LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

PLANTINGA, BELIEF IN GOD, AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

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A rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.

William James, "The Will To Believe"
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INTRODUCTION

University of Notre Dame professor of philosophy Alvin Plantinga has proposed an epistemic theory of rationality that allows for theistic belief to be epistemically appropriate in the absence of any good inductive, deductive, or abductive arguments to support it. This flies in the face of traditional accounts, which have taken the rationality of belief in God\(^1\) to be in proportion to the evidence\(^2\) for or against such belief. Typically, a belief \(p\) has been said to be rational if \(p\) is internally justified for \(S\), such that \(p\) is either self-evident or incorrigible for \(S\) (and therefore properly a part of the foundations of \(S\)'s noetic structure), or \(p\) is inferred from beliefs \((r \ldots s)\) which are themselves self-evident or incorrigible for \(S\), or derived from beliefs that are such; that is to say, \(p\) is evidenced (see note 2 above). This position is known as evidentialism. Plantinga's suggestion is that belief in God need not be internally justified in the above evidential manner to be rational. He summarizes his position saying:

\[^1\] There are two ways in which belief in God may be construed: "belief in God" or "belief that God exists." The latter is primarily an intellectual enterprise, involving only those cognitive aspects of one's person connected with accepting an entertained proposition as true. On the other hand, "belief in God" is an act of one's entire being that commits one's entire person to God as an overall way of life. It is belief in God in the intellectual sense that is referred to here and throughout this document. For discussions of this, see Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," (this will be cited as "R & B" from now on) in Faith and Rationality (cited as F & R from this point on), ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 18; and Dewey Hoitenga, Jr., Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga (New York: State of New York University Press, 1991), 176-177.

\[^2\] The notion of evidence is a tricky one and will be treated in more depth in chapter two. Roughly what is meant here is that to have evidence for a belief is to hold that belief \(p\) on the basis of other beliefs \((r \ldots s)\), which one explicitly takes as support for that belief \(p\). This has normally meant propositional evidence. By "propositional evidence" is meant an argument from which "one draws, derives, or infers (the conclusion) [inductively, abductively, or deductively] from one or more other propositions (the premises)." Ronald Nash, Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith (Grand Rapids: Academie Zondervan, 1988), 74. The most succinct statement of this is, "To sum up: it wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." William K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in The Rationality of Belief in God, ed. George I. Mavrodès (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970), 160. For two examples of philosophers who take this view, particularly with respect to belief in God, see: Antony Flew, "The Presumption of Atheism," in Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19-32; and Michael Scriven, Primary Philosophy (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1966).
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.  

Plantinga's controversial position falls within the rubric of what is being called Reformed Epistemology. Plantinga has developed a concept of epistemic rationality that is permissive enough to allow belief in God to be rational without evidence, and properly basic, without sliding down a slippery slope into epistemic relativism. This thesis contends that Plantinga is essentially correct in his understanding of the rationality and proper basicity of belief in God and that on this conception an exclusivist Christian theism can be sustained. This concept will be developed throughout the following pages.

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3 Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in Faith and Rationality, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 17. Here Plantinga is specifically referring to Christian theistic claims, not merely pantheistic claims ("pantheistic" used to mean all other types of theistic belief).

4 Reformed Epistemology is a relatively new movement, arising from within the intellectual tradition of the Protestant Reformation, in particular Reformed Theology in the tradition of John Calvin. The core of the Reformed Epistemologists is represented by Alvin Plantinga (University of Notre Dame), William P. Alston (Syracuse University), George Mavrodes (University of Michigan), and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Yale University).

5 The phrase "epistemic rationality" concerns itself with the reasonableness of beliefs and the conditions of belief formation. This term specifies a singular usage of the term rationality, restricting it to the appraisal of beliefs and/or knowledge claims.

6 A belief is basic if it is held without inference from some other belief. A belief is properly basic if it is a belief that is held without inference from any other belief, thereby occupying a place in the foundations of a person's noetic structure, and has been deemed appropriate or rational. These beliefs require no evidence to be rightly considered knowledge beliefs. This concept will be treated with more depth in chapters two and three.
CHAPTER ONE
PRELIMINARY REMARKS ABOUT RATIONALITY AND EPISTEMIC PERSPECTIVES

There are two models--foundationalism and coherentism--that yield epistemic theories to describe the relationship between beliefs in our noetic structures. Foundationalism has been the dominant version of Western Philosophy and continues its dominance to date. Our discussion of epistemic rationality will be within the context of the foundationalist model for three reasons: (1) foundationalism has historically been and currently is the dominant epistemological model, (2) Plantinga is a foundationalist of sorts, so our discussion of rationality will of necessity be within the context of foundationalism, and (3) there is a very real sense in which coherenst theories may be understood to be a type of foundationalism.

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7 Foundationalism is a model for epistemological theories on which the total system of our beliefs is organized so that some beliefs rest upon others, non-basic beliefs on basic beliefs, so that the basic beliefs comprise a foundation for our noetic structure. This theory will be dealt with in more detail in chapter two. As for the claim that this is the most dominant tradition, see Louis Pojman, What Can We Know? (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994); Alvin Plantinga, R & BIG; Dewey Hoitenga, Jr. Faith and Reason From Plato to Plantinga (New York: State of New York University Press, 1991); Nicholas Wolterstorff, Reason Within the Bounds of Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

8 See Alvin Plantinga's two volumes on epistemology, Warrant: The Current Debate --will be cited as Warrant 1 from this point on--(New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapter 4; and Warrant and Proper Function--cited as Warrant 2 from now on--(New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chapter 10. Coherentists are often charged (by foundationalists) to advocate a view that claims that warrant for any of S’s beliefs is arrived at solely by virtue if its coherence with the rest of S’s noetic structure, and that this is grossly circular. Plantinga argues that the coherentist may be understood as claiming coherence to be the sole criterion under which basic beliefs are proper, thus making coherenst a type (however peculiar) of foundationalism.
Rationality as the Deliverances of Reason

There are many variables which can determine how rationality is broadly understood. Plantinga identifies five "varieties of rationality" in chapter seven in his Warrant: The Current Debate (Warrant 1). In our context, rationality is concerned with what Plantinga calls "the deliverances of reason," meaning those products (beliefs) that are the result of exercising our powers to reason within our limits as humans. There are several types of foundationalists and with each type rationality (as the deliverances of reason) means something different.

The epistemic perspective taken by the foundationalist is the main determinant stipulating how rationality is meant. It is important that we understand what the term "rationality" actually means (i.e., how the deliverances of reason are construed) in foundationalist discussions, and what is univocally true for both internalists and externalists (if anything) when they employ this term. The internalist will understand and use the term rationality to connote a very different set of circumstances than the externalist. In this chapter we will discuss the concept of epistemic rationality contextually in light of these epistemic perspectives.

Epistemic Rationality, Normativity, and Warrant

Linguistic designators (ie. terms) have little meaning in vacuo. Terms derive their specific meanings as they function in a particular context. When we speak

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9 Plantinga, Warrant 1, pp. 134-135. This is a generic type of rationality like the one Aristotle had in mind.

10 Following Plantinga's analysis there are three basic types of foundationalists: (1) ordinary foundationalists, (2) coherentists (see note 7), and (3) Reidian foundationalists. Chapter two will further explicate (1) & (3).

