soul-making theodicy. Finally, I want to connect how the character in question relates to the "personal relationship" Schellenburg discusses. I have argued that

a Hick-styled approach to hiddenness requires talking about one's epistemic character—needing something of epistemic value that also develops the character of the agent for the better. Faith *qua* act of epistemic virtue fits this role perfectly, but that is not the only important point here. Focusing on faith can offer insight into how to solve Schellenburg's worry about a personal relationship with God. Paul Moser underscores the connection I find here. He argues that

entrustment of oneself [to God in faith] moves outward obediently in self-giving love...toward God and thereby toward others...The intended result is human personification and reflection of God's moral character for others...³⁷⁵

So far, I have argued that the development of faith *qua* act of virtuous character can explain divine hiddenness as encouraging reliance on God. But, if Moser is correct, then developing one's character into a reflection of God requires faith as well. Faith requires hiddenness and, in so requiring, God hides in order to allow us to develop our characters to reflect God better. The way that we reflect God through our characters in faith, then, forms the core sort of relationship that Schellenburg argues God would promote. In effect, faith makes us (or, more specifically our character) more like God and in doing so, we not only become better ourselves but relate better to God as a person. And *that* claim, in a nutshell, answers the objection as to the value of faith: it is the segment of our character that (partially) promotes the moral-cum-religious-cum-epistemic development of an agent. Since my theory grounds faith in a virtuous character, we can account for how hiddenness can promote the same kind of relationship that Schellenburg emphasizes.

The soul-making defense I offer here does not concern itself primarily with belief that God exists but how hiddenness impacts the *character* of the agent in question. Such

³⁷⁵ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 99.

development of character clearly cuts right to the *person* involved. One's faith *qua* act of virtue indicates something deeply personal about him/her insofar as virtues just are traits of character. Faith just *is* a particular expression of a segment of one's character. Thus, if we ask why faith is so valuable, we are not simply talking about beliefs or their manner of production, but we must discuss the value of the whole person or, at the very least, some significant part of that person's moral and intellectual character. And, furthermore, we ask how that corresponds to the "personal relationship" Schellenburg cites as God's motive. In promoting faith, then, God would not be simply promoting belief (that). Instead, this involves the promotion of the whole of that agent's character and a good character, I take it, has tremendous value; moral, epistemic, or otherwise. And our characters deeply impact our all of our relationships. Divine hiddenness, then, works to promote a certain kind of *epistemic* character—reinforcing the Hick-inspired genesis of this response and grounded in the virtue-theoretic approach to faith that I have developed and defended in this work.

But one might object that divine hiddenness does not appear *necessary* to develop ET as faith. ET occurs throughout our lives and in many ways and it seems possible that such non-religious ET can develop into religious beliefs held on faith in time. I think this is generally correct: faith does not strictly *require* or *make necessary* divine hiddenness. However, I deny that we need so strong a claim as this. Rather, I contend that my view here does not "solve" the problem of hiddenness *on its own*. My response in this section, I suggest here, fits into a more general approach to the problem of evil on the whole. In short, it contributes a part of the general response instead of providing the sole response.

The larger problem of evil has many different responses: the free-will defense,³⁷⁶ Hicks' *moral* soul-making theodicy, skeptical theism,³⁷⁷ and so forth. I see my view as fitting into these responses as an overall answer to the problem of evil. But, why think that we need an answer composed of several theories—why not have one single answer? Considering the “evil” at the root of the problem leads to such a convergent approach.

“Evil” is said in many ways. Philosophers appeal to a huge variety of evils in generating arguments for and against theism. We hear of nasty *moral* evils that persons do to other persons, evils done by persons to animals (and vice versa), *natural* evils that befall us in the form of natural acts, and so forth. Only the overly vague “bad thing” suffices to capture all of these instances of evil. So, it would seem plausible that different *kinds* of evil would call for different kinds of responses to solve them. The free will defense, for instance, works poorly to explain natural evil—excepting Augustine's original sin answer and Plantinga's suggestion of demonic causes of natural disasters. But, when we consider *moral* evil, the free will defense becomes more plausible. In short, different kinds of evil can require different kinds of theories as a response. Thus, we should not expect *one* response to solve all instances of evil. As part of such an overall response, my view does not “solve” the problem on its own, but rather it contributes an important component to the general account we should need for evil. Thus, it should not be required that divine hiddenness is *necessary* for faith when part of

³⁷⁶ See Plantinga's *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) for the modern *locus classicus* of the Free Will Defense.

³⁷⁷ See Stephen J. Wykstra's “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of ‘Appearance’,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1984): 73-93 and William Alston's “The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 5 (1991): 29-67 for two good sources of this approach.

the answer could come from other responses that, together with my own, provide a joint or convergent reply to such evil.

Faith and Reason

This section explores the issue of faith and reason as well as their interrelation. Many people have made much of a ‘debate’ or ‘conflict’ between faith and reason—with some even assuming from the outset that such concepts are simply contraries of each other. But, my view has interesting and, if I am correct, advantageous implications for such considerations. I contend that my view can affirm both faith and reason in a consistent manner unlike many popular approaches to either. Before I give my own view, I want to discuss some other theories of faith and reason. This will uncover the landscape into which I place my own view and show better just how my view relates to these various positions.

Philosophers typically assume that either faith or reason must be the primary or only guide to epistemically proper religious beliefs. Let us call those that place epistemic primacy on reason ‘rationalists’ and those that do the same for faith ‘fideists.’ Each theory type comes in different strengths. We see what I shall call “strict” and “lenient” versions of each. A strict rationalist holds that faith and reason are wholly separate domains of knowledge, thought, belief, etc. To put it another way, faith and reason are incompatible doxastic states having incompatible objects. For instance, if I have faith that there exists a flying spaghetti monster or a pink invisible unicorn, then I cannot have rational beliefs about such beings. Similarly, if I rationally believe that my coffee this morning was not poisoned, then I cannot also hold that belief in faith. Thus, a strict

rationalist will argue that faith and reason are two different sources of belief such that the beliefs that they generate cannot coincide. Accordingly, there are two claims that I suggest that any strict rationalist must accept, thus making them necessary conditions:

(1) It is *impossible* for faith and reason to have the same belief as their object.³⁷⁸

(2_{SR}) Only beliefs or doxastic states caused by or held in reason (i.e. rationally) are in epistemic good-standing.

(1) expresses the strictness of strict rationalism in keeping faith-based beliefs and reason-based beliefs necessarily separate. (2_{SR}), however, preserves the rationalism here in ensuring that only reason-based beliefs can have positive epistemic status.

Lenient rationalism, on the other hand, denies (1). That is, a lenient rationalist affirms the possibility of some belief being the object of both faith and reason, but reason takes epistemic priority over faith. Reason-based beliefs are epistemically better than faith-based beliefs. So, while some person may hold some belief in either faith or reason, the belief does not possess the same epistemic status. Hence, lenient rationalists deny (1) but accept an analogous version of (2_{SR}):

(2_{LR}) Beliefs caused by or held in reason are in better epistemic standing than beliefs caused by faith alone (i.e. reason is 'above' faith).

The denial of (1) makes this version *lenient* whereas the acceptance of (2_{LF}) makes the view *rationalist* in tone. And (2_{LR}) makes a weaker claim about epistemic status than the strict version. (2_{LR}) makes it possible that faith confers *some* level of positive epistemic status on faith-based beliefs, though this status must remain lower than that of reason.

³⁷⁸ Here the belief is a token rather than a type. I do not mean that faith and reason cannot cause the same *type* of belief, but instead I intend (1_{SR}) to mean that faith and reason cannot cause the same actual (particular) belief. Whenever I make a claim about faith and reason causing a belief, I intend to mean the same belief token as opposed to belief type.

Lenient rationalism, then, is doubly lenient: first, it denies (1) and, secondly, it affirms the possibility that faith-based beliefs have some degree of positive epistemic status, though such status will be epistemically inferior.

Fideism is the view that faith properly grounds religious belief. This characterization is extraordinarily vague, but it must be vague because there are so many different accounts people give for faith and belief based upon it. Strict fideism treats faith just as strict rationalism treats reason. The strict fideist claims that the domain of faith and reason are wholly separate and necessarily so. However, where the strict rationalist holds reason as the avenue to religious truth, the strict fideist argues that faith is the only genuine route to true religious beliefs. Perhaps the strict fideist argues that reason is corrupted in such a way that it is inefficacious, that God is beyond all rational thought entirely, or some other basis. Thus, according to strict fideism, if we are to obtain true religious beliefs, we must use faith instead of reason. Keeping the parallel to strict rationalism, there are two essential claims to any strict fideist:

(1) It is *impossible* for faith and reason to have the same belief as their object.

(2_{SF}) Only religious beliefs or doxastic states caused by or held in faith are in epistemic good-standing

(2_{SF}) differs from (2_{SR}) due to the way ‘religious’ modifies belief and doxastic state. The reason for the modification in the case of (2_{SF}) is to preserve a strict fideist’s ability to claim that only in religious matters does reason fail so thoroughly. In short, I want to allow that a strict fideist can claim that in all non-religious matters, reason is an acceptable doxastic or epistemic practice—at least in principle. But, what makes a strict fideist *strict* is the acceptance of (1); in an exact parallel to strict rationalism.

Lenient fideism, unsurprisingly, offers a position analogous to lenient rationalism. Instead of abutting faith with reason, a lenient fideist here will argue that reason, while efficacious, is not the most complete source of true religious belief. Consider this example. Perhaps I support Anselm and I have some rational grounds for my belief in the Incarnation. However, the lenient fideist will claim that my reason here can only get me so far (epistemically speaking). To get to the genuine truth of the matter, I must have faith that I cannot rationally justify, ground, or support. So, like lenient rationalism, the lenient fideist rejects (1) *qua* lenient and adds the following principle analogous to (2_{LR}):

(2_{LF}) Religious beliefs caused by or held in faith are in better epistemic standing than beliefs caused by reason alone (i.e. faith is ‘above’ reason).

Again, I want to restrict (2_{LF}) to *religious* beliefs only. I want to leave open the possibility that the fideist accepts the primacy of reason in all non-religious matters. And, again, (2_{LF}) is weaker than its parallel for strict fideism. The lenient fideist can say that reason can confer some epistemic standing on religious beliefs but not to the extent as faith.

Many thinkers have suggested a ‘war’ or ‘conflict’ between faith and reason, with these views (and their kin) occupying positions in such conflict. But if this is a war, then it must be a war of attrition. There is no need to rehearse the arguments for or against each side because, as should be fairly obvious, there is no settled view among philosophers of religion here. The reason for this impasse, I suggest, is that the debate views the issues through the wrong lens. Both sides are right to some degree and both sides are wrong to some degree. The view I have defended in previous chapters implies that this ‘war’ is not a genuine one and the dilemma expressed is false. My view can

affirm significant portions of both but neither entirely. Thus, I shall argue we find both an answer to the “problem” and an explanation for why it seems so problematic in the first place.

We have analyzed faith and discussed it in depth. But, we have not said much about ‘reason.’ A virtue-based approach to epistemology provides us with a very interesting conception of reason: modeling rationality on the paradigmatic person of virtue.³⁷⁹ To be rational is to think as would a paradigmatically virtuous person would think; i.e., to think as would a person expressive of all epistemic virtues. No one need be fully or totally rational here. We can say that Jones is rational with respect to some set of beliefs, field of inquiry, time in Jones’ life, etc. to preserve the intuitive idea that no one is (epistemically) perfect. This is the reason for the hypothetical description above: to be rational is to think *as would* an epistemically ideal agent. Of course, we need not think that any such paradigmatically virtuous person is actual but so long as we have an ideal as the exemplar, we can make sense of what it means to be a rational person. And, if we have such an account of rationality, then we thereby have an account of rational beliefs. Roughly, a belief is rational just in case a rational person would typically believe in it similar circumstances.³⁸⁰

Let us combine this result with the claim I defended in Chapter 6—namely, that faith is an act of intellectual virtue. The implication is that, in certain contexts, the rational (=epistemically virtuous) agent expresses ET as faith. Faith expressed as appropriate ET just *is* an expression of that agent’s rationality. Hence, faith and reason are conceptually intertwined; provided that the faith fulfills the caveat of being

³⁷⁹ Here I follow Linda Zagzebski. See her “*Phronesis* and Religious Belief,” op. cit.

³⁸⁰ Reading “rational” as “practically wise” or “epistemically virtuous”.

appropriately expressive of ET. This implies the falsity of (1) above—it is possible to believe that *p* in both faith and reason. Hence, the strict versions of both rationalism and fideism are false. But, the lenient versions fare little better. Since rationality is constituted by virtues, one of which (ET) expresses itself as faith, then faith and reason are conceptually interconnected with each other. Moreover, reason cannot be above faith, since faith *qua* act of epistemic virtue is a necessary condition for the religious person of epistemic virtue. Hence, neither is any ‘higher’ than the other, for they are interwoven into the very intellectual character of the religious practically wise, virtuous person. That is: faith *qua* act of epistemic virtue entails that (2_{LR}) and (2_{LF}) are false—there is no clear-cut ‘higher’ versus ‘lower’ principle that applies for such conceptually intertwined notions. This means that neither lenient version of rationalism or fideism is true either. My solution is not to show that faith and reason are merely *consistent*, as many of the lenient versions argue, but that faith and reason *cohere* together in the virtuous operation of the religious person of faith. My thesis is stronger and, thus, forms a different type of approach to religious epistemology. The real answer is to see that the mistake is placing a ‘versus’ between faith and reason turning it into a dilemma rather than picking the wrong option.

If faith is a virtue, then there are aspects of both rationalism and fideism that are true. This result is the heart of my claim that they can fit coherently together in a virtue approach. Thus, we can explain why we are so worried about the faith versus reason conflict in the first place. The worry is there because both views are right to a degree: faith and reason are both vital to epistemically proper religious belief. We should not expect a resolution in this case, since there will probably be some good arguments on

both sides that bring out this truth in each view; each attaching to the correct aspects of fideism and rationalism. But since both views incorporate inadequate or false claims, we should also expect neither to get a decisive argumentative advantage over the other either. Hence, not only can this theory solve (or at least mitigate) our worry but it can explain why we were so worried in the first place—all within the same conceptual machinery.

So, we have a blending of fideism and rationalism into a rational fideism or a fideistic rationalism—all the while understanding that we are using these terms in a much different sense than either fideists or rationalists use. If we want to define ‘fideism’ as the thesis that faith underpins our religious belief, then my view is fideistic. If we want to define ‘rationalism’ as the position that reason underpins our religious belief, then this theory is rationalistic, too.

Faith and Religious Diversity

There is a growing literature on philosophical approaches and analyses of religious diversity. I contend in this section that the approach to faith I have defended in previous chapters provides an interesting response to this issue and an option that has great deal of merit. Some philosophers respond to the problem of diversity by arguing that there is no universal truth about religion and all religious truths are simply true indexed to their tradition.³⁸¹ In short, religious truth is relative. Others accept a non-realist view of religious claims. We discussed this view briefly in Chapter 5. Non-realists deny that religious claims or propositions have any objective truth value because they do not make substantive metaphysical claims about the world at all. Religious

³⁸¹ See, for example, Joseph Runzo’s “God, Commitment, and Other Faiths: Pluralism vs. Relativism,” *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 1988): 343–364.

beliefs express attitudes (Braithewaite) or moral commitments (Cupitt), for instance, rather than attempting to express genuine belief in some objectively true metaphysical state of affairs. In short, there is no religious truth (or falsity) since religious propositions do not affirm anything. I find both of these views deeply problematic but, for the same of space, I shall not go into detail as to my arguments. Let us make a rejection of these views an assumption here. Instead, I mention them as standards that any adequate approach to religious diversity must satisfy; namely, such an approach cannot entail either religious relativism or non-realism. The view I shall defend implies neither. In particular, I shall argue that my theory of faith can permit many different expressions of faith from many different religions to qualify as epistemically valuable without adopting a relativistic account of truth or knowledge and avoid a non-realist account of religious belief (à la John Hick).

Religious diversity seems to be an obvious datum of experience. There are many religious traditions in the world and often those traditions make incompatible claims about the nature and origin of the world. And, furthermore, it seems that there are instances of well-informed, rational, and conscientious believers with radically different religious commitments and creeds.³⁸² Put in these terms, I would suggest that the problem of religious diversity provides a special instance of disagreement in general. With this bit of introduction, the question becomes: what are we to make of religious diversity?

³⁸² Of course, not all instances of religious disagreement involve epistemic peers. One or more of the disputants may be reasoning fallaciously, have different sets of evidence, or some other relevant epistemic difference. Disagreement *simpliciter* is the same—not all disagreement holds between peers. I intend my comments here to hold for the interesting case of religious *peer* disagreement for that is where you get the hard cases.