11 As the phrase "epistemic perspective" is being employed here, there are two; internalism and externalism. These will be further discussed and clarified below.
of rationality, it must be in reference to a belief of some person S. The beliefs of S are also in particular context, constituting part of the noetic structure of S. When a belief is said to be rational then, what is being referenced is its status and place in the noetic structure of some person. The noetic structure of a person is "the set of propositions [a person] believes, together with certain epistemic relations that hold him and these propositions together."13

Briefly, a noetic structure has four basic characteristics: 14 (1) It includes the complete set of beliefs of a particular person. (2) It is characterized by the way its beliefs are internally related for that person. (3) It includes differing degrees of tenacity with which beliefs held. And (4), it is constituted by some beliefs which are central and intrinsic in their relationship to the whole of the structure, and others at the periphery with little relationship to the rest. From the outset then, when we call a belief rational, we are saying it occurs within a rational noetic structure of a person and is itself being held properly within that noetic structure in such a way that it does not violate the integrity of the rest of


13 Alvin Plantinga, R & BIG, 48. What we are claiming here is not the stronger claim that human belief-holders have necessary access to the internal relations of their own noetic structures. Rather, the more modest claim is asserted that these sets of beliefs do exist along with the certain relations that hold these sets to their believers, regardless of any access to or awareness of these internal connections by the belief-holders. In personal correspondence, Dr. John Woods of the University of Lethbridge philosophy department (Lethbridge, AB, Canada) has rightly pointed out that from early Wittgenstein on there is a tradition which doubts the existence of sets of beliefs per se on the basis of the failure of the Extentionality Axiom for sets. Willard van Ormond Quine is representative of this tradition. He maintains that beliefs, as individuated propositions, do not in fact exist, despite their conventional utility. What is obtained, says Quine, in our believing is a psychological disposition to "respond in certain ways when the appropriate issue arises;" see Quine, The Web of Belief (New York: Random House, 1970). A full-blown polemic on this point would carry us beyond our scope, and in any case Plantinga does not take the Wittgensteinian-Quinean position. Let it suffice to say that while our methodology, like Quine's, is radically naturalistic, his view appears to ultimately run amuck; see Plantinga, Warrant and Proper Function (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45-46, 75n for discussion of Quine on this point. From this point on, Warrant and Proper Function will be referred to in the text as Warrant 2.

the noetic structure. Of some issue then, in this state of affairs, is both the manner in which any given rational belief is \textit{obtained} by $S$, and even further the manner in which it is \textit{maintained} by $S$ in the face of potential defeaters.$^{15}$

Rationality and Normativity

When the foundationalist wields about the idea of epistemic rationality, she intends it to function in two significant capacities. First, the issue of epistemic rationality$^{16}$ is normative, functioning analogously to the term "moral." The terms "moral" and "rational" are both judicatory and to attach one of them to a belief or action is to go beyond description and prescribe an appropriate state of affairs--one epistemic, the other moral.$^{17}$ Thus, foundationalists appeal to reason to adjudicate between those beliefs that are proper or correct for us to consider basic and those beliefs that must be appropriately evidenced much in the same way that ethicists appeal to moral standards (via the deliverances of reason) to determine those human actions that are proper or correct.

This is not to confuse rationality with truth or intelligence. To use rationality in a normative way does not mean equating a rational belief with an intelligent one.

\footnotesize

$^{15}$ A "defeater" is basically a competing belief that challenges the epistemic status of any previously held belief by $S$; or to say it differently, any belief that causes cognitive dissonance with respect to any of $S$'s beliefs. There are two basic types of defeaters: rebutting and undercutting. A rebutting defeater is any piece of evidence that, when introduced into $S$'s noetic structure, entails the negation of at least one of $S$'s antecedent beliefs. An undercutting defeater is any piece of evidence that, when introduced to $S$'s noetic structure, reduces the prima facie warrant $S$ has for some other belief or set of beliefs. Unlike rebutting defeaters, these undercutting defeaters do not supplant belief $x$ for its negation $\neg x$, but rather undermine the warrant $S$ has for $x$, causing $S$ to have grounds to believe that $x$ may in fact be false. To these two basic types of defeaters there may be added a third, namely that of a 'defeater-defeater', whereby $S$ acquires a defeater (of either of the first two kinds) to her original defeater. See Plantinga, \textit{Warrant 2}, 41-42; and John Pollock, \textit{Knowledge and Justification} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

$^{16}$ For the purposes of this document, the phrase "epistemic rationality" will throughout be used to denote "the foundationalist conception of epistemic rationality," and "rationality" means "epistemic rationality."

$^{17}$ See above notes 4 and 5. There we find that our definitions of "epistemic rationality" and "properly basic belief," when put together, contain this normative component.
(however intelligence may be taken to mean). Likewise, a rational belief is not determined by its complexity and its degree of difficulty to comprehend.

Rationality of a belief does not necessarily attribute intelligence to that belief. We are apt to think, of course, that there will be a greater tendency toward rationality in proportion to intelligence, but the two concepts are distinct from each other. Intelligence is a very slippery term to define, but however it is defined rationality does not come in direct proportion to it.

Similarly, rationality is not to be conflated with truth. The term "truth" is not a logically necessary part of the discussion of rationality, though again it is appropriate to say that rationality does tend toward truth, or lends itself to truth. The truth of a particular belief refers (roughly) to its objective standing in relationship to the laws of logic in such a way that what is said to be true bears resemblance to how things actually are (ontologically).\(^{18}\) The rationality of belief \(p\) refers to the way \(p\) (which may or may not be true) is obtained and sustained in relationship to its subjective possessor \(S\). This is what Nicholas Wolterstorff has in mind when he says that, "Rationality is always situated rationality." and that rationality "is in good measure person specific and situation specific."\(^{19}\) When we say that one's noetic structure is rational, we are not claiming that it of necessity contains only true beliefs; rather, it contains beliefs that one is entitled to hold. A rational belief is not necessarily true, but possibly (maybe even probably) true. It is not the case that a belief is rational only if it is true. Truth is a different discussion.

\(^{18}\) This is a rough working definition of truth and is not intended to stand up to a rigorous philosophical analysis. What is intended for this definition to accomplish is a characterization of what truth-theories are attempting to demonstrate. For more on this see Barry Allen, *Truth in Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

\(^{19}\) Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Can belief in God Be Rational If It Has No Foundations?" in *F & R*, 155. In this work Wolterstorff produces a thorough analytic definition of rationality as normative.
We see emerging from the normativity of rationality, a sort of epistemological permission associated with it.\textsuperscript{20} On this reading, rationality means something similar to being within our epistemic rights in our believing. Wolterstorff succinctly sums up our point thus far concerning rationality as an epistemic norm:

To say that it is rational for me to believe something is to say that I am justified in believing it. And to say that I am justified in believing it is to say that I am permitted to believe it. Further, to say that I am permitted to believe it is to say that it is not in violation of the norms that pertain to my believing—that my believing it does not represent any failure on my part to have governed my believing as I ought to have done. (emphasis his)\textsuperscript{21}

We are not thinking of rationality as utilizing the concept permission in exactly the same way as we mean it in ethical and moral discussions. Rationality functions in respect to beliefs much like morality functions in respect to actions. Both assume that there is some agreed upon standard by which we determine that beliefs or actions are not beyond what is allowed when exercising of our cognitive capacities. Rationality means that our beliefs are in a sense epistemically cleared. We are not saying with Clifford that there is an ethical dimension to our believing that makes us either morally upright or culpable. Rationality is used epistemologically to sanction beliefs as being within the bounds of reason, connoting an epistemically valuable state affairs such that the said belief is justified, or permissible. This type of normativity, or "permissibility," may even be of a mild, naturalistic sort very much like the sort of normativity involved when it is said that kittens \textit{should not} be separated from their mother until they are 8-10 weeks old, or that computers with a virus do not function as they \textit{ought}, or that human eye-sight \textit{ought} to be 20/20. This is how Plantinga


understands rationality to function. His approach is admittedly naturalistic and as such avoids the deontological notion of necessary duty, but it is normative still the same. On this model, descriptive questions about how humans acquire beliefs play an important role in our determining the normative guidelines for human rationality.22

Rationality and Warrant

The normative nature of rationality left us with the idea of justification, or some epistemic "oughts" to fulfill, in the application of rationality to a belief. This is the second significant capacity in which the foundationalist means for "rationality" to function. That is, whenever we talk about epistemic rationality, we are ultimately talking about warrant or justification in the epistemological sense—or something in its neighbourhood.

The received twentieth century epistemological tradition defines knowledge as "justified true belief."23 All things considered, we may generally define "justified" as "that quantity enough of which is sufficient, together with truth, for knowledge."24 This concept of justifying a true belief we may also call warrant.25

22 See Plantinga, Warrant 2, 45-47.

23 The use of the "justified, true belief" definition here serves as a working definition of knowledge. "Justified, true belief" has been the accepted traditional definition of knowledge, beginning with Plato's "Meno," [in Classics of Western Philosophy, ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1977), 4-27] through to the present day; but not without its share of troubles. In an effort to accommodate Edmund L. Gettier's challenge to this definition in "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Analysis 23 (June 1963): 121-123, current discussions in epistemology find this definition to be lacking, but there is no unanimous agreement as to what extent, or how. Regardless, it seems to be the consensus (the relativist objection of Richard Rorty et al. noted) that whatever knowledge is, it is at least equivalent to the "justified, true belief" requirement and not less.

24 Warrant 1, 132.

25 In this loose sense, the terms justification and warrant are referring to the same thing. Plantinga, in his two volumes Warrant 1 & 2 (see especially chapter one of Warrant 1), supplants the term justified with the more neutral term warrant because of the deontological baggage of justified. Another epistemically neutral term for the same idea is the somewhat awkward phrase "positive epistemic status."
The normative standard rationality appeals to is this quality of warrant (remember, we are not appealing to truth).

Rationality is to be distinguished from warrant however. James Beilby cautions us that these concepts are not to be used coextensively as there are crucial differences between the two.\textsuperscript{26} We have seen that a rational belief is one that is in conformity with the deliverances of reason within a given context—i.e., S's noetic structure; that is, S has epistemic permission to hold that belief. Warrant is a technical epistemological term used to evaluate beliefs positively as knowledge. Of the two terms, rationality is the more synoptic. A belief may be rational but not warranted; the converse is not true.\textsuperscript{27} Descartes provides us with the classic example of this with his thought experiment of a malicious demon who at every moment deceives us and causes all of our beliefs at every moment to be false but coherent.\textsuperscript{28} In this case, all our beliefs are rational, but none have the needed warrant to make them knowledge beliefs. Rationality imparts the more subjective, situated concept of epistemic correctness or permission irrespective of truth or falsity, while warrant refers to an abstracted "objective notion of truth conduciveness or knowledge."\textsuperscript{29}

Warrant is at the same time inextricably linked to our discussion of rationality for the two are operating on the same continuum. What separates rationality from warrant is more quantative than qualitative—a difference in quantity of certainty or degree of objectivity. Neither of them are synonymous with truth, but

\textsuperscript{26} "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity," \textit{Philosophia Christi} 17 (Fall 1994), 5.


\textsuperscript{28} René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy." In \textit{Classics of Western Philosophy}, ed. Steven M. Cahn, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977)301-346.

\textsuperscript{29} Beilby, "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity," p. 6.
unlike rationality, warrant is inseparably linked with truth. One may have false rational belief as in the case of Descartes' malicious demon, but not a false warranted belief. Warrant is a distinct concept from rationality in the same way the Bull's Eye is distinct from the target--an arrow may be on the target without being on the Bull's eye--but the Bull's Eye is at the same time inseparably linked-if an arrow is on the Bull's Eye it is also on the target. The thrust of this point is that rationality and warrant are close neighbours and that an understanding of warrant is crucial to a solid understanding of rationality.\footnote{Plantinga, Warrant I, 132.}

**Rationality and Epistemic Perspective**

The foundationalist has two perspectives from which to view the nature of warrant or justification or positive epistemic status; an internalist perspective or an externalist one. These two perspectives differ radically on what the nature of this epistemizing something is, and have conflicting pictures of rationality. Internalism has enjoyed the privilege of being the accepted tradition in Western philosophy since Descartes and Locke and is represented by contemporary epistemologists like Roderick Chisholm, Kieth Lehrer, John Pollock, Robert Audi and Richard Foley (to name only a few). Externalism is a radical departure from the received internalist tradition of the last few centuries and has only recently been introduced as a serious epistemic perspective by current epistemologists like W.V. Quine, Earnest Sosa, Fred Dretske, Alvin Goldman, and Alvin Plantinga.
Internalism and Justification

The internalist perspective sees warrant for a belief as being dependent upon conditions that are internal to the cognizer, of which she is aware. That is to say, a belief is justified for S by the conscious reflection of S. Here a belief \( p \) has warrant for \( S \) iff \( S \) can provide propositional evidence\(^{31}\) in support of \( p \), or \( p \) is properly part of the foundations of \( S \)'s noetic structure (to which \( S \) can gain access but may or may not have accessed as yet).\(^{32}\) Internalism takes the normativity of rationality deontologically resulting in an evidentialist appraisal of warrant. This process is more accurately called justification rather than warrant for justification conjures up the idea of obligation. The internalist speaks of warrant then, as justification.

Two Conditions of Internalist Justification

There two fundamental conditions to be met from the internalist perspective.\(^{33}\) First is the condition of accessibility. In the above caricature of internalism we notice that there is a stress on having reasons, or providing propositional evidence for \( p \), to warrant our beliefs. If one is to produce reasons for her beliefs, she must have epistemic access to them. This epistemic access is of a special kind. As Plantinga points out, he has epistemic access to the distance of the earth from the moon and the depth of the Pacific Ocean because

\(^{31}\) See note 2 for a brief definition of what is meant by propositional evidence.

\(^{32}\) The formulation of the internalist requirement varies according to different internalists but this captures the essence of the internalist perspective. For a rigorous analysis of this see William Alston, "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology," and "An Internalist Externalist," in Epistemic Justification (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). For further treatments of this, see Louis Pjzman, "Theories of Justification (II)," What Can We Know? (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994); and Alvin Plantinga, "Justification, Internalism and Deontology," Warrant I.

\(^{33}\) Louis Pjzman analyzes internalism with respect of these two conditions in his, What Can We Know? (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1994), 123-125. His points have been modified and extended in the following discussion.
he has an encyclopedia, but this is not the sort of epistemic access that the internalist has in mind. The internalist has in mind the sort of access where we can determine whether belief \( p \) has sufficient warrant by reflection alone.

Second, the accessibility condition accommodates a tacit deontological premise which places the "ought" of our believing solely in our own power. Therefore we have a duty to fulfill and because warrant is something we have access to merely by reflection, rationality requires that we fulfill our epistemic duty. This makes us epistemically culpable for false beliefs much like the moral culpability we have for wrong actions, established on the basis that we could act or believe otherwise. In the same way that individuals have prima facie moral responsibilities (to tell the truth, for example), and that the failure to perform these moral duties (or at least sustain an adequate effort to do so) makes us morally culpable, so it is with our believing. We have epistemic responsibilities (such as, to hold only true beliefs) and the failure to perform these epistemic duties makes one epistemically culpable.