Let me put the question in this manner: what shall we say of two inconsistent religious beliefs, grounded in faith, held by epistemic peers?³⁸³ That is: how can we analyze the epistemic status and/or value of these two beliefs? Now, given the virtue-theoretic approach in this work, we must analyze the status of these beliefs in terms of the virtues in which those beliefs are grounded. And, of course, possession and expression of virtue results from what sort of intellectual or epistemic character those agents possess. So, is it possible that two agents from different religious traditions possess and express equally epistemically virtuous characters? This certainly sounds plausible—especially given my account of epistemic virtue from Chapter 1.

In Chapter 1, I defended an account of epistemic virtue that does not include or require a success or reliability component. Accordingly, it is possible (though unlikely) that some agent commit genuine acts of virtue while failing to be successful. Put in epistemological terms, one's beliefs can express genuine epistemic virtues even if those beliefs turn out to be false.³⁸⁴ Now, let us apply this to religious diversity. By definition, *religious* epistemic peers have virtuous characters as well as inconsistent religious beliefs. Further let us suppose that each peer's faith grounds these beliefs. Now, on my view, it is still possible that both agents express genuine and fully robust epistemic virtue in those beliefs—even though at least one's religious beliefs must be false on pain of contradiction. Thus, those beliefs cannot both be true and they cannot both be

³⁸³ We may even assume that these peers have identical evidence. It is not at all clear to me that evidence *in itself* is sufficient to guarantee that peers cannot differ with respect to belief. One may weigh the same evidence differently, factor it into one's conceptual framework differently, connect it to other pieces of evidence differently, etc. in ways that can make a huge difference for the beliefs one holds and their epistemic status. There is still a vital role for evaluation one's virtues and acts thereof even when holding evidence the same.

³⁸⁴ Or even reliably false. On my view, one may still possess epistemic virtues even if one is unreliably with respect to truth. Of course, this will be *tremendously* unlikely but it is still possible (given the details).

knowledge, but nevertheless they can still fully express virtue. They both have positive epistemic value or, to put it in other terms, they can both be justified.

Each religious tradition has its sages or saints and it seems that many of them would be epistemic peers. But although I deny that all of these sages can possess knowledge (since the set of beliefs they hold is inconsistent), that alone does not entail that their expressions of faith lack positive epistemic status, value, justification, or whatever. In short, their faiths can still be (epistemically) good even if false. And, I think this is just the sort of answer we need. We can accommodate the idea that different persons from different religious traditions can be rational and have justified beliefs without affirming relativism about knowledge and/or truth or some version of religious non-realism. It provides real epistemic credit to persons that we may intuitively think virtuous without having to say that such persons necessarily possess knowledge or true beliefs.

This also gives us an interesting view of the contemporary discussions of religious diversity. A quick look at the field shows several theories in response: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.³⁸⁵ And we can separate versions of each by their objects.³⁸⁶ For example, one can take truth as the object and be an exclusivist, pluralist, or inclusivist about truth. The truth-exclusivist will think that only one set of religious beliefs or creed is true whereas the truth-pluralist contends that at least two religions or sets of religious beliefs are true. (Thus defined, pluralism includes relativism about truth; since there being at least two true religions is consistent with thinking that *every* religion is true.)

³⁸⁵ Of course, skepticism is also an option here—i.e. to deny that any religious beliefs are true. But this view avoids the real ‘meat’ of the discussion here. It offers no specific answer to these issues.

³⁸⁶ Here, I follow Linda Zagzebski’s approach to distinguishing different types of these theories. See *Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), Chapter 9.

The truth-inclusivist will say something like the following: only one religion is true *simpliciter*, but other traditions get close (or close enough) to the truth. But one need not focus on truth. One may adopt exclusivist, pluralist, or inclusivist positions regarding salvation, justification, rationality, knowledge, and a number of other issues.

If we restrict our concern to epistemic concepts like rationality and justification, then I contend that the inclusivism versus exclusivism versus pluralism debate is wrong-headed. If rationality and justification come down to the way that a person expresses epistemic virtue in his/her beliefs, then no religious creed *as such* will be either justified or unjustified; rational or irrational. What confers justification/rationality on a belief is neither the belief itself nor its religious tradition but the person that has the belief and that person's character. Or, if the agent in question has not developed virtuous habits or for a case of lucky mimicry of a virtuous agent, how the person's beliefs mimic those of the truly virtuous agent. I suppose that, strictly speaking, my view counts as pluralism but this misses the point. The focus should be on the agent's virtue in holding his/her religious beliefs rather than simply taking about the set of beliefs corresponding to some religious tradition or the other. On a virtue theoretic approach, it makes very little sense to speak of some discrete set of beliefs as being rational/irrational or justified/unjustified apart from the virtues expressed by the persons holding those beliefs. That is, the debate should not concern whether some *religion* is rational or justified but whether some *person* is rational or justified in accepting certain religious creeds. The traditional inclusivism-exclusivism-pluralism debate misses this point entirely and, thus, provides a skewed lens through which one can analyze the debate. Of course, my comments here

hold for epistemic concepts and do not apply to inclusivist-exclusivist-pluralist debates regarding truth, salvation, and the like.

So, my view provides two benefits to the problem of religious diversity. First, it changes the lines in the debate way from exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism to an agent-centered approach to diversity. This gives a new prospective that allows for a more nuanced approach to the issue. Second, we find an attractive position that reduces to neither relativism nor non-realism. We can accommodate the intuitive idea that there really are virtuous persons of diverse faiths and that such virtue gives rise to robustly valuable expressions of virtue. Thus, the view is neither parochial nor authoritarian while avoiding the twin dangers of relativism and non-realism.

Objections

At the end of Chapter 6, we discussed some objections to the specifics of my account—assuming each of the definitions and views I defended in previous chapters. Those objections aim at the particular accounts of epistemic virtue, ET, and faith I defended. In the second portion of this chapter, I want to address more general objections to my account. That is, I want to consider objections to the claim that faith is (can be) an act of epistemic virtue even if one denies the specific epistemological basis of my own particular theory. I have defended a very specific account of virtue and ET in order to give a robust virtue-theoretic account of faith, but I one can accept an alternate account of virtue and still maintain the same general thesis regarding faith. Or since such a view is possible at least, I should give some consideration to more general objections. Let us begin with what I consider the strongest objection.

The Vagueness of ‘Appropriate’ Faith

I have consistently denied through this work that *any* act of faith or faith-based belief counts as epistemically appropriate as such. That is, I take it to be obvious that not all faith-beliefs have positive epistemic standing, and I say the same for ET-based beliefs as well. But, then, a natural and vital question arises: what standards or criteria distinguish *proper* faith (i.e. epistemically virtuous faith) from *improper* faith (i.e. epistemically non-virtuous faith).

In touching on this topic briefly in previous chapters, I contend that there the criteria here must be flexible and reflect a kind of context-sensitivity to the agents, actions, and situations involved in some agent’s expression of virtue. As Linda Zagzebski notes:

intellectual behavior is no more rule governed than moral behavior. No set of rules is sufficient to tell us when to place intellectual trust in the reliability of another, or what a person with intellectual courage, perseverance, or discretion would do, and so on.³⁸⁷

Thus, we cannot formulate any set of rules distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate faith. And it is this claim that turns the question above into an objection. Given all of this, it would seem that epistemically proper or appropriate faith suffers from an intractable vagueness. Now, I have argued, following Aristotle, that there must be some objective mean that determines virtue from vice (and non-virtue), so the objection here is not that good or proper faith is *relative*. Holding to the doctrine of the mean implies that faith has some objective standard for its value—just like any virtue or act of virtue. But even if one rejects the latent Aristotelianism here, I still maintain that there must be some objective, non-relative criteria for measuring the adequacy of some act of virtue. So, the

³⁸⁷ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 150.

point is not whether there *is* such a criterion; rather, the objection here concerns *our knowledge* or *application* of this standard. How can we tell if any given faith-belief satisfies the standards we discuss in Chapter 6? If the standards are objective (i.e. non-relative) but vague, then we seem to be at a loss when we want to know whether any given faith-belief satisfies them or not. So, if there are no rules that determine genuine (proper, appropriate, virtuous, et al.) faith, then how can we avoid a worrisome vagueness about evaluating any putative faith-based beliefs or acts?

Let me respond by offering some rules of thumb that I think instructive. I accept the force of the objection because I do deny (like Zagzebski, Aristotle, and most virtue theorists) that there exists hard and fast rules for expressions of virtue. This is the price to pay in accepting the context sensitivity of virtues. However, just because I see the force of this objection does not mean that I think it particularly problematic. If we can give instructive and informative guidelines, then we can remove the teeth from the objection even if these guidelines hold only *ceteris paribus*.

Our first guideline follows the Zagzebski's line cited above. After her denial that moral and intellectual behavior fits strict rules, Zagzebski claims that "[f]or this reason imitation of the person with *phronesis* is important for acquiring both intellectual and moral virtues..."³⁸⁸ I agree but I also want to extend her talk about *phronesis* (or practical wisdom) from how one *acquires* virtues to how one *evaluates* virtues. We must keep in mind that Zagzebski's account leans heavily on Aristotle and Aristotelian *phronesis* concerns not only how one acquires a virtue but also what makes a virtue a virtue. That is, the *phronesis* serves as a standard for how one expresses virtues. Aristotle's doctrine of the mean forms an essential part of his account of virtue, but he

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

also appeals to *phronesis* in the definition as well. And, here, I am suggesting that the *phronimos* (i.e. the person with *phronesis*) serves as the standard one can use to judge a person's actions with respect to virtue. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* for belief as well. One can appeal to the *phronimos* as a way to know what actions and beliefs count as appropriate expressions of virtue—at least probabilistically speaking. Since virtues (and their expressions) must be acquired in some social/cultural context, there will be some kind of role model that can help serve as a rough *personal* standard here. Even if there are no *actual* persons of complete virtue, one can think of idealized agents or 'create' such a person from segments of different people. In any case, such a person (actual or not) will be involved in the moral education of the person of faith and, thus, provides some guide as far as what genuine faith should be or what it should look like.

But, as I have claimed from the outset, one should view this only as a rule *of thumb* or a guideline rather than a strict rule or universal criterion, for several reasons. First, as the cliché goes, "no one is perfect." If this is true or nearly so, then even the best person we may take as a *phronimos* may lead us astray at some point. However, even if one models oneself on an idealized *phronimos* that cannot err, the novice may go awry in applying or understanding the exemplar. Even if you have an ideal and infallible role model, the student of virtue can always misappropriate that idea in his/her life (epistemically and morally). And, of course, who counts as a *phronimos* is not beyond contention either. We may have core examples that serve us well: Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Buddha, etc. but there is always disagreement—especially on the edges of such debates.

My second guideline relates to the first. As I discussed in the previous paragraph, possession and development of any virtue requires moral and intellectual education. Since virtues are acquired or habituated, they cannot occur by nature or by accident but only by effort and practice over time and under guidance. One's social or cultural context provides such guidance and the exemplars that one imitates in one's aretaic education. Hence, virtues—moral, epistemic, or whatever—are necessarily social: they arise in social contexts and we cannot divorce agents' virtues or their expressions from the context in which that agent developed and acquired those virtues. Points by William Alston can turn these social considerations into grounds that might help us address this objection. Alston offers what he calls a “doxastic practice” approach to epistemology. It is more a general framework, fitting more specific epistemological theses, than a particular epistemology itself, but I find his connection between one's beliefs and one's social contexts instructive. A “doxastic practice,” for Alston is

a way of forming beliefs and epistemically evaluating them. Examples of such practices (or families of such practices, depending on your taste in individuation) would be those involving reliance on sense perception, introspection, memory, rational intuition, various kinds of reasoning, and mystical experience.³⁸⁹

In general, a ‘doxastic practice’ would be a generalized structure of input-output functions; moving from some kind of input content (e.g. perceptual experience, intuition, etc.) to some belief as the output.

Now, Alston addresses our concerns here by the necessarily social nature of such practices.

Doxastic practices are thoroughly social: socially established by socially monitored learning, and socially shared. We learn to form perceptual beliefs about the environment in terms of the conceptual scheme we

³⁸⁹ Alston, *Perceiving God*, 6.

acquire from our society. This is not to deny that innate mechanisms and tendencies play a role here. We still have much to learn about the relative contributions of innate structures and social learning in the development of doxastic practices...But whatever the details, both have a role to play; and the final outcome is socially organized, reinforced, monitored, and shared.³⁹⁰

Our social context helps fashion our belief-forming mechanisms (=doxastic practices) and, importantly for us, helps *constrain* those beliefs by forming epistemic norms for their production, maintenance, revision, and evaluation. (I suspect it is by virtue of these considerations that Alvin Plantinga describes Alston's social doxastic practice approach as "judiciously blending Reid with Wittgenstein".³⁹¹) Further, on a virtue epistemology, we change those "belief-forming mechanisms" to become "epistemic virtues." As we discussed above, virtues are necessarily social but not only in their genesis; their social context can play an *evaluative* role as well. Like the personal exemplar of a *phronesis*, one's social context can be used to guide and provide rough criteria for proper expression of epistemic virtues *qua* doxastic practices.

Since faith is an act of epistemic virtue like any other, there must be some social context which provides not only the origin but potential criteria for its outputs—be they acts or beliefs. A person of faith is not an epistemic island; s/he lives in a particular social context and develops his/her character in that social context. And, often, that context can constrain what counts as appropriate. And, again following Alston, the well-established practices have *prima facie* practical rationality.

It is a reasonable supposition that a practice would not have persisted over large segments of the population unless it was putting people into effective touch with some aspect(s) of reality and proving itself as such by its fruits.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 163.

³⁹¹ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 118.

³⁹² Ibid., 170.

As one should expect, such rationality is only *prima facie* and subject to potential overrides or defeaters. And there are, of course, outliers from any such established practice and social community, but as Alston notes, those outliers are just that *outliers* and lack the credence we provide to more well-established practices. Thus, “[n]ewcomers will have to prove themselves” and those practices do not possess the *prima facie* rationality that well-established practices enjoy.³⁹³ Faith-beliefs that run against that social context have no such defeasible default rationality and require more for their proper status.

And, as with our first guideline, we should only think of this as a rule of thumb. Social and cultural change can alter our evaluation of doxastic practices and certain beliefs and, especially while such change is ongoing, we may have a very difficult time trying to evaluate such practices and beliefs. Moreover, certain beliefs or practices may just be wrong. Consider some person growing up in a society where human slavery, ritual sacrifice, etc. are considered good (or least permissible). That society can *negatively* impact the intellectual and moral characters of the persons in them. So, again, I want to stress that this guideline has failed in the past and can certainly fail in the future. But, as a general rule of thumb, it gives us some kind of guidance about expressions of virtue.

Alston motivates my third guideline by an alternate description of a well-established doxastic practice’s rationality. He ends his analysis of the propriety of a practice by claiming that “a firmly established doxastic practice is rationally engaged in provided that it and its output *cohere sufficiently* with other firmly established doxastic

³⁹³ Ibid.

practices and their output” (emphasis mine).³⁹⁴ The key term here is “cohere.” For our purposes, Alston’s doxastic practices primarily concern epistemic virtues, acts of virtue, and the beliefs they produce. So, if we put his talk of practices into virtue-theoretic terms, we find that *coherence* functions as an essential criterion for the rationality of such virtues, acts, and beliefs. Minimally, expressions of virtue must be *consistent*. Some act of virtue A cannot count as a genuine or really virtuous act if A is inconsistent with some other act of virtue. For example, suppose that a friend is going through a nasty break-up and seeing my friend’s former significant other causes great emotional distress. Murdering the ‘ex’ would not count as a virtuous act of kindness because it would be inconsistent with other virtues (presumably entailing that such murder would be wrong). But coherence is stronger than mere consistency: genuine acts of virtue must promote other acts of virtue and the general betterment of the agent in question. Coherency of virtues and their expressions, if I am correct, can serve as a very helpful tool in analyzing one’s beliefs (or actions).

But, like other guidelines, this cannot suffice as a rule. Consistency may be easy to pick out but it remains weak. Coherence—in the sense of mutual support and interdependence—makes an intuitively stronger, more robust claim but at the sacrifice of ‘fuzzy’ conceptual definition. I suspect we shall have a hard time giving an informative and wholly non-vague account of what such coherence is or entails. It can help in many cases but there will always be borderline cases that have no clear, direct answer.

Finally, one might use practical considerations as a rough guideline. Because virtues are intrinsically social, they help us in those social contexts as well. As Zagzebski notes, “most virtues are traits that enable individuals to *live well* in communities”

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 175.