**Internalist Justification and Deontology**

The internalist perspective says that we are justified (or warranted) in our beliefs only when we have used all the powers at our disposal to have true beliefs and avoid false ones. This position is firmly rooted historically. The quintessential internalists, Descartes and Locke, maintained that we have a doxastic duty such that to be justified in our beliefs we must fulfill two conditions: (1) violate none of our epistemic duties and (2) believe no more than is

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34 Warrant 1, 5.

35 Roderick M. Chisholm says, "Epistemic reasonability could be understood in terms of the general requirement to try to have the largest possible set of logically independent beliefs such that the true beliefs outnumber the false beliefs." The Foundations of Knowing, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 7. See also Chisholm's Theories of Knowledge (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 15.
permitted.\footnote{36} For Descartes this meant believing only whatever one perceives with clarity and distinctness.\footnote{37} For Locke it meant not believing anything except "upon good reason."\footnote{38} The deontological component is the motivating factor in justification from this perspective.\footnote{39} Internalist justification is not something that happens to our beliefs, but it is something we do to our beliefs. We have an active role in the justifying of our beliefs. Warrant for our beliefs is up to us.

**Internalism and Rationality**

The internalist perspective could not be better exemplified than by W.K. Clifford when he said, "To sum up: It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."\footnote{40} The internalist's normative use of rationality functions in many ways like justification. As Clifford makes clear in his above quote, the internalist understands rationality in such a way that to form a belief without sufficient evidence is to go against the deliverances of reason.

Antony Flew, one of the foremost philosophical atheists, is an example of a twentieth century counterpart of Clifford. In his classic essay in defense of atheism entitled "The Presumption of Atheism," Flew commends Clifford's position on rationality and calls Clifford's above essay both "luminous and

\footnote{36} For more discussion of Descartes and Locke on this topic, see Plantinga's chapter one of \textit{Warrant I}. 

\footnote{37} "Meditations on First Philosophy," in \textit{Classics of Western Philosophy}, ed. Steven M. Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), Meditation IV, 331.


\footnote{39} Plantinga, \textit{Warrant I}, 29.

compulsive."\textsuperscript{41} Flew strongly advocates a Cliffordian view of rationality and from this understanding asserts that the onus of proof is on the theist to prove (via propositional evidence) that her concept of God is rational before it may be accepted as such. In Flew's understanding, a belief is not to be accepted as rational until one has properly evidenced it via propositional evidence.\textsuperscript{42} Rationality in this sense is deontological in character and is the name for a type of human behaviour--namely, believing according to evidence.

Externalism and Warrant

The account of warrant for the externalist can be easily characterized as the opposite of internalism. Alston (himself a externalist of sorts) briefly summarizes externalism as the denial of internalism.\textsuperscript{43} Externalism is a rejection of the traditional internalist account of justification and moves the locus of warrant to something external to the consciousness of the cognizer. That is, warrant for a knowledge belief is not about having and giving reasons in an attempt to justify true belief. Warrant is more to be understood as an inherent status of our beliefs, than something we work to achieve; it is a product of our beliefs being obtained and maintained by mechanisms or processes that reliably produce true beliefs.


\textsuperscript{42} Michael Scriven concurs and says, "So the proper alternative, when there is no doubt, is not mere suspension of belief, it is disbelief..." Primary Philosophy (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1966), 103. See also Michael Martin, Atheism: A Philosophical Justification (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 30 ff. for a corroborating view. Martin essentially maintains Clifford's position, slightly modifying it saying that "...Clifford should have argued that there is an independent epistemological duty to base one's beliefs on purely epistemic reasons. If one does not base one's beliefs on purely epistemic reasons, one is epistemologically irresponsible." (emphasis his). Martin never comes clean with any definition of his term "epistemological reasons," but it appears from his discussion that he understands this in terms of propositional evidence.

The more widely known name for the externalist theory is reliabilism. For reliabilism a true belief is epistemized by "the causal relationships or law-like connections between belief states (S believes that p) and the state of affairs that makes p true, such that given that S believes p, it must be the case that p." Jonathan Dancy calls this the "causal theory of knowledge" because S's beliefs p has warrant by virtue of being caused in a truth conducive manner.\footnote{44 Louis Pojman, \textit{What Can We Know?} (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994) 128.}

There are six general points of externalism/reliabilism that must be noted.\footnote{45 Jonathan Dancy, \textit{Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology} (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 46-47.} First, externalism as defined above is committed to truth conducivity for warrant. What epistemizes true belief is something that will under normal circumstances produce true and not false beliefs. Externalism is in the final analysis an argument for the probabilistic truth of our beliefs, based on a broadly inductive means of establishing the reliability of true-belief producing mechanisms and/or processes.

Second, externalists emphasize that how a belief is produced is what is crucial to its epistemic status.

Third, externalism operates on the assumption that we co have genuine knowledge. It finds the internalist preoccupation with satisfying the Pyrrhonic skeptics who deny the possibility of knowledge, unnecessary and the skepticism itself largely a product of construing knowledge from the internalist perspective. Knowledge is a subject matter to be studied that no more needs proving than solopsism needs defeating before biology may be studied.

\footnote{46 These are based on and adapted from William Alston's discussion of five points of externalism in "Knowledge of God," in \textit{Faith, Reason, and Skepticism}, ed. Marcus Hester (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 26-29.}
Fourth, externalism is much more permissive in its criteria for knowledge than internalism. Internalism is oriented to a sophisticated notion of knowledge that is (at least historically) linked with Cartesian certainty, amounting to an infallibility requirement. The cognizer is a highly sophisticated and reflective being who critically examines, reflects on and weighs her beliefs before accepting them. Externalism on the other hand, is much less discriminating to whom (and what) it allows knowledge to be ascribed. Knowledge does not require sentience and is therefore a much less sophisticated entity which consists (more or less) in accurately receiving and recording information in a reliable fashion. This opens the range of knowledge "beliefs" to lower life forms like animals. The externalist has no problems ascribing knowledge to our pets when they, for instance, "learn" that the clunking sound of dry dog-food on the bottom of the dish means it is feeding time.

Fifth, we notice for externalism knowledge of some particular thing depends more on other antecedent knowledge than for the internalist. For the latter perspective there is little inter-dependence between knowledge beliefs for warrant since we can tell which beliefs of ours have warrant by mere reflection.\(^{47}\) Externalism relies not on reflection for warrant, but on (again, broadly speaking) inductively established reliable true-belief forming mechanisms or processes. Both truth and warrant rely on and are inter-connected with other knowledge beliefs we have formed through life experience (i.e., having produced other beliefs via reliable mechanisms). We cannot determine the truth of our beliefs by reflection since, either they are perceptual beliefs and as such the question of the reliability of the belief forming mechanism that produced them is a question

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\(^ {47}\) Alston notes that this cannot be pushed too far since on the internalist reading truth is also required for knowledge and it is not reasonable to suppose that for most candidates for knowledge their truth can be directly intuited. He goes on to note that this holds true for beliefs about the physical world and other persons. Ibid., 28.
for science, or they are beliefs formed by inference, which in turn rely on the principles of inductive inference established by trial and error and not introspection. What is needed by externalists for warrant for a knowledge-belief \( p \) of some sort requires a comparison of that \( p \) with other knowledge-beliefs we have already formed via reliable process that are of the same sort as that \( p \). This argument is admittedly circular but, says the externalist, this does not hinder us from being able to have beliefs that have warrant by means of being reliably formed.\(^{48}\)

Six, externalism is basically a naturalistic approach to epistemology, relying heavily on natural science and its methods.\(^{49}\) The normativity of warrant is understood to be empirical in nature established by an examination of the natural cognitive and psychological processes involved in the production of a belief. There is a definite "ought" here but it is not the ought of duty and obligation, it is instead the ought of how we arrive at our beliefs.\(^{50}\)

Externalism and Rationality

The externalist perspective strips rationality of its deontological trappings and its particular normative component. The deliverances of reason are seen as the result of a uniformity of nature established empirically through induction.\(^{51}\)

\(^{48}\) For one of these arguments see William Alston's "Epistemic Circularity," in Epistemic Justification (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 319-349.

\(^{49}\) Warrant 2, 45-46; and Louis Pojman, What Can We Know?, chapters 8-10.

\(^{50}\) The champion of this view is W.v. Quine. See his "Epistemology Naturalized," in Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). Quine sees epistemology as the handmaiden of science and reduces epistemic endeavours to neural science. Not all externalists take Quine's radical stance, there are varying degrees to which externalists take their naturalism (See Plantinga, Ibid.). The point is that there is an abandonment of the idea that epistemology is done by pure reflection.

\(^{51}\) This is not be confused with Richard Rorty's relativistic idea that all truth is a matter of ethnocentric consensus (and therefore all knowledge claims are equal) which rests on the internalist constraint of Cartesian certainty for knowledge and on an unwarranted (and untenable) Pyrrhonic skepticism regarding the objectivity of knowledge (and even reality). Refer back to the discussion earlier in
this sense rationality is understood much more permissively in the light of natural cognitive processes. In the situated context of our own noetic structures, rational beliefs are those ones that we are permitted to hold by virtue of their having been produced by reliable processes.\textsuperscript{52}

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\textsuperscript{52} There is a latent internalist idea of justification that lingers on in some accounts of externalism. In this case, a belief is deemed rational and justified by our explicit comparison of the mechanism which produced it and those that we know to be reliable. See Alvin I. Goldman, \textit{Epistemology and Cognition}, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); and William Alston, "Concepts of Justification," and "An Internalist Externalism," in \textit{Epistemic Justification} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).
CHAPTER TWO
PLANTINGA'S ANALYSIS OF WARRANT AND EPISTEMIC RATIONALITY AS PROPER FUNCTION

In chapter one internalism and evidentialism were seen to be linked. All those beliefs that are not properly a part of the foundations of our noetic structures are beliefs that we are obliged to evidence if they are to rational knowledge beliefs. The criteria we have for measuring basic beliefs, as well as our epistemic perspective, is crucial to our question of whether or not belief in God must be evidenced. The internalist criteria for proper basicality are such that belief in God is not included. Bertrand Russell, atheist, internalist and evidentialist, when asked what he would say to a God who asked him why he never believed in God's existence replied "Evidence, God. Not enough evidence!"¹ The internalist/evidentialist objection to belief in God results in a type of foundationalism that necessarily excludes beliefs in God from being properly part of the foundations of a rational noetic structure (or there would be no objection from evidence).² Typically, internalism takes a modern version classical foundationalism which defines the criteria for properly basic beliefs so as to exclude belief in God. Belief in God is obliged to be adequately evidenced (in a propositional manner) for it to be a rational knowledge belief.³

² This is not to say that all internalists object to belief in God. Those internalists who do believe in God do so (purportedly) according to the evidence in its favour. The point made here is that on an ordinary foundationalist internalist view, belief in God is not accepted as properly basic, though it may qualify as a knowledge belief by inference.
³ It may be possible to construe internalism from a foundationalist theory that allows belief in God to be properly basic. Alston attempts this in his "An Internalist Externalism," Epistemic Justification (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). The success of his internalist/externalist reconciliation leaves some questions and his position is not widely held. For the most part, to be an internalist is to hold
Classical foundationalism (CF) and internalism are different sides of the same coin; one entails the other. CF is not only a theory about the structure of knowledge, it is a theory of rationality (or at least entails a theory of rationality). The modern CF criteria include only those of our beliefs that are self-evident for us⁴ or incorrigible for us⁵ as properly basic beliefs. Thus, internalism restricts our properly basic beliefs to tautologies or beliefs about our own sense experiences.⁶

**Reidian Foundationalism**

In *Warrant and Proper Function* Plantinga describes the type of foundationalism that he endorses as Reidian foundationalism (RF), after Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid.⁷ Reid rejected the CF criteria for properly basic beliefs of Locke and Descartes as arbitrary and pointed out that if it were true very few of our beliefs would have warrant.⁸ Plantinga concurs. In *R&BIG* to a type of foundationalism that excludes belief in God from being properly basic. The ontological arguments of Anselm and Descartes are not proper examples of an internalist case where belief in God is properly basic. God's existence is argued to a priori, but he is not known a priori without argument/reflection. If God was properly basic on their view they would not argue for His existence, but for His proper basicity. For a brief discussion of propositional evidence and two examples of philosophers who object to belief in God on these internalist evidentialist grounds, refer to page 1, n 2, chapter 1 above.

⁴ Beliefs are considered to be self-evident for us when they are of the kind that upon comprehension of we instantly recognize them as necessarily true—for example my belief that 1 + 1 = 2. This belief is immediate and held without inference from another belief. I instantly recognize it to be true upon grasping the meaning of the proposition. Alvin Plantinga discusses this in depth in "R&BIG," especially p. 57.

⁵ Our beliefs are incorrigible for us if they are used to designate propositions that are held for certain and cannot reasonably be doubted, but lack the logical necessity of self-evident propositions. This ultimately is limited to beliefs about our own perceptual states—the way in which we are appeared to at a particular time. For example, I cannot be deceived about the fact that I am appeared to redly when I see a fire-engine even if the fire-engine I see is illusory; at least it may be said that I am having the phenomenon of seeing red.


⁷ *Warrant 2*, 183.
Plantinga vigorously attacks the CF criteria for properly basic beliefs as self-referentially incoherent, and labels their criteria as no more than "intellectual imperialism."

In a nutshell, the charge against CF is that it fails to meet its own criteria. If it is true that basic beliefs must be either self-evident or incorrigible, or appropriately evidenced in a propositional way, then the proposition

(i) All beliefs must be either self-evident or incorrigible for \( S \) or \( S \) must propositionally evidence them.

must itself also be self-evident or incorrigible. But (i) is neither. Upon grasping the proposition expressed in (i) I do not see it as immediately and necessarily true (i.e., self-evident), nor is it one about which I cannot be mistaken (i.e., about my own perceptual states, or "incorrigible"). This being the case, (i) must be evidenced somehow. The evidence is not forthcoming, nor does it seem likely to be. The classical foundationalist is as apt to establish her criteria for properly basic beliefs evidentially as the logical positivists are apt to establish their radical empiricism empirically. There is yet to be an adequate response to this charge from the CF camp. All things considered then, it would appear that CF is self-referentially guilty as charged.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) See Thomas Reid, "An Inquiry Into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense," and "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man," in Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Kieth Lehrer, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983). The charge here is that we do not have time to contemplate, reflect, and infer in the manner prescribed by internalism. If we were to actually do this it would result in not only very few beliefs (those one's we actually had time to reason out) but our survival would be jeopardized to the extent that our species would be extinct.