(emphasis mine).³⁹⁵ Similarly, a quote by Alston above cites the “fruits” that well-established doxastic practices bear as evidence for their *prima facie* rationality. These are practical considerations that can constrain what counts as a genuine expression of virtue. Now, my definition of ‘virtue’ and ‘act of virtue’ includes no clause about human flourishing, living well, or any kind of necessary *eudaimonia* connected with virtue. I leave out such a clause because I deny that such considerations are *necessary* for the possession of virtue, but I do not deny that virtues (and their acts) quite often promote such practical goods. Thus, the quality of life that one’s virtues ground can offer some kind of help in gauging the adequacy of one’s expressions of those virtues. That is, if the expression of some virtue A does not typically promote one’s well-being, then we have probabilistic reason to doubt the adequacy of A *qua* genuine act of virtue. Consider, again, the faith of Jim Jones’ follows. Part of our analysis of that faith in his teaching, I suggest, should be the practice considerations of such a faith-based way of life and belief system. I find such practical benefits lacking when one considers the whole scope of such commitment. Their faith in Jones did *not* promote their well-being or general betterment for obvious reasons and, as such, this practical detriment should factor into our analysis of the faith upon which that life is based. Even if one considers ascetic religious practices, where one puts oneself through physical suffering, the aim is the improvement of one’s soul or character in the long run. Such improvement certainly counts as a practical benefit, I would think.

Finally, practical considerations work only for the most part. As discussed in Chapter 1, a significant portion of our lives come down to luck (either good or bad). Saints or sages may suffer or even die for their commitments, so I would be foolish to

³⁹⁵ *Virtues of the Mind*, 44.

suggest that practical constraints *necessarily* work as a reliable standard here. But, like the other guidelines I have offered, I think there is something useful in this guideline that can help us in epistemic evaluation of putative acts of faith (even if we admit this guideline can fail sometimes).

These are a few guidelines or rules of thumb that can help in making genuine faith less vague.³⁹⁶ They are certainly not independent and, I would suggest, do their best work in *jointly* serving as tools of evaluation in some kind of reflective equilibrium of epistemic analysis. Social context can foster bigotry and hatred that the consistency necessary among virtues can rule out. The practical detriment a martyr can suffer may find balance in considering a *phronimos* that may have suffered as well. Each guide does its best work in concert and coordination with the others and, while each may have problems considered individually, I would suggest that such coordination can mitigate many of these individual problems in the aggregate.

The Object(s) of Faith

In this section, I shall address another putative problem of vagueness for my account. Since I model faith on trust and since trust (as I have used the term) always involves a relation between a *trustee* and a *truster*, I need to clarify what sorts of things and/or persons can function as the objects of faith. The *trustee* side of faith has no real problem—it is simply some religious person trusting in some deep way. But, the *truster*

³⁹⁶ I understand that these considerations will not convince someone wanting more specific or rule-like guidance here. But, given the virtue-theoretic approach at the core of this work, I cannot offer any such rules. If one requires more specificity and rules than this, I suspect that will involve (and perhaps require) giving up an approach based in virtue theory.

aspect of the account seems vague—what or who exactly does the religious person trust in some deep way in order to have faith?

I have been vague so far on this answer and intentionally so. As a response to this sort of objection, I have two maneuvers. First, I shall give some reasons to think that one should remain at least somewhat vague regarding some robust account of the putative objects of faith. And, second, I shall give what I consider an informative but incomplete list of plausible candidates to flesh out my account in more detail.

First, I think we have good reason to think that one cannot (or at the very least should not) give an exhaustive account of the possible objects of faith. Consider, for instance, the wide variety of religions and religious traditions in the world. There are divergent accounts of what/who the divine reality is (or is not) as well as divergent accounts of how the divine reality relates to humans (if at all) through intermediary holy persons, holy texts, religious figures, etc. We have no reason to expect that we can reduce all of this wide variance down to anything approaching a concise account. And, also if there exists some divine reality, one might expect that the list of *actual* religious traditions and commitments does not exhaust the list of *possible* religious expressions. God, presumably, could provide different religious expression than any we see in the world currently or in the past. If such religious novelty is logically possible—which I suppose it is—then the list of *possible* religious expressions far outstrips that of *actual* religious expressions. Thus, we might not even think that the list of putative faith-object is even finite given these philosophical considerations regarding the logically possible religious expressions and traditions. The upshot of all this is that we should not expect, require, or attempt a strictly exhaustive list of possible faith-objects. That list would be

tremendously long and complex, at the minimum, and perhaps even infinitely long (which I think is more likely).

But, given my claims in the previous paragraph, we still might give a non-exhaustive, incomplete list of good candidates for faith objects. This would help decrease the vagueness of the account while making it more informative and substantial. I want to emphasize again: the considerations that follow make no claims to being exhaustive. And I consider them plausible candidates, so I shall not argue that they *must* occur in any religious tradition or that they are *definitely* adequate objects of faith. They are simply what I take to be plausible. Since I claim plausibility rather than infallibility, there are possible points I make that others deny and, since I claim no completeness, others might include other objects I omit. This list simply begins a larger discussion that I lack the time to analyze completely. But even self-admitted sketches can be informative and helpful.

Let us consider, then, what sort of plausible persons or objects that one might take in/on faith. To put it in other words, I am suggesting here some plausible persons/things *in which one might place one's faith*. I shall spend the rest of the section discussing each in more detail.

- (A) God (i.e. some divine reality) directly
- (B) Holy texts
- (C) Holy persons
- (D) Non-divine persons of religious authority
- (E) Religious objects or states of affairs

Let us take each in turn. I shall introduce each object by means of a non-religious analogy grounded in ET and, using this analogy, we can examine how each of these putative object function *qua* object of faith.

Often, we trust another person directly for some belief that we may have via that person's verbal communication. Suppose that I wish to pick up some groceries from the store but I need directions. I ask a friend and native to the area, Smith, directions to the store. Smith responds by telling me the location and how to get there. Smith communicates this information to me and, though this telling, I trust Smith and form the corresponding beliefs regarding the location of the store.

One may find an exactly parallel notion where some person trusts God directly for some belief, commitment, etc. (I shall use the term 'God' as equivalent to 'divine reality' for ease of expression. I do not mean exclude non-theistic or polytheistic possibilities here.) Put in such terms, (A) puts us in the arena of divine revelation. I make no attempt to define 'revelation' or given a robust account of the concept since that would be obviously beyond the scope of this work. Instead, I shall mention only a few ways to think about how one could have faith in God directly as (A) claims. Perhaps the easiest way to think about how divine revelation might work on (A) would be to think about revelation in terms analogous to mundane linguistic communication. That is, one could suppose that one accepts by faith some communication that God transmits in an analogous way that a non-divine person would communicate by speaking. George Mavrodes calls this the "communication" model of revelation whereby "[o]ne thinks of God as speaking with men and women, as saying something to them; and these human

recipients, for their part, are represented as the hearers of the word of God.”³⁹⁷ We find many instances across traditions of reports where God appears to utter words communicating distinct content to human hearers. And, just as we accounted for accepting other persons’ testimonial assertions by ET, we can account for these types of revelation by a person having faith in God *qua* locus of communication.

But, one can trust another person directly without necessarily trusting that person’s *words*. If I ask Smith directions to the grocery store and Smith points directly to it, I take Smith’s pointing as a form of communication. In this situation, I can trust Smith by Smith’s *doings* in the same way that I can trust Smith by Smith’s *sayings* or *telling*. Both function as types of communication that can ground my trust in Smith.

We may think of a parallel situation with religious matters. Keeping the analogy, we might think of God as *doing* something that can communicate content to a person. We find plausible instances of such doings if we consider religious experience. William Alston, for instance, notes several examples of experience where the experiencer comes to have certain beliefs or commitments about God that are not the result of God’s directly telling him/her anything.³⁹⁸ God directly communicates certain things like joy, peace, security, and others without the experiencer having any sort of quasi-linguistic experience of God’s saying anything. Alston analyzes this as a kind of religious perception without basis in a divine (quasi) linguistic act. As before, we have an instance of communion—God communications via some kind of religious experience—some content as ground for belief but this communication does not occur by any kind of analogy to speech or statement. Mavrodes refers to this sort of revelation as the “manifestation” model. Such

³⁹⁷ Mavrodes, *Revelation and Religious Belief*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 111.

³⁹⁸ See his *Perceiving God*, Chapter 1.

a model has “to do with something like an *experience* of God, a sort of perception, or quasi-perception, of the divine presence” (emphasis his).³⁹⁹ We can think of some person having some kind of experience of God and on the basis of *that* form of communication, have faith in God. Alston and Mavrodes, in accounting for this form of communication as a general type of perception, connect us back to the earlier example of my trusting in Smith through Smith’s pointing. Smith aims to communicate the location of the grocery store through an act, and through my perception or experience of this act, I come to trust Smith. And, finally, this trust grounds my belief that the grocery store is *there* (i.e. the place where Smith points). Similarly, God can communicate something, that all shall be well; for instance, through some sort of religious experience of some person (call her Julian). Through Julian’s experience of God, she forms the belief that “all shall be well” on the basis of her faith in God (insofar as God communicates this to her in that experience). The mundane and religious parallel each other in the way that we think of non-linguistic communication and how it can relate to trust and faith, respectively.

So, we can think about (A)—i.e. direct faith in God—in at least a few significant ways. The often discussed role of divine revelation here, I suggest, helps us think about and examine putative ways that one can cash out the direct sort of communication that (A) expresses. Revelation becomes pertinent here because, as I understand it, revelation essentially concerns some kind of divine communication to a person or persons.⁴⁰⁰ But one can also have faith in God indirectly. The remainder of the list, I suggest, provides us with *indirect* versions of faith in God.

³⁹⁹ Mavrodes, op. cit., 75.

⁴⁰⁰ For a view echoing my own, see Joseph Pieper, op. cit., “[t]he innermost core of the event we call revelation is the divine act of communication itself,” p. 76.

Suppose that I ask Smith for directions to the grocery store, and he responds with a map from my current location to the target of my search. As I drive to the store, we might think that I trust the map and, in a sense, this would be correct. But, the terminus of my trust is Smith; since I trust the map *only because* I trust the person that made it. I may trust the map but only as a placeholder for my trust in Smith. In this case we may say that I *indirectly* trust Smith because something mediates the communication in these circumstances.

Let us consider (B), where the putative object of faith is a holy text. We find an immediate parallel for (B) in light of the map situation above. Roughly, I think of a holy text as a written account of some religiously important content such that the origin of some text ultimately terminates in God via divine inspiration, guidance of the human writer, or some other such theory of the divine-human relationship. The holy text, as I have described it, works like the map Smith provides for me to the grocery store. I have faith in the text—just as I trust the map—only because I have faith in the ultimate origin, source, or writer of the text. Having faith in a holy text works as a placeholder for faith in God and, as such, it functions as *indirect* faith in God.

Smith can be directionally helpful in other ways, too. Suppose that I am with another friend Jones and we both need directions to the grocery store. Jones, luckily, has the cell phone number of Smith and gets Smith on the line. In order to keep the directions from getting confused, Jones repeats to me what Smith says over the phone. Accordingly, I form certain beliefs about the location of the store and how we may get there. As with the text/map examples above, it seems to make sense that I trust both Jones and Smith here. However, I trust Jones only insofar as I trust Smith. In this case,

Jones functions as the map in the earlier example—I may trust Jones but only because I trust Smith. Jones is a placeholder or conduit for my trust in Smith.

(C) provides the parallel here. We may think of a “holy person” as someone who has some direct ‘line’ to God—probably of the sort specified in (A).⁴⁰¹ Prophets would be the first sort of (C) that springs to mind. Now, we can think of someone having faith in a prophet and I have no problem affirming this possibility. But, as with the holy text, the prophet serves primarily as a means of indirect communication from God. (Or at least, that is what the person of faith supposes holds for prophets.) The religious person of faith does have faith in the prophet but this faith is not ultimate—it effectively terminates in God. This is because a person of faith thinks of a prophet as a divine mouthpiece, so to speak, communicating something from God that God does not directly provide to everyone. We see a direct parallel to the example with Smith and Jones above. Smith proves the ultimate person in whom I trust, but I need some go-between in Jones to get Smith’s communication. I trust in Smith *indirectly* through Jones and, in the case of holy persons, we may say that one places one’s faith in God indirectly through some holy person.

Let us change the Smith and Jones story a bit more here. Suppose that Smith has provided me a map and that Jones and I are driving to the store. Now, since I am driving in an unfamiliar location, I must pay very close attention to the road. Because I need such concentration, Jones works as my navigator. Jones reads the map and gives me directions and updates about where and when to turn. Again, we can say that I trust Smith indirectly, for only by virtue of Smith’s map can we successfully drive to the store.

⁴⁰¹ I do not suppose that there are or are not instances of genuine prophets or prophecy. Rather, I am simply describing putative objects that a person *may* place his/her faith in—even if that faith turns out to be misplaced.

But in order to receive the information that the map communicates, I must also trust Jones to adequately and accurately read and interpret it. Thus, I may trust both Smith and Jones but my ultimate, even if indirect, trust lies with Smith.

With this situation in mind, let us consider (D) whereby one places one's faith in some person with religious authority. The notion of "authority" is far from clear and things do not get clearer once one adds the "religious" modifier. We had time to speak about authority briefly in Chapter 2, where I characterized seeing someone as an authority as a kind of epistemic confidence in that person. Something like that still holds in this case. Roughly, let us think of a 'religious authority' as some person in whom one extends some kind of confidence—where one thinks that this authority is some expertise in religious matters. The notion of authority is a vexed one in many religious traditions and one need only think of the debates over authority in the Christian Reformation to note just how important, protracted, and divisive such debates can be. Keeping this in mind, I want to keep the concept of "religious authority" fairly vague to avoid begging any question along denominational or sectarian debates. Most religions and specific religious denominations demarcate where they draw their lines as far as appropriate from inappropriate authority goes. One may even offer a reductive account of religious authority: arguing that whatever authority a person may have ultimately reduces to a holy text, holy person, or some other kind of source. Still one can think of priests, gurus, popes, cardinals, pastors, ministers, rabbis, and a host of other related positions that possess religious authority across a wide variety of diverse religions and religious traditions.

But the important thing for our concerns here is how a religious authority—defined however you like—can be an object of faith. But, like above, the faith one places in such an authority is not final. If one places one's faith in some person of religious authority, then one sees this person as having some kind of religious expertise. And, presumably, this person gets this expertise from somewhere. Again, here is where the reduction of authority becomes possible: one can see this expertise coming from some text, some prophet, God directly, or some other more fundamental (non-divine) religious authority. We have already examined the first three options and the second threatens an infinite regress until one ultimately places authority in the divine reality in question in some fashion. Like Jones in the previous example, a religious authority guides the person of faith insofar as that authority has some kind of religious position superior to that of the 'follower.' Again, one can place one's faith in such a person but only if that person gains such expertise and status in some fashion and this will ultimately terminate in God. So, again, faith in some (non-divine) person of religious authority serves as a placeholder for indirect faith in God. In this case, a person has faith in the authority but only by virtue of that authority's more direct line to God. We see the same situation in the example of Smith and Jones. I trust my navigator (=Jones) but only because the map provides Jones with a closer link to the directional expertise of that map's creator, Smith.

We have one final story to tell about Smith's directions to the store. Suppose that Smith knows I will need to go to the store and, out of Smith's kindness, leaves a GPS in my car with the accurate route to the store entered into it. Out of Smith's generosity, I can follow the GPS and I arrive at the store safely. Now, again, I want to analyze this as a case of direct trust in the GPS on the basis of my ultimate, indirect trust in Smith. I

trust the GPS because I know that Smith left it and that Smith has my interests at heart. If I did not trust his GPS's accuracy or his competency in programming it, I would not trust it at all. Like the other cases, my trust terminates in Smith but the GPS mediates such trust making it indirect. Effectively, we have a non-personal object serving as the means of communication here and functioning as the mediation between me and the object of my final trust (i.e. Smith).

What we have above is a case where I trust some object as a means of trusting some person. And I would think that some analogous considerations apply for religious faith. Depending on the particularities of the religious tradition in question, one might see some object as mediating some divine communication. Let me pick just one example. Certain theologians affirm something called "natural" or "universal" revelation. Proponents of this idea argue that the world itself serves as a revelation from God for human beings. Thomas D. Sullivan and Sandra Menssen draw the distinction between this type of revelation and the sort in (A) from a Christian perspective:

[u]niversal revelation is God's revelation through the physical world sustained by God's continual activity...In contrast to universal revelation, special revelation is God's intervention into the natural order, through (for instance) extraordinary communications to prophets, authors of Scripture, and religious communities, and through such manifestations of the divine as the Incarnation and the Resurrection.⁴⁰²

Even within this perspective, some will affirm that the world offers a *direct* revelation from God and others will argue that it offers an *indirect* revelation. But the specifics do not concern us here. According to some, then, the world itself can serve as a kind of revelation or communication from God. Taking either as an object or state of affairs, one

⁴⁰² Thomas D. Sullivan and Sandra Menssen, "Revelation and Miracles" in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister (New York: Cambridge University Press), 202.

can see natural revelation as a means to faith in God. Augustine says that the very world before our eyes proclaim that they are made and, hence, a revelation that there is a Creator for them.⁴⁰³ This example remains particular to Augustine and certain Christian strands, but the general feature can hold for other religious traditions as well. The general point holds: we trace these natural signs of God back to the original source just as we follow the GPS Smith left as directions to the grocery store. If I can place my trust in the latter, then the former certainly seems plausible as an object of faith. But, as with many other putative objects of faith, they serve as indirect mediations for the faith that ultimately terminates in God.