\(^9\) The accounts of this fatal flaw in classical foundationalism are almost too numerous to count. Plantinga's now classic refutation is found in RBiG; see also his Warrant 1, especially chapters one and two; and Warrant 2, especially chapter ten. For more treatments of this see William P. Alston, Epistemic Justification (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), especially chapters 1-3; Nicholas Wolterstorff, Reason Within the Bounds of Religion, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Louis Pajman, What Can We Know? (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994), especially chapter six; Ronald Nash, Faith and Reason (Grand Rapids: Academie Zondervan, 1988); and David K. Clark, Dialogical Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993); Dewey Hoitenga, Jr., Faith and Reason From Plato to Plantinga (New York: State of New York University Press, 1991).
Reidian Foundationalism and Classical Foundationalism

Plantinga's Reidian foundationalism is his externalist alternative to CF. According to this theory basic beliefs are correct or properly basic when they are formed by a person whose cognitive faculties are functioning correctly. This opens up many kinds of beliefs to qualify as properly basic beliefs previously discounted by CF; those allowed by CF and many more like perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, beliefs about the mental states of other people, inductive beliefs, and testimonial beliefs.

Plantinga credits Thomas Reid with his concept of proper function according to a design plan. Reid called this "having concepts by our constitution," by which he meant that we are designed or structured so that we have certain perceptual and cognitive abilities, concepts and beliefs. Reid thought that on perceiving an object through sensation, we form immediate and non-inferential beliefs, without further reflection.

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10 Classical foundationalists limit properly basic beliefs to, apart from self-evident truths, beliefs about our perceptual beliefs—that is, propositions that are incorrigible for us like, "I am appeared to redly." (See note 5.) Reidian foundationalists include the perceptual belief itself (as well as the incorrigible one) as properly basic. For example, the proposition, "I see a red fire-truck" is basic for RF.

11 See Warrant 2, 183.


13 Ronald E. Beanblossom, "Introduction," in Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Kieth Lehrer, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p. xx-xxi. In his Inquiry Reid said, "We have shewn, on the contrary, that every operation of the senses, in its very nature, implies judgment or belief, as well as simple apprehension. Thus, when I feel a pain in my toe, I have not a notion of pain, but a belief of its existence ... and this belief is not produced by comparing ideas, and perceiving their agreements and disagreements; it is included in the very nature of the sensation. .... Such original judgments are, therefore, a part of that furniture which Nature hath giver to the human understanding." In Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays, ed. Ronald E. Beanblossom and Kieth Lehrer, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983),118.
It is this understanding of experiential propositions and the allowing of them to qualify as properly basic beliefs that is the watershed between Plantinga's RF and CF.\textsuperscript{14}

RF is characterized by a spirit of fallibilism and therefore rejects the CF requirement of Cartesian certainty for knowledge.\textsuperscript{15} Internalists since Descartes and Locke have held that beliefs must have something like infallibility (i.e., self-evidence or incorrigibility as defined above) for \( S \) if they are to be knowledge for \( S \). This criterion has generated much of the skeptical tradition in epistemology. As finite knowers it is theoretically possible and practically proven that we are often mistaken in what we hold to be knowledge.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, says the skeptic, there is no knowledge-- there is nothing we believe that is not possibly false theoretically and therefore subject to skepticism. This has posed some consternation among adherents to CF.\textsuperscript{17} Plantinga is not disturbed by skeptics (solipsist or otherwise) conjuring up visions of Cartesian demons, or of brains in vats manipulated by Alpha Centaurian scientists to produce illusory phenomena. Plantinga sees the epistemologically skeptical argument as a \textit{non sequitur} and says in response,

There is no need to declare these things impossible; indeed, they seem perfectly possible (in the broadly logical sense), if a bit farfetched. But nothing much follows. In particular it does not follow that no warrant is enjoyed by my beliefs \ldots \ldots Nor does it follow that I am unjustified in these beliefs, or that there is something irrational in my holding them. All that follows is that I don't have the sort of certainty Descartes sought.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Warrant 2}, 183.

\textsuperscript{15} Cartesian certainty refers to Descartes' criterion of indubitability for knowledge.

\textsuperscript{16} The history of science (to name only one discipline) is replete with examples of discredited knowledge claims. In fact all scientific endeavours depend upon an assumption that our current scientific knowledge is somehow flawed or incomplete.


\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Warrant 2}, 76.
By Plantinga's argument, the fact that our beliefs may be false in this sense (or at least not demonstrably true) despite our best efforts is irrelevant to our knowing them. He replaces the CF requirement of Cartesian certainty with a fallible notion of psychological certainty. We must be inclined to a fairly high degree to think that our beliefs are true for them to be knowledge beliefs, but that does not mean their truth must unequivocally demonstrable.¹⁹ This precipitates the circular use of induction to establish the reliability of belief producing mechanisms (mentioned in chapter one) and ultimately to provide warrant. But this is not a problem from the externalist perspective as was also seen in chapter one.

Plantinga's responds to an internalist use of a Humean critique to object to his use of induction by noting that: (1) this assumes without argument that only deductively valid arguments provide warrant-giving status; (2) there are no non-circular arguments to establish the truth of (1) either, so it appears that all the knowledge we have is in the same boat; and (3) this assumption appears to be plagued with self-referential problems for it is not self-evident.²⁰ What is important to Plantinga is that we actually do reason this way with formidable results, and that what is logically possible in another world is irrelevant to us on this point. We live in this world, with this doxastic phenomenology, and do not have access to Kant’s noumenal realm and the *ding an sich* (if it exists). Alston aptly summarizes, "If one lacks cognitive access to a certain sphere of reality, one is doomed to ignorance thereof. If you are in that situation, you ain't never gonna know."²¹

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¹⁹ Ibid., 77.

²⁰ *Warrant 2*, 126-127.

Reidian Foundationalism and Properly Basic Beliefs

We are now in a position to come clean with a full blown definition of properly basic beliefs according to RF. But first let us briefly review. There are qualities of properly basic beliefs that are unanimously agreed upon by foundationalists of all types. First, we have already noted in chapter one that basic beliefs are held non-inferentially and are in the foundations of our noetic structures. Second, a properly basic belief is one that is correctly held in our noetic foundations. This makes properly beliefs ones that are, thirdly, direct both psychologically and epistemically, and are therefore considered knowledge beliefs in their own right.\textsuperscript{22} This gives properly basic beliefs a fourth, normative or evaluative component. These properly basic beliefs are not argued to, but are the basis from which other beliefs are argued to.

Plantinga defines properly basic beliefs as being: grounded in experience, fallible, and person-relative.\textsuperscript{23} First, both CF and RF agree that a properly basic belief depends on the experiential conditions in which it is formed and that they are normative and evaluative. However, they disagree on how much and what experience grounds basic beliefs. According to Plantinga, properly basic beliefs receive their sole warrant or grounding from their arising in the experience of the person for whom they are properly basic.\textsuperscript{24} In this subjective element of one's private noetic structure, properly basics beliefs must be held in the absence of

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\textsuperscript{22} James Beilby, "Rationality, Warrant and Religious Diversity" Philosophia Christi 17 (Fall 1994), 3.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 4; and R&BIG.

defeaters that either deny the belief or the reliability of the mechanism or process by which those beliefs were formed.\textsuperscript{25}

Second, on the RF theory, properly basic beliefs are fallible. A basic belief that is held in the correct way is not a necessarily true proposition. It is a belief that we have every epistemic right to hold basically and is rational for us in the externalist sense. In other words, the basic belief is produced in a reliable way that is truth conducive, but not established as a truth in and of itself through pure reflection.\textsuperscript{26} There is a distinction between prima facie and ultima facie (all-things-considered) warrant. This point, in conjunction with our first observation, means that a belief may be held in the basic way until an obvious defeater presents itself, and then will require justification (in the internalist sense) for warrant. After being justified in presence of a potential defeater, the basic belief would lose its status as basic because it is now held on the basis of argument. This same belief may again convert back to a basic belief if the person holding it ceases to do so on the basis of reasons, due to a change in one's cognitive environment such that the belief in question is once again held non-inferentially on the basis of perception, not arguments.