As I argued from the outset, I make no claim that (A)-(E) exhausts the list of possible objects of faith. But, they seem plausible and discussing them affords the opportunity to connect my account of faith to important concepts like religious authority, revelation, and the like. Thus, the list allows us to deepen the theory and connect it to important concepts in philosophical theology to which it relates. I hope the examination is general enough to fit a wide variety of religions but informative enough to answer questions about how to think about possible objects of faith.

What About Atheists and Agnostics?

In this section, I shall address concerns about people who in principle do not have faith: atheists and agnostics. If faith is an act of epistemic virtue and if atheists/agnostics (in principle) do not have faith, then what must we say about the epistemic characters and beliefs of those persons? In this section, I shall argue that my view does not imply that

⁴⁰³ *Confessions*, XI.4.

atheists and agnostics must *necessarily* lack virtue or that their beliefs/actions are *in principle* non-virtuous.

One might think, first of all, that my view entails that atheists and agnostics are epistemically vicious or, alternatively, that their actions are acts of epistemic vice. And one might think this due to my adherence to the reciprocity of the virtues; discussed in Chapter 6. If faith is an act of virtue, then agnostics/atheists seem to be incapable of acts of virtue in principle due to the reciprocity thesis. But, there is one thing to note first: lacking a virtue does not entail possession of vice. Even if one lacks an acquired perfection of character, that lack does not entail that the person possess an acquired *defect* of character (i.e. a vice). So, my view does not entail that atheists or agnostics must be epistemically vicious.

But one could weaken the objection and claim that, instead of being vicious, my view seems to imply that atheists/agnostics cannot possess total virtue in principle *qua* atheist/agnostic. It is the “in principle” that seems worrisome. Virtue is hard to acquire and hard to express completely, so it does not seem terribly worrisome to say that some group of people cannot possess total virtue due to the difficulty in obtaining total virtue in the first place. But the worry comes across in claiming that a group cannot obtain such virtue in principle or that, to put it another way, atheists/agnostics as such *necessarily* cannot obtain total virtue. It is the “in principle” or the strength of the “necessarily” here that seems problematic.

Here we must recall a distinction I made regarding faith from Chapter 5. I claim that faith is an *act of virtue* rather than a virtue *simpliciter*. If I were to claim that faith is an epistemic virtue *simpliciter*, then conjunction with the doctrine of reciprocity would

entail that atheists/agnostics cannot obtain total virtue in principle. But, since I claim that faith is an *expression* of virtue rather than a virtue itself, this conclusion does not directly follow. And I shall contend below that it does not follow at all, given a few plausible assumptions about virtues and their expressions.

I have defined faith as a species of ET and, as far as I know, I see no reason to think that atheists/agnostics cannot possess ET in any particular non-religious context. The trouble occurs when we think about all of the different ways one can express ET and, in particular, expressing in in a religious context as faith. So, it would seem that atheists/agnostics can certainly possess the virtue of ET but that they cannot *qua* atheist/agnostic express this ET as faith. One might think, therefore, that because some act of virtue remains impossible for such persons to express, my view implies that (again, in principle) atheists/agnostics cannot be as epistemically good or virtuous as theists; since only the latter can express ET in all possible manners. However, this thought seems to require that, to be as good or virtuous as possible, one must *exhaustively* express virtues. That is, the objection appears to assume the following: for any virtue V, if an agent is as virtuous as possible, then one must express V totally—i.e. in all possible manners of expression. Call this the Principle of Exhaustive Expression of Virtue (PEEV).

I shall argue that PEEV is false and, *a fortiori*, that it comes into tension with other key tenets of a virtue theory. First, PEEV has counterintuitive results when we apply it “across the board” to all plausible candidates for virtue—moral and epistemic. In particular, PEEV is far too strong of a principle. If true it requires impossible tasks for moral agents and, as such, makes possession of total virtue impossible. Let us consider a

paradigmatic moral virtue in courage. According to PEEV, the person of total virtue must express courage exhaustively—i.e. in all manners of expression. No agent, however, can fulfill such a requirement. Consider every way that a person can express courage. One may be courageous in war, courageous in the face of a mugging, one may be courageous in the face of a terminal illness, etc. Once we open the possibilities for all the different ways that one may express courage, it should be evident that no person living a finite life span could possibly express courage in them all. And, further, we cannot expect this of a person—some agents never find themselves in war, being mugged, having a terminal illness, etc. How one expresses virtue results to a large degree in the context in which one finds oneself and to require that a person express virtue in all manners would seem to require that an agent come to be in all possible contexts. And such a requirement seems impossible—we do not find ourselves in each and every situation possible. Hence, expression of virtue cannot be *total* because our experience of every situation is not total either. If PEEV holds, in order to possess *fully robust* or *genuine* courage, one must find one's self in all possible situations in which one must express courage. But due to the impossibility of acting all possible situations, then obtaining courage becomes impossible as well. And this conflicts with the common-sense intuition that there are or can be courageous persons. Similar considerations apply to the rest of the virtues. Given PEEV, it seems that obtain robust, genuine virtue proves impossible. But, I take it, such a requirement is *highly* counterintuitive.

Let us return to the objection with faith. PEEV also has counterintuitive implications in religious matters as well. According to PEEV, any person that really possesses ET must have faith, since faith is one possible expression of ET. This has

really nasty consequences in certain situations. Let us suppose that a group of persons—ones that do not have *any* religious beliefs whatsoever—isolate themselves into a community and avoid all contact outside of that community. Following the ideas of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, et al., the members of this community suppose that all religious belief as such is morally repugnant and disastrous for all reasonable folks. Thus, the members of this community will remove all traces of religion from the community, their lives, and how they raise their children. Thus, the members of this society rid themselves of all religious concepts at all: they never use nor speak of *anything* with religious content. Now, let us consider the second generation of this community. These children will necessarily adopt agnostic views because they do not believe any religious creed at all and, since they are raised in a context where they learn of no religious concepts, they cannot *disbelieve* religious claims either. PEEV implies that, if this second generation is to possess ET, then they must have faith. But, as we have described the situation, faith in this community is *impossible* for the second generation since they have no possible way to entertain religious concepts, much less form beliefs regarding those concepts. Like the courage example above, these second generation agents cannot *in principle* find themselves in *any* religious context that would make faith possible. But, again, I take this to be counterintuitive. We have a case of bad *religious* luck—these folks cannot obtain virtue (*in toto*) because they happen to find themselves in a certain context beyond their control. And, from our anti-luck considerations in Chapter 1, we should find this situation extremely counterintuitive.

Thus, these considerations regarding both courage and faith give us reason to think that PEEV has unacceptable implications and, as such, we should reject it. PEEV

requires exhaustive expression of virtue and, due to our limitations of contexts; such a requirement makes demands of agents far too severe. We have adequate grounds, therefore, to think it false. But, furthermore, PEEV clashes with certain key principles of virtue theory.

The upshot of all this is that faith, like any other expression of virtue, does not find a home in all circumstances. Expecting a person to have faith where that person possesses no religious concepts whatsoever would be to expect something impossible or nearly so. Or the *proper* exercise of ET could lead away from religious faith in certain circumstances. I assume, for instance, that proper ET would *not* incline the virtuous agent to have religious faith in the claims of Jim Jones. Not all expressions of ET actually yield beliefs and, given the right circumstances, it might turn out that non-belief is epistemically virtuous. Thus, I do not contend that all agents whatsoever must have faith, since such a universal claim runs against the context sensitivity of virtues. And this contention leads to the tension I see that PEEV suffers with a core thesis of virtue theory. PEEV focuses *only* on which acts of virtue a person expresses but, if we hold to the thesis of context sensitivity, we should see that such focus is unduly narrow. The context plays an essential and irreducible role in determining how the good or virtuous person acts. Thus, if we leave out the context, we leave out something absolutely essential. Thus, PEEV finds itself in tension with a major thesis of a virtue theory—i.e. how an agent's context plays an essential role in how we assess the virtuous expression of that agent.

Rejecting PEEV alters the issue. The question is *not*: “can atheists/agnostics be virtuous if they do not express ET exhaustively, including faith;” but rather: “does this agent's context call for expressing his/her virtue as faith?” I find the former question

uninteresting and, for the reasons offered above, misleading. Only the latter question gets to the heart of the matter. I argued in Chapter 6 that we can expect certain agents in certain situations to express their virtuous characters as faith, and I have argued above that not all contexts (actual or possible) require expression in such matter. But, *pace* PEEV, the distinction is not about exhaustive expression of virtue but *context-sensitive*, *appropriate* expression of virtue. The PEEV confuses ‘exhaustive expression’ for ‘appropriate expression’ and, as we have seen, this confusion leads to its downfall.

And, now we can return to the original motivation for this section: the standing of atheists/agnostics on my account. Given what I have argued above, I deny that all atheists/agnostics *as such* cannot possess total virtue. By definition, they do not express virtue—specifically ET—exhaustively, but no one expresses any virtue exhaustively. Hence, that generates no problem for any particular set of persons or other. And this is the key claim: it is false that my view entails that an atheist or agnostic *in principle* cannot be fully virtuous. Now, whether any given atheist/agnostic is *in fact* fully virtuous I cannot say, but that is not the point here. But, I do not need to argue that any atheist/agnostic really does possess virtue, as I argued at the beginning of this section. All I need to show as a defense here is that the atheist/agnostic *as such* is not *necessarily* lacking some component of virtue. Rejecting PEEV provides for this defense and we find it grounded in the key notion of context-sensitivity that I have maintained throughout this work.

Faith and Intellectual Autonomy

In this section, I shall address a certain objection alleging that human autonomy and freedom illegitimizes faith. Accepting some proposition, doctrine, or commitment in faith, the objection goes, destroys human autonomy and freedom—to the detriment of faith. Joseph Pieper provides a poignant expression of an objection of this sort stemming from Karl Jaspers.

Jaspers...states with great sharpness that the philosopher must “cling to no authority, nowhere receive truth as a dogma, nor owe his salvation to any historically handed-down revelation.” No such submission, he declares, can be asked of the mature mind, because it would mean “destruction of his freedom and his dignity.” Which is nothing less than an express negation of [faith] itself.⁴⁰⁴

So, let us call this the Jasperian Objection to faith. The Jasperian Objection maintains, in effect, that the “mature mind” or the rational mind must not take anything “on faith” or accept anything from any other source than that person him/herself. In effect, the idea is that the good thinker must be intellectually autonomous and, since faith *qua* trust involves relying on another, then we must reject the adequacy of faith.

I think such an objection misunderstands and misrepresents human autonomy in a few ways. First, the objection seems to take human autonomy to be exceedingly weak if it can be destroyed by something so innocuous as a divine communication (=revelation).

Consider Mavrodes’ response to this sort of objection:

It seems to be to construe human autonomy in an unrealistically fragile manner. The human will, one would think, would be blown to bits by the gentlest breeze. The facts, however, seem to be quite otherwise. Human stubbornness (or determination, if we prefer) seems capable of almost incredible exploits of resistance.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Pieper, op. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁰⁵ Mavrodes, op. cit., p. 126.

Revelation cannot destroy human autonomy, Mavrodes argues, because humans can be notoriously stubborn. Revelation might be influential to various persons to various degrees but I know of no one that affirms an account of irresistible revelation. And even if such revelation did psychologically compel belief (contrary to fact), then it would differ little from ordinary sense perception, memory, and the like. If we do think of certain revelatory experiences as roughly akin to sense perception as certain philosophers like Alston allege, then we should reject sense perception on autonomy-negating grounds as well. But, since we do not rail against sense experience on the basis of human autonomy, we should say the same of revelation as well. So, the objection misconstrues the strength of autonomy with respect to faith.

But, second, the objection also misconstrues how autonomy relates to faith-based acceptance of religious beliefs as well. Even if one's faith-based beliefs, commitments, and world view determines one's life to minute detail (again, contrary to fact), one must still *accept* those beliefs, commitments, and world-view. As Mavrodes argues above, humans can be tremendously stubborn, so someone's communicating something (even a divine Someone) does not entail our acceptance of that communication.⁴⁰⁶

Finally, let us assume what we have denied so far to strengthen the objection. Suppose that human autonomy really is fragile and that, due to God's perfection, God's revealing that *p* logically requires the recipient's belief that *p*, deep commitment to *p*, and accepting that *p* into his/her most fundamental world-view. Let us assume all of these claims I deny simply to make the objection as strong as possible. Even so the objection fails. Again, Mavrodes provides a good argument.

⁴⁰⁶ Assuming that my argument against Aquinas' infused virtue of faith holds from Chapter 6.

Even in those cases in which the divine word is accepted and believed, there seems to be no appreciate damage to human autonomy and initiative. Perhaps if God where to reveal *every* fact in which a person were interested, then some other natural activities would be inhibited...But it does not at all follow that God's revealing *some* information need have that consequences. No one, after all, supposes that the autonomy of chemists is damaged by the fact that they normally read the labels on their reagent bottles.⁴⁰⁷

Not all facts and not all beliefs come by way of revelation and faith for the theist. Even if one relies on some religious authority (God, text, etc.) for one's faith-based beliefs and commitments, such reliance does not negate autonomy across the board. Mavrodes' chemist relies on the labels of the reagent bottles, but the chemist still does autonomous work in chemistry. The person of faith, analogously, may take certain doctrines or commitments on faith, but such reliance does not destroy the whole of that person's autonomy or even the whole of that person's autonomy with respect to religious matters. Even if divine communication determines one's belief over the subject of that communication, since the revelation is not totally determinate of all of one's beliefs in general, one still maintains significant epistemic autonomy.

So, even at its strongest—assuming points I think we have good reason to deny—the Jasperian Objection from autonomy fails. Whether it be trust or faith, our reliance on some authority for a belief or commitment does not overwhelm our cognitive freedom or intellectual autonomy. We can still be quite stubborn and deny communications, and we can exercise control over our acceptances in ways that the objection misconstrues. Thus, I see good reason to reject the objection.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 126-127.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined some issues pertinent to the theory I have defended as well as some objections that arise against it. In the first of the chapter, I have argued that my virtue-theoretic approach to faith has interesting and beneficial implications for certain major philosophical topics: problems of faith and reason, divine hiddenness, and religious diversity. There is much more to be said here regarding many other topics of philosophical import, but I must cut off these discussions somewhere or else this chapter will be manuscript length itself.

And in the second part of this chapter, I have defended my account against general objections. In particular, I have argued that the criteria for *appropriate* faith may be vague but they are not so vague as to be uninformative or vacuous. Also, I contend that the possible objects of faith may be vague to account for all possible expressions of religious belief but at the same time offering a list that helps make such objects intelligible. Finally, I have argued that my account does not make atheists or agnostics necessarily lacking in epistemic goodness or virtue, and that faith does not undermine or destroy our intellectual autonomy.

CHAPTER 8

A VIRTUE THEORETIC APPROACH TO FAITH AND ITS RIVALS

In this final chapter, I shall discuss how the view I have outlined and defended in Chapters 1 through 7 relate to certain rival theories in religious epistemology. I do not intend to argue decisively against any of these views or to contend that I provide a more satisfactory account than them in the final analysis. Either aim would require far more time, space, and argumentation than I have here. In particular, that would require another whole manuscript on its own. Rather, my aim will be to discuss how certain rival views intersect with my own view—positively or negatively—so that it will provide a fuller understanding of how my theory fits into the current landscape regarding religious epistemology.

There are many different positions on religious knowledge and belief and, as such, I shall not attempt to deal with each of them. Instead, I shall take a few of the different types of religious epistemologies and discuss some interesting variants. That way, we can focus our discussion in this chapter while maximizing the depth of intersection between these theories and my own. So, let us do some categorizing to see the contours of the landscape in more detail. I shall divide the field as broadly as possible into two main types of theory; each with subtypes of varying detail and complexity. There are evidentialist approaches to religious knowledge and belief and there are non-evidentialist approaches. In the evidentialist section, I shall discuss two interesting modifications of traditional evidentialism from Paul K. Moser and William J.