For example, upon looking out my window at a thermometer one frosty winter morning, I may be experientially situated in such a way that I believe in the correct basic way that it is 20 degrees below zero, without inference from any other beliefs. That is, I may form this belief on the sole basis of my experience of perceiving the thermometer with that reading. This belief may lose that status


\textsuperscript{26} The next section of this chapter is devoted to explicating a complete picture of Plantinga's warrant. It will be explained under what specific circumstances he thinks a belief is warranted, including basic beliefs.
however, if my wife provides a defeater for it by informing me that the landlord told her the week before that the thermometer outside was ten degrees off in its reading. A phone call to the landlord informs me that the broken thermometer was replaced last week, so I now believe again, this time in a non-basic way, that it is twenty degrees below zero outside. When I look out the window two hours later it is now entirely possible that I once again form the belief, "It is twenty degrees below zero outside", basically without explicit inference from any other belief. In this way then, properly basic beliefs may oscillate between basicality and non-basicality in relationship to how they are situated in their cognitive environment.²⁷

Our third point about properly basic beliefs and RF is that our properly basic beliefs are person relative. What is properly basic for one person is not necessarily properly basic for another. Proper basicality depends upon the experiential environment we are in when the belief is formed. As Beilby notes, the proposition

(B) June 6, 1944, a large amphibious force landed on the European continent.

is not properly basic for him, but it could have been so for a Frenchman swimming in the English channel near Normandy on that day.²⁸ Similarly, in the above example concerning my basic belief that it is twenty degrees below zero on the basis of my perceiving outside my window a thermometer of that reading, the same belief, under the exact same conditions, could never be basic for a native of Papua New Guinea who had never seen a thermometer before. My

²⁷ Beilby, Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.
belief was basic for me due to my cognitive situation conditioned by my past experience and knowledge base.\(^{29}\)

To summarize thus far, properly basic beliefs according to RF share with CF the idea that properly basic beliefs are non-inferential, properly a part of the foundations our noetic structures, direct both epistemically and psychologically, and normative. RF rejects the CF criteria of properly basic beliefs as being the only criteria because it is viewed as being self-referentially incoherent. The significant difference between the two accounts is on their understanding of experiential propositions. This difference is conditioned by the RF rejection of the CF requirement of Cartesian certainty for knowledge. RF defines properly basic beliefs as grounded in experience, fallible, and person-relative. This opens up many kinds of beliefs to qualify as properly basic beliefs previously discounted by CF; those allowed by CF and many more like perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, beliefs about the mental states of other people, inductive beliefs, and testimonial beliefs.

**Warrant as Proper function**

Plantinga understands his position to take one step beyond the current reliabilist theories of Alvin Goldman and William Alston et al. They lack the idea of the proper function of cognitive faculties as essential for warrant.\(^{30}\) Plantinga's warrant formula says that we have warranted beliefs iff they are produced by cognitive faculties that are properly functioning in an appropriate environment for

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\(^{29}\) Refer back to the discussion in chapter one regarding the externalist dependence on prior experience and other knowledge.

\(^{30}\) *Warrant 1*, chapters nine and ten; *Warrant 2*, preface. Plantinga sees the oversight of proper function as the fatal flaw in all current epistemologies. See below.
them, according to a design plan aimed at truth, with a high statistical probability that the beliefs produced are true; furthermore, the stronger our inclination to believe beliefs of the preceding sort, the more warrant they have. There are three essential components in this definition: (1) the idea of cognitive proper function, (2) cognitive environment, and (3) the idea of a good design plan aimed at truth.

Cognitive "Proper Function" and "Environment"

Cognitive Proper Function

The first element of Plantinga's warrant formula is his idea that our beliefs only have warrant for us if our cognitive faculties are functioning properly, working the way they ought to in producing and sustaining our beliefs. Plantinga finds fault in contemporary accounts of both internalism and externalism because he can successfully construct a dilemma where, by virtue of cognitive malfunction, S has met all the requirements for knowledge of p according to the examined epistemic theory where S fails to have warrant for p.

Plantinga challenges internalism re. proper function, with the counter-dilemma of a person (let's call him Paul) who is a victim of an unusual brain lesion, (or Cartesian demon or Alpha Centaurian neural experimenters). By virtue of this cognitive abnormality, our internalist friend forms the belief (nonculpably and with every internalist right we might add) that every time he is appeared to by something red his vision is misleading him and there is really nothing there at all. In an attempt to maintain his epistemic duty to believe no more than the evidence allows (the appearance of red in this case no longer

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31 This counter-dilemma is adapted from Warrant I, 44.
constitutes evidence for the existence of a red something for him), Paul over a period of time is able to modify his beliefs such that when he is appeared to by something red, he actually forms the belief that nothing is appearing to him. Despite Paul's laudable efforts to perform his epistemic duties, it is clear that his believing with respect to red things have no warrant, for there is are in fact red things appearing to him. The main point of this counter-dilemma is that Paul's epistemic duty fulfillment is nowhere near sufficient to warrant his beliefs because by cognitive malfunction of some sort he may in fact be false in his beliefs. Thus, Plantinga is led to reject the internalist deontologically rooted idea of justification.

But there is also the case of the Epistemically Serendipitous Brain Lesion designed against reliabilism.\textsuperscript{32} Plantinga imagines that there is a rare and particular type of brain lesion that affects certain cognitive processes to the relevant degree of specificity in such a way as to cause a large number of false beliefs in the person whom this lesion affects. Interestingly enough, this brain lesion affects the brain in a peculiar fashion, causing the sufferer to believe that she has a brain lesion. Suppose further, that Cindy has this brain lesion and believes she does, but has no corroborative evidence whatsoever to confirm this belief. "Then," says Plantinga, "the relevant type . . . will certainly be highly reliable; but the resulting belief—that [she] has a brain lesion—will have little by way of warrant for [her]."\textsuperscript{33} Plantinga therefore finds reliabilism lacking because of the generality problem associated with the possibility of malfunctioning.
cognitive faculties which undermines the reliability of the belief forming processes or mechanisms.

By default both internalist and the reliabilist theories at least tacitly rely on an assumption that S’s cognitive faculties are properly functioning for S to have knowledge of that p. But there are three notable aspects to Plantinga’s version of cognitive proper function and warrant. First, Plantinga notes that what is necessary for warrant is that our cognitive faculties function properly—not normally, in a broadly statistical sense.\textsuperscript{34} Here Plantinga does not mean proper function like John Pollock, for whom proper function is a functional generalization. The functional generalization of a human heart is: "Human hearts circulate blood." Pollock would on this basis say that the human heart is properly functioning when performing it circulates blood. Plantinga sees some problems with proper function characterized this way. He offers plethora of counter-examples where statistical preponderance is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for proper function. These counter-examples point out that Pollock’s functional generalizations cannot be necessary in defining proper function because it is obvious that things can function differently from others in their phylum and still function properly.\textsuperscript{35} Neither is this understanding sufficient for it interprets those with exceptional abilities, like unusually high intelligence quotients or keen eye-sight, as cases of malfunction. So, by cognitive proper function we do not necessarily mean (statistical) normal cognitive function.