Wainwright. Then, turning to non-evidentialist theories, I shall examine two broad subtypes: Reformed Epistemology and what we may loosely denote as ‘fideism.’ As with evidentialism, I shall look at two versions of each subtype. Thus, we have a selective but fairly representative look at some of the major types of religious epistemology. Let us turn to evidentialism.

Evidentialism

Evidentialism with respect to religious epistemology works exactly as an extension of evidentialism *simpliciter* to analyze religious knowledge, beliefs, justification, etc. In briefest fashion, we may say that a theory is evidentialist just in case it takes possession of adequate evidence to be both necessary and sufficient for knowledge, justified belief, or whatever epistemological concept lies on the analytical chopping block. And what we may call “traditional evidentialism” here focuses on providing evidence for or against whatever religious issue one takes as one’s target. For instance, we can see Richard Swinburne’s *The Existence of God* providing arguments culminating what he takes to be evidence sufficient to warrant belief that God probably exists. And, in similar fashion, we see J. L. Mackie’s *The Miracle of Theism* providing arguments that he takes to show that theism does not have sufficient evidence. Each philosopher’s text may argue for exactly opposite conclusions, but they enter the debate on the same terms and with the same assumptions regarding what makes for justified belief; namely, sufficient evidence (from good arguments). These remain the ‘textbook’ examples of the ‘traditional’ evidentialist approach, and such an approach is well-versed in religious epistemology and epistemology as a whole.

So, where does my view stand on the epistemic role of evidence with respect to religious belief and/or knowledge? We have actually seen this answer in Chapter 3. In that chapter, we discussed how a virtue-theoretic approach to ET relates to evidence and, since we know from Chapter 5 that faith is a species of ET, we shall have a parallel answer for faith. First, my view is inconsistent with evidentialism proper. Since epistemic virtues (or acts of virtue) do heavy philosophical work on my view, it cannot be the case that evidence is both necessary and sufficient for justification, knowledge, warrant, positive epistemic status, or what have you. But that answer should be obvious since I am not giving an evidentialist account of faith. However, my view can accommodate some of the evidentialist motive. ET is certainly not the only epistemic virtue pertinent to knowledge or justification (or whatever), and there will certainly be virtues involved in the acquiring, judging, and maintaining of evidence. These virtues do not work in isolation with others, so evidence—via these evidence-aimed virtues—will factor into epistemically virtuous cognitive function (at least indirectly). Evidence is certainly an epistemically good thing to possess in many instances and the virtuous person will have part of his/her intellectual character attentive to it.

What this means is that evidence plays a very nuanced role here. If there is good evidence available for some particular belief or view, then the virtuous agent should take means to possess and use it accordingly. And that is due to virtues that allow one to adequately (=virtuously) obtain it and use it in one's cognition. The virtuous agent will be sensitive to the relevant epistemic circumstances, which can partially determine what evidence one can possibly have for a belief. So, in response to this context, the virtuous agent will determine what positive evidence or negative evidence (defeaters) are

appropriate for the belief in question. If there is evidence available, the virtuous agent should be able to adequately possess and assess it. But, if there are instances of epistemically proper belief not based on sufficient evidence, evidence-aimed virtues still play a background role in the inquiry. Thus, evidence features importantly and significantly in the epistemic evaluation of a belief or piece of knowledge—preserving some of the intuitive pull behind evidentialism. But, as we saw with ET, not all beliefs in all contexts require the same kind, degree, or search for evidence. As I have maintained constantly, the context-sensitive nature of virtuous operation eschews accounts overly inclined to necessary and sufficient conditions. Such ‘monolithic’ accounts do not provide the required flexibility to account for epistemically significant changes in one’s context. In other contexts, evidence may not be available or open to neutral judgment. Faith *qua* act of epistemic virtue, therefore, cannot be inconsistent with one’s evidence but epistemically good faith should not be reduced to evidence, either. The context in which one displays one’s faith determine how much evidence may be necessary (if any), how to obtain this evidence, how to weigh this evidence, and so forth. In short, my account admits that evidence can be epistemically significant and, depending on the situation, perhaps even epistemically required, but I deny that evidence is necessary and sufficient across contexts for all faith-beliefs (and any other beliefs, for that matter).

We can maintain a core evidentialist motivation in that evidence is epistemically valuable and often plays a necessary role in proper intellectual function without accepting that evidence is *the only* value that confers robust epistemic standing or justification. Evidence is *an* epistemic value but not *the* epistemic value. My view, then, can capture at least part of such a core motive. Given that evidential considerations *are* epistemically

significant for a wide variety of beliefs, my view has no problem accommodating this platitude. However, I simply deny that such considerations are the only significant ones. So much for ‘traditional’ evidentialism. Lately, two important philosophers of religion have provided two interesting modifications or ‘tweaks’ on traditional evidentialism; theories that provide even more notable intersection with my own theory.

Non-Traditional Evidentialism

Paul Moser and William Wainwright have offered accounts that satisfy the above “necessary and sufficient” definition of evidentialism above, with different ways of cashing out what sort of theistic evidence we possess and how we evaluate the theistic evidence we have, respectively. Moser argues that (certain) theists do have evidence sufficient for religious knowledge but we too often look for the wrong type of evidence in the wrong places, and Wainwright suggests that one must develop certain intellectual capacities to evaluate theistic evidence adequately. Let us turn to Moser.

Moser’s “Volitional Theistic Evidentialism”

First, Moser maintains a broad evidentialist approach. He endorses a “moderate evidentialism, implying that justified belief in God must rest on (perhaps fallible) evidence, but *not* necessarily propositional evidence, that indicates the reality of God,”⁴⁰⁸ such that “[a]ny truth indicator for a proposition qualifies as evidence, even if defeasible, for a proposition...” (emphases his).⁴⁰⁹ Thus, it should be clear that his view accepts the broad evidentialist thesis at its core. His ‘tweak’ comes into the account when he

⁴⁰⁸ Moser, *The Evidence for God*, 135-135.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

suggests that the nature of the evidence required should be suited to the target belief in question. That is, what sort of evidence we seek and where we seek it should be determined by the object of such evidence. In our case, it is the nature of God that should determine what evidence counts as a “truth indicator” and where we should look for these indicators. In his terms, we should

let the relevant *notion* of God guide the suitable cognitive parameters, including the kind of evidence to be reasonably expected if God is real. Otherwise, we would risk begging some important questions about God’s reality and evidence thereof, regardless of whether God actually exists.⁴¹⁰ (emphasis his)

What counts as an indicator for the truth of *p*, then, becomes partially a feature of the content of *p* from the outset.

At this point, Moser introduces his distinction between “spectator” evidence and “authoritative” evidence. “Spectator” evidence for some proposition or view would be some indicator(s) that does not call for a moral or volitional response from the agent.⁴¹¹ It is ‘spectators’ evidence in that one can simply ‘see’ it without any resulting change in the spectator him/herself. For instance, rain on my window provides evidence for the weather calling for no volitional or moral response from me.⁴¹² However, “authoritative” evidence calls for a volitional or moral response from the agent: “it thereby treats the person as something other than a neutral spectator or self-sufficient cognitive judge.”⁴¹³ If we consider God’s nature as perfectly loving, Moser argues, this makes considerations of “authoritative” evidence pertinent. God’s aim would be the betterment of the person in question and the evidence God provides would sync up with God’s aim of “volitional

⁴¹⁰ Moser, *The Elusive God*, 35.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴¹² At least, we no such call happens in normal circumstances. If something morally significant rides on my actions if it rains, then the situation not be the normal one wherein I simply am aware of the rain.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

moral orientation.”⁴¹⁴ God’s nature and aims, then, affects what sort of evidence we deem necessary. Thus, a perfectly loving

God shouldn’t be expected to come to us with *spectator evidence*, that is, evidence point to some truth but *not* demanding that its recipients yield their wills to (the will of) the source of this evidence...The God in question would come to us with *authoritative evidence* of divine reality, that is, evidence demanding that we yield our wills to (the will of) the divine source of the evidence in question.⁴¹⁵

Thus, Moser wants to shift evidentialism to talk about *what kind of* evidence one requires as well as what is the *intent* behind the person (or thing) providing the evidence. His point is that the (authoritative) evidence we must seek for a perfectly loving God would be such that it brings about a volitional-cum-moral shift in the recipient for the better.

Moser suggests that we find this evidence in the conscience. The evidence we seek comes in the form a divine “call” to use that we conform our wills and selves to God. In his words:

[t]he relevant divine call, I’ve suggested, would itself be a manifestation of divine love; in experiencing it in one’s conscience for what it is intended to be, one would experience divine love...It identifies a kind of experienced theistic evidence that would be cognitively more basic than any kind of argument for God’s reality.⁴¹⁶

Through the conscience, a person volitionally receives the “divine call” that provides direct, compelling evidence for God on Moser’s view. Thus,

volitionalism about knowledge of God’s reality, in contrast to pure rationalism and pure empiricism, implies that the human will is a central “source” (or, perhaps better, “avenue”) of conclusive evidence and knowledge of God’s reality.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴Ibid., 92.

⁴¹⁵Ibid., 46-47.

⁴¹⁶Ibid., 49.

⁴¹⁷Ibid., 59-60.

We have evidence sufficient for religious knowledge, Moser contends, but we need to “reorient” what sort of evidence we need to seek and change how we seek it. Thus, we need to avoid typical argument-based, “spectator” evidence in favor of what he calls “volitional theistic evidentialism.”⁴¹⁸

Moser’s account remains unabashedly evidentialist while trying to redraw the philosophical lines around what counts as evidence and how we think such evidence is to be obtained. He moves from the traditional evidentialist approach of providing arguments for God’s existence and offers a ‘tweaked’ version of evidentialism tailored upon what he considers to be the appropriate aims of a loving God. So, aside from similar considerations regarding traditional evidentialism above, how should we view Moser’s “volitional theistic evidentialism” in relation to the account I have offered in the preceding chapters? Moser makes one general move that captures a main virtue-theoretic motive we have employed so far: namely, that considerations of one’s character can be epistemically significant. As one would expect, we differ on *how* one’s character has epistemological significance but we still agree *that* such character is significant. Such agreement may seem thin or trivial, but given how little certain traditional approaches (e.g. classical evidentialism, foundationalism, reliabilism, etc.) say about character, this agreement is deeper than one may suspect at first. He argues that moral and volitional aspects of one’s character make differences in what sort of evidence can be available to an agent. He claims that there are “cognitive idols” that can effectively blind one to adequate theistic evidence even if one has it in one’s possession.⁴¹⁹ Accepting idols can derive from a misaligned character; one effectively directing oneself away from what one

⁴¹⁸Ibid., 11.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 101-105.

should appropriately seek. One's cognitive blindness, on Moser's view, can be a symptom of a poorly directed character. I see this as a positive intersection with my own view. On my view, differences in character can imply differences in which virtues one possesses and how one expresses the virtues that one does have. Thus, Moser and I both agree that an agent's character can make a massive difference in the epistemic standing of that agent's beliefs.

I take these points of overlap as benefits to my view. His arguments about the character offer a similar approach to epistemology that keeps moral issues in the mind. Evidence, he argues, is not a monolithic concept that applies equally to all persons in all contexts for all beliefs, thus offering a variant of the context sensitivity I have proposed through this work. His tweak on the varieties of evidence provides support for a nuanced view of epistemology that I broadly share.

But, Moser is nonetheless an evidentialist, which means that one's character only affects the type of evidence to which one has access—character has no direct epistemic impact. And, on that claim, we must diverge. And this is where his view has problems in relation to mine. For him *qua* evidentialist, religious belief comes down to only evidential considerations. Now, his 'tweak' offers a broader approach to evidence, but he must still restrict it only to evidence. Moser uses one's *moral* character as key here, but my view widens the role of character as an *epistemological* feature. Evidence may be significant (on that we agree), but the way one obtains, weighs, uses, and maintains evidence seems as epistemologically relevant as the *kind* of evidence in question. These meta-evidence based questions are not open to Moser's evidentialist account, but my view has no problem linking them to various traits of character possessed by the person

of virtue. Thus, my view can capture more of what is epistemically significant than Moser's and this result, I suggest, makes my view more preferable.

But in 'tweaking' traditional evidentialism, Moser makes room for more significant overlap and agreement with the virtue-based approach to religious epistemology I have defended here. Let us turn now to Wainwright's modification of traditional evidentialism.

Wainwright's 'Passional' Evidentialism

In *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason*, Wainwright examines the views of several philosophers of religion: Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman, and William James. All three thinkers diverge at significant points, but they all overlap in key places regarding religious belief and knowledge. Wainwright views evidence as necessary and sufficient for justification, knowledge, etc. but he modifies how it is that one comes to view and measure the evidence. His main point is that

mature religious belief can, and perhaps should, be based on evidence but that the evidence can be accurately assessed only by men and women who possess the proper moral and spiritual qualifications...reason is capable of knowing God on the basis of evidence—but only when one's cognitive faculties are rightly disposed.⁴²⁰

Evidence plays the central epistemological role here but how one views the evidence remains a key point in the analysis—Wainwright's point being that the accurate assessment of the evidence (morally and spiritually) shows it sufficient for religious

⁴²⁰ Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 3.

knowledge. Edwards, Newman, and James all may disagree on certain specifics but, as Wainwright argues, they all share three common, vital theses:

- (1) “There is good evidence for religious truths
- (2) Proper epistemic functioning depends on the possession of the appropriate moral or spiritual temperament.
- (3) (When properly disciplined) our passionate nature tracks the truth.”⁴²¹

Each cashes out (2) or (3) in slightly different ways. The “passional” modifier above refers to the non-cognitive aspects of our thought: “our temperament, needs, concerns, hopes, fears, passions, and deepest intuitions.”⁴²²

Edwards, Wainwright argues, affirms what he calls the “spiritual sense” that one must develop over time. Through this ‘sense,’ Edwards claims one can ‘see’ the spiritual beauty of a text or some other source. But this is not experience of God directly: “the new spiritual sense does not involve a direct or immediate or quasi-perceptual awareness of God Himself. Instead, God’s reality is *inferred* from the excellency and beauty of the things depicted in scripture” (emphasis his).⁴²³ Thus, we have evidence sufficient to warrant belief in God but we can only obtain this evidence and see its force adequately with spiritual development of this new “sense.”

Similarly, Newman argues that humans possess an “illative sense” that allows us to order and balance the evidence for some given issue, assign prior probabilities to claims/theories, and (most importantly) to see or “assess an argument’s overall force.”⁴²⁴ Disagreement occurs, then, more because of differences in our illative reasonings—where we do not agree on the order of evidence or appreciate its force—rather than differences

⁴²¹Ibid., 5.

⁴²² Wainwright, “Theistic Proofs, Person Relativity, and Rationality,” in *Evidence and Religious Belief*, eds. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.

⁴²³ *Reason and the Heart*, 33.

⁴²⁴Ibid., 60.

in the actual evidence we possess. For those in possession of a properly functioning illative sense, they will accurately measure probabilities, see the true force of arguments, et al., and it is this properly functioning illative sense that permits one to appreciate adequate theistic evidence.

Finally, James claims that our ‘passional’ nature—i.e. our overall emotional life—partially guides our beliefs, inquiry, and general intellectual life. These non-evidential features may seem to have no epistemic bearing but Wainwright denies this for James. Rather, one’s “passional nature” tracks the truth in the long run.⁴²⁵ And, to James and Wainwright, that means that they provide us with “good epistemic reasons.”⁴²⁶ If we take ‘good epistemic reasons’ as a kind of evidence—which seems natural—then we have another version of evidentialism but of a highly modified sort.

The upshot of Wainwright’s three cases studies provides us with an account where evidence is the primary and direct epistemic justifier, but with the added proviso that one must have certain moral or spiritual ‘qualifications’ to accurately assess the evidence. So, as with the other views, how does this relate to my own? I see my view as very closely related to Wainwright’s. Most of these “passional” characteristics look strikingly similar to epistemic virtues as some epistemologists would define the term. They are acquired, practiced, cognitive capacities that, ultimately, lead to knowledge. And assuming that they are reliable, that would make them epistemic virtues on a reliabilist approach to epistemology.⁴²⁷ And, for responsibilist views like mine, Wainwright’s view makes ‘passional’ or emotional considerations epistemically

⁴²⁵Ibid., 96-103.

⁴²⁶Ibid., 99.

⁴²⁷ Recall that virtue reliabilism counts *any* cognitive faculty or disposition as a virtue if it reliably produces true beliefs.

pertinent. My own view defines ET, and thus faith, as including an emotional component where one “sees” the object of one’s faith or trust as worthy, reliable, etc. Wainwright, if my interpretation holds, offers us religiously significant epistemic virtues and, as such, puts his view and mine into substantial overlap.

But he is nonetheless an evidentialist. Even if I am right about epistemic virtues, they only *indirectly* impact knowledge and justified belief. Virtues are tools to assess evidence and it is only the latter that *directly* warrants knowledge or justification. Epistemic virtues (or something very much like them) may be necessary on Wainwright’s view, but they are a step removed from knowledge and justification. Whatever the overlap or agreement, his focus on evidence as *the* (sole) epistemic criterion means that we also must see important disagreement as well.

Unlike Moser, these non-evidential concerns about the illative sense or spiritual beauty *do* impact the epistemic status of beliefs. Their role is indirect to the role of evidence in justification, though. But nonetheless, these developed traits/skills of Wainwright are relevant to the epistemic status of religious beliefs. In that claim Wainwright and I find deep agreement. However, these virtue-like features still provide problems for Wainwright. He claims that only evidence justifies beliefs and that these features work only to assess and adjudicate evidence. But, how do we talk about assessing the use of those features themselves? Suppose that Jones reads religious text X and sees conclusive evidence for the claim that *p*. Smith, however, reads X and sees evidence for not-*p*. And both Jones and Smith claim to be using the illative sense or see the spiritual beauty of X (or any other of the traits Wainwright analyzes). How do we adjudicate Jones’ and Smith’s competing claims coming out of X?

I see only a few options open to guide evaluation of these features: (a) evidential considerations, (b) these traits themselves, or (c) some other set of virtue-like features. All three options have serious worries. We cannot accept (a) as an adequate standard for Wainwright's "reasons of the heart" standardize how the evidence works in the first place. If we had the evidence necessary to adjudicate claims between Smith and Jones, we would not need these "passional" features in the first place. (a), then, puts the epistemological cart before the horse. But, (b) gets us into a nasty circle. For, if we accept (b), then we have the question of how to assess *those* uses of his "passional" features. (b) gives no answer but rather only moves the question up a level. (c) looks attractive but, if we accept it, then Wainwright's position must be radically incomplete *in principle*. If (c), then we are owed a further account of what these other features are, how they work, how they relate to truth, how they justify claims, and a host of other necessary steps in a full account.

So, given these considerations, we find that Wainwright's account must either face serious worries in (a) or (b) or else will end up missing a vital piece of the overall theory in (c). My view, in widening epistemic analysis beyond evidence alone and a few evidence-based criteria, makes adjudicating claims possible at least. Proper expressions of virtues must fit a variety of conditions: fit with context, mean between excess/deficiency, consistency/coherence with other virtues, and so forth. We have discussed at length in Chapter 7 that, even though what counts as appropriate may be vague, we still have non-trivial and informative guidelines to assess appropriate expressions of virtue. Asking the same question for Wainwright leads to either problems

or theoretical incompleteness. Thus, I conclude that we have fairly strong reasons to find my theory preferable.

So far, I have argued that my view has significant agreement with certain versions of evidentialism; most closely with Moser and Wainwright. My view is not evidentialist, as should be clear, but it does have favorable relations to these modified versions of evidentialism. Like evidentialism proper, I can claim that evidence plays a major role in epistemological considerations but, like the modified versions of evidentialism, I recognize that there is more to epistemic evaluation than mere consideration of evidence alone. All of us widen what is epistemically relevant beyond just evidence. But, since they retain the claim that *only* evidence *directly* warrants belief or knowledge, our views remain inconsistent. And we have seen that, for both Moser and Wainwright, we have strong reasons to accept my view over theirs despite whatever agreements we may share. I conclude that my view is preferable to evidentialist approaches to religious epistemology. Now, let us move on to non-evidentialist theories.

Non-Evidentialist Approaches to Religious Epistemology

In this section, we shall examine two broad types of non-evidentialist religious epistemology: Reformed Epistemology and fideism. Roughly, speaking Reformed Epistemology carries the name ‘Reformed’ because it affirms with certain theologians of the Reformed tradition that knowledge of God can be immediate or direct. So, we can say that a Reformed epistemologist is one who contends that religious belief or knowledge need not be based on any other belief, argument, or evidence. Alvin Plantinga and William P. Alston provide two different ways to talk about how (proper)

religious belief need not be based on evidence or argument. Recalling distinctions made in Chapter 7, we may say that fideism, in the broadest possible sense, refers to views that make faith epistemically primary for one's religious beliefs. That characterization is, of course, extremely vague but we see no real clear lines of categorization here. We shall discuss two different versions of faith-based epistemology: what some call "Wittgensteinian" fideism and John Bishop's "doxastic venture" fideism. Let us begin with Reformed Epistemology.

Reformed Epistemology

On both Plantinga and Alston's account, epistemically proper religious belief does not require that the believer have any evidence or argument for the religious belief in question. Of course, if one *does* have a sound or cogent argument or some other kind of evidence, then that belief could have good epistemic standing but their point is that such evidence or argument is not *necessary* for justification or warrant of one's beliefs. We should be clear to emphasize that they deny the necessity of argument or evidence rather than their sufficiency. Though Plantinga and Alston agree on this broad anti-evidentialist claim, they give different accounts of what does actually justify or warrant religious beliefs (if not evidence or argument). Let us turn to Plantinga first.

Plantinga and the *Sensus Divinitatis*

Plantinga first states his anti-evidentialist position in the much anthologized "Reason and Belief in God."⁴²⁸ He echoes certain Reformed theologians in claiming that

⁴²⁸ In *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 16-93.

“it is entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all; in this respect belief in God resembles belief in the past, in the existence of other persons, and in the existence of material objects.”⁴²⁹ In this earlier work, he follows certain philosophers in maintaining two classes of beliefs: those inferred from other beliefs and those that we hold immediately (without basis in some other belief). The latter he calls “basic” beliefs and those we *appropriately* hold without basis in some other belief he calls “properly basic” beliefs. Much of his paper attacks what many early modern philosophers take to be properly basic beliefs: those either self-evident or based on sense perception. Plantinga calls this account of properly basic beliefs “classical foundationalism.” But admitting only these beliefs as properly basic seems neither self-evident nor based on sense perception. Hence, classical foundationalism violates its own epistemological standards: it is not derived from its own class of “properly basic” beliefs. Plantinga concludes that ‘classical foundationalism’ is thus “self-referentially inconsistent.”⁴³⁰

With classical foundationalism’s list of properly basic beliefs thus imploded, Plantinga suggests that we have no philosophical grounds to exclude theistic belief from that class. Plantinga’s endorsement of the Reformed approach to epistemology concludes that “a believer is entirely rational, entirely within his epistemic rights, in *starting with* belief in God, in accepting it as basic, and in taking it as premise for argument to other conclusions.”⁴³¹ Theistic belief finds itself among other belief types we typically think have immediate, basic warrant/justification: perceptual beliefs, memory-based beliefs, belief in induction, and a host of other fundamental beliefs.

⁴²⁹ “Reason and Belief in God,” 17.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 60.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 72.

His later work provides more substance into *how exactly* theistic belief can have this foundational or basic status on parallel with perception, memory, and the rest. In the nineteen years between “Reason and Belief in God” and *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga develops his general epistemological theory that he uses to underpin his earlier Reformed approach. First, a bit of terminology: Plantinga uses the term “warrant” to denote whatever it is that, in addition to truth, converts belief into knowledge. (He avoids the term “justification,” one that other philosopher use equivalently, because he thinks it has an irreducibly internalist element.) Plantinga provides his own account of ‘warrant’ in motto form:

A belief has warrant for a person *S* only if that belief is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for *S*’s kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth.⁴³²

What provides warrant for a belief, then, is its being formed by a reliable, properly function cognitive faculty (given the rest of his provisos). Thus, his general epistemological approach is non-evidentialist, where evidence does not justify/warrant a belief, so we can expect the religious extension of this theory to have a non-evidentialist character as well. Many of our perceptual beliefs, we suppose, are formed on the basis of properly functioning (reliable) sense faculties and therefore have warrant on Plantinga’s view. Such beliefs require neither evidence nor argument since they are grounded in such faculties. This faculty-based approach accounts for why certain basic beliefs may be *properly* basic beliefs and thus non-evidentially warranted.

Plantinga’s discussion of Calvin provides a parallel response for theistic belief in God. He concludes that “Calvin’s basic claim is that there is a sort of instinct, a natural

⁴³²*Warranted Christian Belief*, 156.

human tendency, a disposition, a *nisus* to form beliefs about God under a variety of conditions and in a variety of situations.”⁴³³ In short, we have a cognitive faculty that produces religious belief: “there is a kind of faculty or cognitive mechanism, what Calvin calls a *sensus divinitatis* or sense of divinity, which in wide variety of circumstances, produces in us beliefs about God.”⁴³⁴ This *sensus divinitatis* functions analogously to perception: we have a certain disposition such that, when we are in a certain cognitive state, we have a tendency to output certain types of beliefs. Again, following Calvin, Plantinga thinks that a wide range of experiences cause theistic beliefs; “in particular some of the glories of nature.”⁴³⁵ Like perception, “we can think of the *sensus divinitatis*, too, as an input-output device: it takes circumstances mentioned above as input and issues as output theistic beliefs, beliefs about God.”⁴³⁶ We have a sort-of “God faculty”—so to speak—that, when functioning properly, reliably produces in us true theistic beliefs. So long as the *sensus divinitatis* functions properly, the beliefs it causes will have warrant for the believer; even if s/he has no evidence or argument supporting those beliefs. Plantinga’s later, non-evidential approach to epistemology provides the framework into which he fits Calvin’s *sensus divinitatis*. This combination provides Plantinga’s general religious epistemology, hooking up with his earlier claims about theistic belief being properly basic.

What shall we say of Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology and its relation to my own virtue-theoretic view? First, there are obvious points of intersection. Both of our views are non-evidentialist in the sense that neither makes evidence necessary and

⁴³³Ibid., 171.

⁴³⁴Ibid., 172.

⁴³⁵Ibid., 174.

⁴³⁶Ibid., 174-175.

sufficient for justification, warrant, positive epistemic standing, etc. I think the more significant agreement, though, lies in the nuance he gives to bare (virtue) reliabilism.

But we disagree on the epistemic significance of cognitive faculties. For him, such faculties warrant beliefs and, for me, epistemic virtues immediately provide positive epistemic value to beliefs. Accordingly, his view would count as either a reliabilism proper or a version of virtue reliabilism, as we discussed in Chapter 1. His account of warrant makes it necessary that the faculty in question must, to some degree, be appropriate for its context vis-à-vis truth. I agree that epistemological considerations must be flexible and sensitive to the contexts, even though his considerations are not virtue-based ones. His religious epistemology, thus, remains too faculty based. Religious warrant occurs by virtue of God's creating us such that we have a certain faculty or disposition to form theistic beliefs. My view makes proper religious beliefs the produce of acquired, habituated dispositions of character whereas Plantinga's view implies that religious beliefs occur by virtue of our natural constitution.⁴³⁷ However, if the epistemic propriety of religious beliefs occurs as a function of our natural (cognitive) constitution, then so would the *impropriety* of those beliefs. We do not choose our faculties and, to a large degree, how well or poorly they function is a matter of natural endowment. If my *sensus divinitatis* works well to produce warranted beliefs, but Richard Dawkins' *sensus* does not, it seems like I have hit the epistemic jackpot. Plantinga's faculty-based approach here makes the warrant of one's belief a matter of luck in how one's cognitive apparatuses work out. In short (and in good Calvinist fashion), Plantinga's view leads to an epistemic predestination. By virtue of God's creation of our cognitive faculties, it is *God's* determination of whose *sensus* works and

⁴³⁷ Or, at least, our natural constitution prior to the Fall.

whose does not. God (epistemically) elects some of us for religious warrant by ensuring that our *sensus* works well and (epistemically) damns others by not ensuring the function of their *sensus*. Whether we have warrant or not is entirely up to God's creation and preservation of our faculties and not due to us. And, if we are worried about epistemic luck in mundane matters, this sort of religious epistemic luck has even worse implications. My view eschews such luck and, by denying the basis in faculties, avoids these nasty problems of epistemic predestination.

But, this "faculty versus virtue" debate aside, we both agree that—in certain contexts—the proper function of a person (generally speaking) will produce religious beliefs. His basis is the *sensus divinitatis* and mine is ET via faith. In different ways and on the basis of different epistemological theories, then, we agree that theistic belief can be or is a product of an intellectual or cognitive perfection in an agent. And I take that agreement to be fairly significant; even if we give very different accounts of what exactly "intellectual perfections" involve. Now, let us move on to another way to account for proper religious belief: Alston's perception-based religious epistemology.

Alston and Perceptual Experience of God

William Alston, like Plantinga, develops his position on religious epistemology over the course of several years beginning with a straightforward reliabilist theory and ending with a more complete account in *Perceiving God*. Early on, Alston defends a general reliabilist theory: "construed as the view that knowledge is *true reliably engendered belief*—again, with some addition condition(s) to take care of Gettier

problems.”⁴³⁸ Applying such a theory to religious belief provides an easy and straightforward verdict on religious beliefs: the question of religious knowledge simply comes down to whether the mechanisms that form religious beliefs are reliable. One may think of various ‘mechanisms’—religious experience, faith in some religious authority, faith in some holy text, crystal ball gazing, augury, or whatever it is one may use to form religious beliefs. And since his approach includes *only* a reliability condition (with Gettier provisos), this means that one has religious knowledge just in case the mechanism is reliable “whether or not [one] can show that the mechanism is reliable, whether or not [one] can show that [one’s] basis is adequate, whether or not [one] can provide reasons for [one’s] belief that would be convincing to any rational person who considered them carefully...”⁴³⁹ Reliable belief-forming mechanisms make for religious knowledge rather than having evidence, argument or reasons. The latter considerations, instead, only contribute to the ‘higher-order’ knowledge that one knows that one knows some religious proposition. The lower-order knowledge of God works by externalist reliable faculties without any considerations of evidence or reasons.

But it is this last implication that one might find problematic. Especially with religious matters, it can be quite significant to know that one knows something. Otherwise, we seem faced with Plantinga’s kind of epistemic predestination: some are epistemically damned and some are epistemically saved and we have no real standard to decisively determine one from the other.⁴⁴⁰ The complaint in question goes thus: we

⁴³⁸ Alston, “Knowledge of God,” in *Faith, Reason, and Skepticism*, ed. Marcus Hester (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 26.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 37

⁴⁴⁰ I am simply going to suggest here that considerations of epistemic luck might account for desiring this higher order knowledge. If religious knowledge comes down to simple reliability and such knowledge might be salvifically significant, we might think that one may happen to be “epistemically damned” due only to some bad epistemic luck. But, nothing turns on this really and I leave it as a mere suggestion.

want to know that we know religious matters, but reliabilism provides only for lower-order knowledge rather than the higher-order knowledge we seek. Alston sees the force of this complaint and addresses it in light of other kinds of knowledge. In response, he develops his notion epistemic circularity. Recall from Chapter 1 that some argument suffers from epistemic circularity just in case one cannot believe the premises with warrant or justification unless one also believes the conclusion as well. A position, cognitive faculty, or whatever is infected with epistemic circularity when every argument one can produce for its truth or reliability is epistemic circular. And recall further that Alston argues that epistemic circularity infects all of our most fundamental doxastic practices like sense perception, memory, induction, et al. We may have perceptual knowledge, for instance, since our faculties may in fact be reliable but we cannot know that we have perceptual knowledge due to the epistemic circularity that infects every argument for the reliability of sense perception.

So, how does Alston's account of epistemic circularity solve the complaint about knowing religious knowledge? His

point is that even if it is not possible to give an external validation, that does not consist a black mark against religious knowledge in particular. It simply indicates that religious knowledge has the same status as other large departments of human knowledge, including those of which we are most confident. One cannot reject knowledge of God on this basis without, in consistency, tossing out all or most other standard knowledge claims as well.”⁴⁴¹

Alston's thesis of epistemic circularity, then, allows him to place religious knowledge and other fundamental “departments of human knowledge” in the same epistemic position with respect to the arguments one may adduce to show them reliable. We have

⁴⁴¹ Alston, “On Knowing That We Know,” in *Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge*, ed. C. Stephen Evans and Merold Westphal (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 35.

the beginnings of a parity of reasoning argument between religious belief and beliefs from other fundamental sources (e.g. perception, memory, induction, deduction, etc.). And this parity argument drives his theory for epistemically proper religious belief: if these fundamental sources provide beliefs that are *prima facie* justified or epistemically adequate, then we must say the same thing regarding religious belief because all of these beliefs fall in the same category of epistemic analysis. But, it is his *Perceiving God* that fully and explicitly provides this theory. One sees the origin of the theory in the straightforward reliabilism in “Knowledge of God” where “On Knowing That We Know” develops this view with an eye towards epistemic circularity and a ‘parity’ approach to religious belief.

In *Perceiving God*, Alston completes these maneuvers and provides an account of epistemically proper religious belief/knowledge requiring no evidence or argument as its basis. Alston develops the parity argument here between sense perception and what he calls “mystical perception” or “mystical experience” of God. By these terms he does *not* (necessarily) mean some kind of entranced, undifferentiated state of oneness with God or anything so specific as that but rather “*direct, non-sensory* experiences of God” in a less profound-sounding way.⁴⁴² One can have a mystical experience or perception of God without experiencing the sort of grandiose “big, splashy Cecil B. de Mille experiences” that characterize certain extreme mystical traditions.⁴⁴³ Given this sort of muted sense of “mystical experience” or “mystical perception,” Alston’s “chief aim of [*Perceiving God*] is to defend the view that putative direct awareness of God can provide justification for

⁴⁴²*Perceiving God*, 5.

⁴⁴³*Ibid.*, 33.

certain kinds of beliefs about God.”⁴⁴⁴ And this conclusion holds because “if we think of perception in the most general way, in which it is paradigmatically exemplified but not confined to sense perception, putative awareness of god exhibits the same generic character.”⁴⁴⁵ So, to flesh out his theory, we must begin with general considerations of perception.

Alston affirms what he calls the ‘theory of appearing.’ This takes perception paradigmatically to involve cases where “something (or so it seems to the subject) *presents* itself to the subject’s awareness as so-and-so” (emphasis his).⁴⁴⁶ Perception, at its most general level, takes the form: *X* appears to *S* as ϕ . And, he argues, mystical perception fits this form—it shares a “generic identity of structure” with all other forms of perception (sensory or otherwise).⁴⁴⁷ Given the characterization of mystical perception above, the connection seems obvious: when *S* has an experience of God as loving, God *appears* to *S* as loving. They fit the same schema on Alston’s view. Thus, we have the first parity of his theory: non-religious perception (especially sense perception) exactly parallels mystical perception *with respect to structure*.⁴⁴⁸

Next, Alston examines the epistemic standing of sense perception. As we have seen earlier, Alston provides an externalist epistemology: “a conception of epistemic justification according to which being justified in believing that *p* is for that belief to be based on an objectively adequate ground, one that is (fairly) strongly indicative of the truth of the belief.”⁴⁴⁹ But, even though many beliefs may have such an “objectively

⁴⁴⁴Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸Later, we shall see a second parallel that goes beyond the structure of the experiences.

⁴⁴⁹Ibid., 99.

adequate ground,” we know that epistemic circularity prevents us from *showing* or *demonstrating* that they have such a ground. For each fundamental doxastic practice (e.g. sense perception, memory, induction, et al.), the practice may actually *be* reliable even though we cannot show this without circularity. Thus, “we should draw the conclusion that there is no appeal beyond the practices we find firmly established, psychologically and socially.”⁴⁵⁰ And, finally, as we discussed in Chapter 7, Alston concludes that we are *prima facie* rational in accepting the outputs of an established doxastic practice; provided it satisfies constraints of no-defeaters, coherence, and so forth.

We know, then, that we have a defeasible presumption of rationality for all established doxastic practices. And, at this point, we are in a position to see Alston’s second sort of parity argument. He spends a large portion of his work arguing that “Christian mystical perception” works as a firmly established, socially constrained, etc. doxastic practice in the same sense as other non-religious practices like sense perception.⁴⁵¹ Since sensory experience *qua* firmly established doxastic practice has *prima facie* rationality, then mystical experience has *prima facie* rationality as well, as a parallel doxastic practice. Thus, Christian mystical perceptual doxastic practice “is rationally engaged it since it is a socially established doxastic practice that is not demonstrably unreliable or otherwise disqualified for rational acceptance.”⁴⁵² This turns on the second parity argument in his work: non-religious perception (especially sense perception) exactly parallels mystical perception *with respect to epistemic standing*.

Religious belief, grounded in mystical perception or experience, then may be rational and possess positive epistemic value then insofar as it has a basis in a doxastic

⁴⁵⁰Ibid., 149.

⁴⁵¹Ibid., Chapter 5.

⁴⁵²Ibid., 194.

practice, where none of this requires that the believer have any argument or evidence for the belief. As with Plantinga, Alston maintains that religious belief can be epistemically proper in a direct, immediate way akin to perception; requiring no further basis for its justification other than an experience or perception of God. Alston, however, does not provide a discrete faculty for divine perception; locating the source of mystical doxastic practice under the wider, inclusive heading of ‘perception’ *simpliciter*.

And that difference provides a deeper agreement with my own view. Like Alston, I give an argument for religious belief based on its fit in a wider, non-religious genus of trust. We move from the non-religious inclusive concepts of perception and trust to the narrower, distinctively religious concepts of mystical perception and faith. Our accounts may differ on their general epistemological basis—reliabilism versus virtue epistemology—but our arguments and positions have a similar structure. Both theories argue for the epistemic propriety of religious belief based on its generic conceptual identity to well-established non-religious epistemological bases. He uses perception and I use ET, but we share the same basic maneuver and outlook.

Also, I think our views also include a deep sense of trust. My view, clearly, makes ET paramount and I focus on it consistently. But Alston’s notion of epistemic circularity, as I argued in Chapter 1, provides a role for ET at a fundamental place in epistemology. We cannot “get beyond, or behind, our familiar practices and criticize them from that deeper or more objective position. Our human cognitive situation does not permit it.”⁴⁵³ Faced with this, a Reidian sort of trust in our faculties and their reliability seems epistemically pertinent and attractive. And, given these sort of

⁴⁵³Ibid., 150.

considerations, Alston's approach to epistemology makes room for a deep sense of ET just as mine makes explicit.

But, we have some reason to prefer my view to his. His core epistemological theory of reliabilism undercuts the plurality of doxastic practices he wishes to affirm. Many religions make claims or involve beliefs incompatible with others, so their doxastic practices cannot have a deep level of *prima facie* rationality in the face of such disagreement. Alston spends a great deal of time responding to this problem of religious diversity and many philosophers use this as a major criticism of this view. Given the conflicting claims of religions, my view—eschewing a reliability component—seems better suited than Alston's reliability-based approach.

'Tweaks' on Reformed Epistemology

Other philosophers take Reformed Epistemology and modify it in interesting ways. Keith DeRose,⁴⁵⁴ John Greco,⁴⁵⁵ and J. Zeis⁴⁵⁶ have all argued for similar modifications on Reformed Epistemology. Whereas standard Reformed epistemologists like Alston and Plantinga argue that proper religious belief does not require *any* sort of evidence or argument, these theorists will contend that robustly adequate religious belief does require *some* evidence. For instance, Greco argues we need to move from Reformed Epistemology's concern on *prima facie* justification to *ultima facie* justification, where “arguments are necessary to convert [the] initial positive status [from basic sources] into

⁴⁵⁴DeRose, “Direct Warrant Realism,” in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Andrew Dole & Andrew Chignell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 150-174.

⁴⁵⁵Greco, “Catholics vs. Calvinists on Religious Knowledge,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 71, no. 1 (1997): 13-34

⁴⁵⁶Zeis, “A Foundherentist Conception of the Justification of Religious Belief,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 58 (2005): 133-160.

an all-things-considered positive status.”⁴⁵⁷ That is, one may think that Reformed epistemology shows that religious belief has *some degree* of warrant or justification from basic, quasi-perceptual sources, but this degree will not be sufficient for knowledge or fully adequate belief without argument or evidence buttressing it.

And Zeis, following Susan Haack, gives a ‘foundherentist’ model of religious belief. Haack’s foundherentism combines foundationalist and coherentist models of epistemic justification. On the former, a belief is justified either by being “properly basic” (in Plantinga’s terminology used prior) or being inferred from such a belief. On coherentism, beliefs have no such distinctive categorization schemes and they are justified by virtue of their coherence with the other beliefs in a person’s noetic structure. Haack, then, argues that some beliefs possess some degree of basic status but this status is not sufficient and requires further support by coherence relations with other beliefs. She uses a crossword puzzle as a metaphor. We may fill in some of the blanks for which we are relatively confident, but they are not infallible and liable to change depending on how one fills out the rest of the puzzle. But, these original, base-line answers gain confidence by their fit with the rest of the answers—ones in which we are not relatively confident from the outset.

Following Haack’s foundherentism, Zeis argues “that Plantinga has minimized the epistemic role played by justification and has exaggerated the epistemic role of what he takes to be warrant.”⁴⁵⁸ Thus, his view is insufficient and requires more than just externalist, faculty-based considerations to merit knowledge or complete positive epistemic standing. Plantinga’s *sensus divinitatis* may provide some degree of non-

⁴⁵⁷ Greco, “Catholics vs. Calvinists on Religious Knowledge,” 29.

⁴⁵⁸ Zeis, *op. cit.*, 135.

inferential, basic warrant, but the degree necessary for fullest epistemic standing must be filled in by “internalist, coherentist, evidentialist...components.”⁴⁵⁹ Zeis, accordingly, accepts the Reformed epistemologists’ account of direct, non-inferential warrant or justification religious belief enjoys but he denies that such status has a sufficient degree for knowledge or fully adequate epistemic standing.

Unlike the pure faculty or reliabilist theories of Alston and Plantinga, views like those of Zeis, DeRose, and Greco all move in the right direction of incorporating the epistemic value that evidence and other non-faculty based epistemic sources can provide for a belief but without the evidentialist insistence that *only* evidence can provide epistemic value. Like my virtue-based account, these ‘tweaks’ on Reformed Epistemology offer a more pluralist approach to epistemic standing. Some virtues will be pertinent for obtaining evidence, some virtues pertinent for the proper operation and use of our cognitive faculties, some virtues will be relevant for seeing and maintaining coherence relations between beliefs, and so forth. My view only counts one type of thing as directly pertinent of epistemic justification or standing—i.e. virtues—but virtues of various sorts govern many other putative epistemic values (like evidence, coherence, cognitive faculties, intellectual skills, etc.). In making room for more than one sort of thing that can contribute to the overall epistemic standing of a belief, such views come closer to my own.

But, these views do not come close enough. Even though they move away from the straightforward faculty epistemologies of standard Reformed Epistemologist, the basic warrant/justification from those faculties is the core of their account. As I have argued in Chapters 1 and 4, I do not find reliabilist, faculty-based epistemologies

⁴⁵⁹Ibid., 157.

promising. And since the theories of Zeis, Greco, and DeRose take that sort of approach as the basis, they will have the same problems as any standard reliabilist approach. So, insofar as my view avoids the problems with reliabilism—as I argued in earlier chapters—we have good reason to prefer my theory to theirs.

And Duncan Pritchard's 'tweak' comes closer still to the view I defend here. He argues that virtue epistemology offers the best approach to understand Reformed epistemology. In particular, he argues that Plantinga's faculty-based approach works as a virtue reliabilism akin to early work by Ernest Sosa and Alvin Goldman: theorists, who recalling from Chapter 1, define an epistemic virtue as any reliable belief-producing mechanism. On this broad reliabilist definition of 'virtue,' certainly Plantinga's *sensus divinitatis* based religious epistemology counts as a version or (reliabilist) virtue epistemology. But, taking a cue from DeRose (and others), Pritchard argues that such reliabilism will not totally suffice. According to Pritchard, "[p]roperly formed religious beliefs are not usually simply formed as a direct response to certain stimuli, as one might naturally think in the case of properly formed perceptual beliefs, but instead standardly seem to invoke certain reflective capacities on the part of the subject."⁴⁶⁰ Pritchard urges the need for more than mere virtue reliabilism in favor for "those virtue theories that do not concentrate solely on the faculty virtues but also incorporate a role for *reflective* virtues" (emphasis his).⁴⁶¹ A responsibilist approach to epistemic virtue seems to fit Pritchard's bill nicely.

Clearly, Pritchard's theory comes very close to my own—arguing that a responsibilist approach to virtue is necessary for an adequate religious epistemology.

⁴⁶⁰ Pritchard, "Reforming Reformed Epistemology," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 1, iss. 169 (2003), 63.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

That is a significant and really important overall with my own responsibilist approach to epistemic virtue. However, I want to emphasize two key points of disagreement. First, as with Zeis, DeRose, and Greco above, Pritchard still accepts the viability of a reliabilist, faculty-based approach to epistemic virtue *to some degree*. As my arguments in the Chapter 1 show, however, I do not find such an approach to virtue plausible and, if I am correct, that view must be rejected. That in itself means that Pritchard's view has some problems in accepting a faculty-based approach too blithely. Second, his suggestion of a "reflective" approach to virtue epistemology is left undeveloped. He urges the need for such an account but none is provided. This work fills that gap—I provide a distinctively responsibilist (non-reliabilist) approach to virtue epistemology and then I apply such an approach systematically to religious epistemology. I cannot say whether Pritchard will find my approach satisfactory in detail but it certainly seems like my view satisfies what he sees as lacking in religious epistemology.

No matter which variant of Reformed Epistemology we consider—Platniga's, Alston's, the foundherentists (of Zeis, Greco, and DeRose), or Pritchard's religious virtue reliabilism, we find that their theories have serious worries. So, as with evidentialist approaches, we see that my virtue-theoretic approach to religious epistemology provides a better account than the Reformed approach. Now let us turn to fideist approaches.

Fideism

We may understand 'fideism' as the view that faith (rather than 'reason') ultimately underpins epistemically adequate religious belief. How this underpinning works, how faith relates to 'reason' (if at all), and what sort of general implications this

has for religious knowledge or justified belief can vary widely depending on the specifics of the fideist theory in question. That is why our characterization of the term must be so broad. We shall close out this chapter by discussing two different variants of fideism—one based in Wittgenstein and John Bishop’s William James-inspired “doxastic venture” approach. Let us begin with what has been called (for better or worse) Wittgensteinian fideism.

Wittgensteinian Fideism

Wittgensteinian fideism roughly corresponds to a series of theories having a basis in Wittgenstein and providing a different approach to religious epistemology. The term “Wittgensteinian fideism” has no easy application and many theorists classified as such think the term more of a distortion of their views than a helpful classification (especially D.Z. Phillips). But, even with these caveats in mind, there are a set of theses or views advanced by Wittgenstein-inspired philosophers of religion that bear upon the landscape of religious epistemology. So, instead of trying to show one person’s explicit account of religious epistemology, I shall advance a few of these distinctive theses in attempt to examine a view that does not always lend itself to easy grasp.

Norman Malcolm describes what he calls “framework principles.”⁴⁶² These principles belong to a system which

provides the boundaries within which we ask questions, carry out investigations, and make judgments. Hypotheses are put forth and challenged, *within* a system. Verification, justification, the search for evidence, occur *within* a system. The framework propositions of the system are not put to the test, not backed up by evidence. This is what

⁴⁶² Malcolm, “The Groundlessness of Belief,” in *Faith*, ed. Terence Penelhum (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1989), 193-206.

Wittgenstein means when he says: “Of course, there is justification; but justification comes to an end.” (emphasis his)⁴⁶³

His words here provide several important theses that come to characterize Wittgensteinian fideism. This system of framework principles has what we may call justificational independence: since they are the prerequisites of justification and justificational practices, they are independent of the standards of justification required for non-framework principles. The system sets up the criteria or standards for justification and, therefore, there is no justification possible outside of such a system. Justification for the system itself cannot occur—this is the import of the claim that justification happens only within a system. Furthermore, the materials used in justification—evidence—can be obtained and assessed only from within this system. Malcolm’s view here provides a non-evidentialism. Evidence is *secondary* to the justificatory function of a system and, therefore, cannot serve as the necessary and sufficient conditions for justification itself. Evidence cannot be the primary epistemological criterion, since the evidence itself occurs and makes sense only in the framework of the principles discussed above. We can possess, use, and make sense of evidence only *after* or *within* the system of principles we accept as our epistemological “bedrock.” One must put evidence to this system of framework principles prior to using it to justify or refute something else. Evidence is possible only insofar as it fits within a system that standardizes, interprets, and measures it.

How does all of this impact religious epistemology, though? First, the non-evidentialism in Malcolm’s account of a system has a clear impact on the epistemic standing of religious beliefs. In particular, the idea is that since a religious belief often

⁴⁶³Ibid., 196.

works as “framework principles” for one’s system, “it does not rise or fall on the basis of evidence or grounds: it is groundless.”⁴⁶⁴ Of course, there *is* a ground for the belief in the sense of having a *cause*:

[w]e grow into a framework. We don’t question it. We accept it *trustingly*. But this acceptance is not a consequences of reflection...We do come to adhere to a framework proposition, in the sense that it shapes the way we think. The framework propositions that we accept, grow into, are not idiosyncrasies but common ways of speaking and thinking that are pressed on us by our human community. (emphasis mine)⁴⁶⁵

A basic, non-evidential sort of trust underpins our acceptance of our framework principles, among which Malcolm certain thinks religious commitments lie. Religious beliefs, therefore, have a ground in a kind of faith *qua* trust that underpins all of our most fundamental acceptances. Here, I suggest, is the *fideistic* aspect of this view: Malcolm’s talk of a fundamental trust underpinning religious belief implies that faith plays such a foundational role in forming the framework of one’s system. Evidence for religious belief comes *after* faith and is possible only on the basis of one’s faith/trust-based acceptance of certain framework principles.

Second, since the religious beliefs form part of the framework of one’s system, it follows that there is no possible justification for these beliefs. They are justifiers rather than justified—they provide the context against which all justification is possible and, as such, are not open for justification themselves.⁴⁶⁶ As the system provides a context of justification, we can see how justification works *within* the system. If there is inconsistency or incoherence in the system, then it is open to appropriate criticism. As D.Z. Phillips notes, we can see how “philosophical criticism may draw attention to

⁴⁶⁴Ibid., 197.

⁴⁶⁵Ibid., 196-197.

⁴⁶⁶To put it another way: they are *norma normans sed non normata*.

confusion in [one's system]" even when there is no extra-systemic position to justify (or criticize) the whole structure.⁴⁶⁷ This system or language game is 'complete' in the sense that there is no "wider" system or game of which they are all parts and under which they are all evaluated.⁴⁶⁸ In this sense, systems or language games are genuinely autonomous insofar as they have no 'higher' or more fundamental system in which they find their own justification. There can be criticism of a game but not from a 'wider' one—the only philosophical criticism possible of such a game (or system) is an *internal* criticism.

But a language game does not only have authority over justification procedures and practices. It also has a degree of autonomy over the meaning of a term or concept. Another key thesis of Wittgensteinian fideism is that claim that "[t]he criteria of what can sensibly be said of God are to be found *within* the religious tradition."⁴⁶⁹ And language games or systems have semantic autonomy because of the way that Wittgenstein views the meaning of any term. The oft-cited motto that "meaning is use" implies that the meaning of a term is connected to how it functions with respect to a person's use of it. The interconnected concepts of a language game, then, are not simply determined by examining those concepts themselves—the content and meaning of the game is determined by how the 'player' uses it. Language games, then, effectively come down to their uses in the lives of the 'players': they are manifestations of different forms of life. So, for Malcolm, a description of a language game is a description of "a system of thought and *action*, [where] you are describing concepts, and yet also *describing what*

⁴⁶⁷ Phillips, "Wittgenstein's Full Stop," in *Wittgenstein and Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 96.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ D.Z. Phillips, "Philosophy, Theology, and the Reality of God," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 53 (1963), 346.

certain people do—how they think, react, live” (emphasis mine).⁴⁷⁰ And D.Z. Phillips argues that the ‘rituals’ involved in the rules of some language game are grasped only through their function in a “form of life.”⁴⁷¹

The religious game, then, cannot be exhaustively conceptual or propositional. Insofar as games are forms of life, the religious game must be lived by a person to grasp the full meaning and interconnection of the concepts that constitute it. Accordingly, one’s faith does not issue in simple propositional belief or purely intellectual assent to some creed, but instead expresses itself in the whole of the person’s life. The justification for one’s way of life lies in that way itself and, for any view outside of that view, justification or criticism has only a limited role.

So, this bare sketch of certain theses of Wittgensteinian fideism has some interesting points of intersection with my own. *Qua* fideistic this view and my own will both feature faith in a prominent role in religious belief. Malcolm’s insistence of the depth of trust involved in accepting a system or game—with its concomitant way of life—echoes the robust or ‘thick’ nature of the trust or faith *in* distinction I maintain throughout this work. Furthermore, the emphasis on a way of life brings in an element of praxis into religious epistemology. Since my approach includes virtues *qua* dispositions to act/believe, I can concur with this addition. Similarly, the virtue-theoretic approach I take to faith implies that faith (*qua* trust) must be deeply embedded in one’s life both epistemically and morally.

But I deny that religious beliefs can be criticized only from within a religious system or conceptual framework. A deeply held commitment to a religious position can

⁴⁷⁰ Malcolm, op. cit., 205.

⁴⁷¹“Wittgenstein’s Full Stop,” 92.

come into tension with some feature(s) of the world or some other person's non-religious commitment. My view accepts the role that non-religious virtues play in one's cognition and moral action so that they allow for a deeper transaction with non-religious persons' commitments. The deep autonomy that the Wittgensteinians give to games or systems conflicts with the interplay between religious and non-religious virtues on my view.

One might object that the context-sensitivity I maintain in my account places me in the same position as the Wittgensteinian here. There is an important difference: I deny that there is no cross-contextual standards. Aristotle, for instance, argues that acts of virtue take into account the context and different actions have different evaluations dependent on an agent's context. But, the person of practical wisdom serves as a standard across contexts. The *phronimos* serves as a standard for what counts as an appropriate action. Now, this standard may lack the determinacy of a hard and fast rule, but it will still provide some criteria from context to context. Without such a standard—even a fairly vague one—a theory might run the risk of a kind of epistemological or justificational relativism. If Wittgensteinian games or systems really do have some kind of epistemological autonomy, I cannot see how a relativism threatens the view. These are the twin problems I see for the Wittgensteinian: (1) how to make sense of cross-game or cross-system *understanding* and (2) how to avoid a relativism indexed to the framework principles of individual systems—principles that lie beyond the pale of epistemological evaluation.

Bishop's "Doxastic Venture" Approach

Bishop's theory begins with what he calls the "thesis of evidential ambiguity" regarding theism. This thesis has two components. First, it claims that "under our rational empiricist evidential practice, our total evidence leaves it open whether or not the classical theistic God exists."⁴⁷² Effectively, the total evidence open to us does not conclusively or decisively count either for or against the truth of theism. Second, the thesis "describes this situation of open evidence as 'ambiguity' by making the claim that the total available evidence is systemically open to two viable competing interpretations" in theism and atheism (or agnosticism).⁴⁷³ The first leads to the second: since the evidence is not conclusive, it turns out to be "ambiguous" in the sense that it can support two inconsistent interpretations of it.

Given this thesis, we have several options. One can take this thesis as itself evidence *against* the truth of theism, as does J.L. Schellenburg and other defenders of his divine hiddenness argument against theism (discussed in Chapter 7). One can, further, take this thesis as grounds to accept religious agnosticism—occupying a skeptical position in light of inconclusive evidence. Or, as Bishop commends, take a "doxastic venture" approach to religious epistemology. Bishop defines a "doxastic venture" thus:

[p]eople make a doxastic venture if and only if they take to be true in their practical reasoning a proposition, *p*, that they believe to be true, while recognizing that it is not the case that *p*'s truth is adequately supported by their total available evidence.⁴⁷⁴

A doxastic venture, then is a kind of risk of belief when one has no conclusive evidence for it—a "leap of faith," as it were. One important point: doxastic ventures do not add to

⁴⁷² Bishop, *Believing by Faith: An Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 71.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 20.

one's evidence; they are thus non-evidential factors in one's general epistemological standing.⁴⁷⁵ Such ventures accept the evidential ambiguity as a given and intractable and, *from that point*, move on to beliefs that, if justified, are not *evidentially* justified. So, in the acceptance of the thesis of evidential ambiguity, we have a denial of the main contention of evidentialism; namely, that one is justified in holding a belief if and only if one has sufficient evidence for it.⁴⁷⁶ Finally, Bishop affirms, following William James, that beliefs can have "passional" causes of belief that outstrip considerations of evidence. The acceptability of a doxastic venture, then, becomes an account of when these "passional" causes can appropriately ground (religious) belief.

Clearly, it would be unwise to permit any and all doxastic ventures, for this would make it possible to sanction *any* belief given the right evidential circumstances. Rather, Bishop argues for a restrictive account for the permissibility of doxastic ventures. That is, one must satisfy certain conditions if one's doxastic venture is to be justified. He goes through several revisions of the principle at target before he ends with (J+):

Where p is a faith-proposition of the kind exemplified by the propositions taken to be true in the context of theistic faith, it is morally permissible for people to take p [on a doxastic venture], if and only if:

- (i) the question whether p presents itself to them as a genuine option; and
- (ii) the question whether p is essentially evidentially undecidable; and
- (iii) *their non-evidential motivation for taking p to be true is of a morally acceptable type; and*
- (iv) *p's being true conforms with correct morality.*⁴⁷⁷

Let us briefly examine each condition. Bishop defines (i) with recourse to James' distinction of a "genuine option." James claims that an option is 'genuine' just in case it

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁷⁶ Actually, this may not be the case depending on the relevant sense of 'justified' involved. If the evidentialist means only *epistemically* justified and the doxastic venturist means *morally* or *pragmatically* justified, then it is possible for these views to be consistent. Something similar to this occurs in Wainwright's interpretation of William James in *Reason and the Heart*.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 165.

is living, forced, and momentous. Live options are ones that have “some ‘appeal’ as a real possibility to [the person] to whom it is proposed.”⁴⁷⁸ Thus, the major world religious may be live for most persons whereas Nordic paganism would not be a live option for most persons (excluding certain Scandinavian aficionados, I presume). An option is forced when we have no real choice whether or not to take some proposition to be true (though ‘taking to be true’ need not entail ‘believing to be true’). Bishop’s example of a forced option concerns one’s opinion of a departmental colleague’s bid for a promotion. As things stand one might be neutral regarding the colleague’s prospects, but if the Dean asks for one’s opinion, the issue becomes forced—abstaining from opinion effectively counting negatively against the colleague in terms of not giving support. Finally, an option is momentous when “for most people...it matters significantly which hypothesis they adopt—where what they take to be true affects significant actions of theirs or, more broadly, what kind of lives they lead or persons they become.”⁴⁷⁹ Religious or non-religious commitments, then, may serve as paradigmatically momentous decisions; for a great deal of one’s outlook, actions, and worldview depends upon one’s religious commitment or lack thereof.

We have already addressed (ii): it is effectively the condition that a doxastic venture is permissible only if the issue at hand is “evidentially ambiguous.” Conditions (iii) and (iv) bring Bishop’s moral considerations to play. Effectively (iii) restricts the “passional” grounds for belief; entailing that only morally acceptable passional grounds can permit doxastic ventures. One cannot appropriately venture doxastically, on Bishop’s view, if one has morally inappropriate motives—even if the issue is evidentially

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 126.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

ambiguous and a genuine option. In short, the motives behind a doxastic venture must conform to morally adequate types of motivations.

Finally (iv) concerns not the motives of the person in question but the moral adequacy of that person's putative *belief*. Bishop cashes out the "conforming with correct morality" talk in (iv) as requiring that "it be morally good" for the proposition or claim in question to be true.⁴⁸⁰ That is, one can belief that *p* on a doxastic venture only if it would be morally good were it the case that *p* obtains. One cannot, thus, venture to belief in the genocide of some people group even if the rest of one's faith satisfies the definition above. Conditions (iii) and (iv) offer restraints of moral coherence on doxastic ventures: the motives of the believers and the propositions they believe must cohere with morally adequate motives and states of affairs.

Putting all of this together, Bishop's account offers a theory of adequate or proper religious belief that goes *beyond* what total evidence one has available where conditions of moral coherence restrict how non-evidential factors ground one's faith. In his words, his theory is a "modest, moral coherentist, 'supra-evidential' fideism."⁴⁸¹ It is faith grounded in an appropriate doxastic venture that Bishop contends provides for justified religious beliefs. Unlike Wittgensteinian fideism, his version of the view grounds itself in moral and pragmatic (via 'passional') considerations.

Now, his view and mine will agree on the key role that faith plays in religious belief. But, that much remains obvious for *any* version of fideism and my own. Yet, there is more significant overlap than such a trivial point. His view makes non-evidential factors absolutely essential for proper religious belief. And, as a non-evidentialist

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 3.

myself, I entirely agree. Epistemic virtues are not evidence and, insofar as they become the primary focus of epistemic status, my view entails that evidence cannot be the only (or even sole) epistemic factor regarding belief. His view, like mine, has a mix of epistemic, moral, and pragmatic factors that come to bear significantly on the overall status and evaluate of religious belief and commitment. And I take that to be *deep* agreement.

However, his talk of distinctively epistemic standing focuses exhaustively on evidence. It seems that he views evidence as the primarily or only *epistemic* criterion for belief such that his non-evidential factors remain non-epistemic as well; since they involve only moral and emotional (=passional) considerations. My view denies the evidentialist aspect but I hold a wider view of *epistemic* criteria for belief other than simply evidence. That is, I see the class of *epistemic* considerations as tremendously wider than that of Bishop's, since he seems to focus epistemic standards *only* on evidence. These passional/moral considerations become key for assessing beliefs but not on an epistemological standard. A distinctively *epistemic* evaluation fo beliefs seems to rely solely on evidence. I include more than mere evidence as epistemically vital; whereas he restricts everything pertinent to non-evidential evaluation on the *moral* side of the analysis.

And this is precisely why I favor an account such as mine to Bishop's. If moral/passional features of a belief and one's life do not contribute to the *epistemic* evaluation of one's (religious beliefs), it is hard to see how that really impacts the epistemological standing of his beliefs. At best, we have *moral* or *practical* reasons for belief that outstrip the epistemic reasons. And thus, we should say on his account that

religious beliefs end up *unjustified*. If he claims that their justification comes from a moral or practical status as a religious *epistemology*, then we have an illicit use of moral/practical justification substituted for epistemic justification. Unless his moral/passional features have epistemic import, his view is not one that properly belongs in epistemology. My view, on the other hand, makes *epistemic* use of various elements of our character. My wider notion of what counts epistemologically inoculates my view against this confusion of moral/practical justification for epistemic justification insofar as my approach includes more in the latter than Bishop's.

I also find the 'moral coherentism' in his account productive. *Moral* considerations form part of the overall set of criteria for the adequacy, appropriateness, or propriety of beliefs. And I affirm something quite similar in my account for appropriate expressions of faith.⁴⁸² *Epistemically* proper faith must cohere with general epistemic and moral factors on my view and Bishop seems to offer a similar approach here. But there is a key difference, one upon which we focus above. For him, moral considerations are important for beliefs but not for the *epistemic* standing of beliefs. My view includes many of the same features he finds important but I see them having an epistemological function to play. Instead of saying that religious beliefs are epistemically unjustified but morally/practically justified, my view affirms the interplay here and resists the temptation to conflate these different senses of 'justification.' I can capture the core that such moral/practical concerns are important but, unlike Bishop, my view affirms that they are *epistemically* relevant.

And, at the end of the analysis, we must find both versions of fideism lacking in relation to the view I defend here. As with evidentialism and Reformed Epistemology,

⁴⁸² See my section on the vagueness of 'appropriate' faith in Chapter 7.

the fideist approach may get some things deeply correct about religious belief and the epistemic analysis thereof. But, none of them provide a theory of such belief preferable to the one I have discussed and defended in this work. I suggest that my view, in that case, provides the most satisfactory approach to religious belief in relation to the other major current epistemological approaches.

Conclusion

What we have found in all of these major approaches to religious epistemology are intersections of both deep agreement and disagreement. Some, like the views of Wainwright and Alston, seem to diverge from mine primarily because they offer different general epistemologies than a virtue account. I think we take very similar views on religious belief, but these positions come through different approaches to epistemology. Were I an evidentialist like Wainwright or a reliabilist like Alston, I suspect we would have pretty extensive agreement on many of these key issues. The other views, also, have intersections of deep agreement with mine in various ways but there is more to our disagreements than the general epistemology at the basis of our respective accounts. But, even with our disagreement, we should not overlook the points of intersection as well.

What does all of this agreement and disagreement mean for my theory? I suggest that it develops the understanding of how my view works into the landscape on religious belief in epistemology. Like most views, I can claim deep agreement with major theories but my view cannot be reduced to any of them. All of the views considered herein (including mine) are distinct from the others, but they are all related to different degrees and different ways. The interaction here can help support some theory, develop in

interesting and productive ways, or perhaps uncover issues that should be addressed to improve the view in question. Thus, this chapter works like a microcosm of the wider philosophical dialogue in which philosophers engage: presenting views, assessing them, seeing relations, seeing problems, offering strengths, etc. in the effort to clarify the significant positions, defend what one considers the best theory, and place it in the philosophical market place. And that is what I have tried to accomplish in this work with my virtue-theoretic approach to faith. Yet, through all of this analysis, we have seen threads of conceptual and practical worries that, when tugged, offer reasons to accept a virtue-theoretic model of religious epistemology over theirs. We find the tentative but strong conclusion that such an approach provides the best epistemological theory for religious belief among these major contemporary views.

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