Secondly, Plantinga asserts that it is not necessary for warrant that every facet of our cognitive capacities function properly for a belief p to have warrant,

\textsuperscript{34} Warrant 2, 9.

\textsuperscript{35} One counter-example of this type is, "The vast majority of sperm don’t manage to fertilize an egg; the lucky few that do can’t properly be accused of failure to function properly, on the grounds that they do things not done by their colleagues." Warrant 2, 201. For Plantinga’s discussion of this view, see chapter nine of Warrant 2, 119-201.
but only the those faculties (or subfaculties, or modules) that produced $p$. It is also the case that these faculties may still have warrant-giving abilities even if they are decrepit and require outside assistance to function properly (i.e., glasses, or hearing-aids). Plantinga's point on this issue is that he is not using proper function to denote an idyllic state of functioning. He means something more like "adequate function." Plantinga also points out that in the same way proper function comes in degrees, so will warrant. In this sense of "adequate function," our faculties can function properly without functioning perfectly, and still provide the necessary level of warrant for our beliefs to be knowledge.

**Cognitive Environment**

Closely tied to Plantinga's notion of properly functioning cognitive faculties is the idea that "the cognitive environment in which the belief is produced must be the one or like the one for which it is designed." Our cognitive faculties may be functioning perfectly but when in a foreign environment our beliefs be bereft of warrant much in the same way that a fish's respiratory system may be functioning properly but when out of the water fail to provide the needed life-supporting respiration. This distinction allows Plantinga to reconcile Gettier-type situations. Perhaps those situations in which Gettier's counter-examples arise

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36 Ibid., 10.

37 Warrant 1, 214.

38 In a short three page journal article Edmund L. Gettier proposed some counter-examples to the "justified, true belief" analysis of knowledge, *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-123. These examples have become known as 'Gettier counter-examples' and have changed the face of contemporary epistemology. Briefly defined, a Gettier counter-example is a situation in which 'S' has a justified but false belief by inference from which he justifiably believes something which happens to be true, and so arrives at a "justified" true belief which is not warranted, therefore not knowledge. A brief example of a counter-example would be a person watching the championship game of last year's Wimbledon Tournament on TV believing it to be this year's Wimbledon championship, while last year's winner actually repeats his/her victory this year. The person watching would correctly believe last year's winner to be this year's winner, without being justified in that belief. Jonathan Dancy. *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (New York: Basil Blackwell,
are cases where those parts of our cognitive faculties that form beliefs are out of their cognitive environments. The cognitive mechanism designed to distinguish certain types of beliefs may not be designed to do the same thing in a different environment.

If we become aware that we are cognitively maladapted to our environment, Plantinga notes that we may adjust our cognitive situation so that our believings in those circumstances can have a high degree of warrant (much in the same way we may adjust our respiratory circumstances when we are respiratorily maladjusted to our environment as when in space or under water). We can build into our thought processes adjustments for shortcomings in the relationship of our cognitive faculties to their environment.39

Cognitive "Design Plan"

A logically entailed property of proper function is design. If our cognitive faculties may be correctly said to be functioning properly and have a right sort of environment, there must be some design plan by which its functionings and environments are adjudicated. This of course has been the implicit premise in our above discussion. But there seem to be more than one possible design plan that guides our formation of beliefs.

Plantinga notes a variety of possible design plans.40 There may be a reproductive design plan that causes women to remember the birth process as

2. p is true.
3. S's belief of that p is justified.
4. p is based on or entailed by some proposition q.
5. S is justified in believing q.
6. q is false.
7. Therefore, S does not know that p.

39 Warrant 2, 11.
much less painful than it actually is. There may be some sort of a relational
design plan aimed at sustaining relationships that causes us to believe our
friend's word long after the evidence and cool, objective reasoning would have
dictated otherwise. There may also be a mental-health design plan that causes
us to form the belief that we will recover from an extremely fatal disease. Or
there may be a survival plan as noted by William James as in his case of the
climber in the Alps who, in the jaws of a life and death situation, forms a belief
against the evidence that he can leap a crevasse of ice. In each one of these
situations the individual's cognitive faculties have not failed to function properly,
nor were they in a significantly foreign cognitive environment and yet none of
their beliefs have warrant. The conditions of proper functioning cognitive
faculties in an appropriate environment is not near sufficient for warrant then.
There must be a further qualification saying that the part of the design plan
producing the belief in question is aimed at producing true beliefs. Plantinga
says that, "to have warrant, a belief must also be such that the purpose of the
module of the epistemic faculties, producing the belief is to produce true
beliefs."  

One final caveat with respect to warrant and the design plan is needed: the
design plan must be a good one. There must be a high objective probability of a
belief of the sort in question being true when produced under those conditions.
In this respect Plantinga's theory sounds similar to reliabilism for this objective

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40 Ibid., 11 ff. One further note, Plantinga sees design plan and proper function so closely related
that they are interdefinable. "A thing (organism, organ, system, artifact) is functioning properly when it
functions in accord with a design plan, and a design plan of a thing is the specification of the way in which a
thing functions when it is properly functioning." Warrant 1, 213. The design plan for our cognitive
faculties aimed at producing true beliefs specifies how those faculties work when they are properly
functioning so that they are actually producing true beliefs.

41 Plantinga quotes John 16:21, "A Woman giving childbirth has pain because her time has come;
but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because if her joy that a child is born into the world."

42 Warrant 1, 214.
probability caveat is "the presupposition of reliability" that "the reliabilist seize upon."\textsuperscript{43}

In conclusion of this point, Plantinga defines our cognitive design plan as the way our cognitive faculties work when they are functioning as they ought to, when there is nothing wrong with them, and when they are not damaged or broken or nonfunctional.\textsuperscript{44}

**Two Key Ideas**

We have concluded our brief account of what Plantinga thinks constitutes warrant for a belief. There are two key ideas that have emerged from Plantinga's account of warrant. The first idea was the different way he treats experiential propositions as opposed to the way they are treated by classical foundationalists. Plantinga's analysis of experiential propositions and the accompanying perceptual beliefs hinges on an idea he calls "impulsional evidence." Secondly, the idea of proper function is one upon which Plantinga places his entire analysis of warrant. These two concepts bear the brunt of Plantinga's theory so we will look at them a little more closely.

**Perceptual Beliefs and Impulsional Evidence**

Plantinga makes a somewhat unexpected move in his chapter "Coherence, Foundations, and Evidence" and announces that in respect to perceptual beliefs "the evidentialist is right: where there is warrant, there is evidence."\textsuperscript{45} This is not, he is quick to say, apart from the need for proper function, neither is it

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Warrant 2, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 193.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
sufficient for warrant. Plantinga, however, has in mind what he calls impulsional evidence, not propositional or "sensuous" evidence.

Reidian Foundationalism and Perceptual Beliefs

The distinguishing factor between the CF position and Plantinga's position on experiential propositions is the difference in how the two understand how an experience is related to its resulting belief. *Pace* CF, a belief that is formed as a result of one of our experiences has warrant iff we believe it on the basis of experiential propositions (eg., "I am appeared to redly") that support it abductively, deductively, or inductively. Plantinga notices that this view requires (1) that we believe those experiential propositions, (2) that we believe the propositions in question on the evidential basis of those experiential propositions, and (3) that the experiential propositions do actually constitute evidence for the proposition in question. As has been duly noted above, this position is both internalist and evidentialist.

Plantinga denies the above CF contentions (1)-(3). First, Plantinga maintains that it is not necessary for us to believe that we are appeared to thus-and-so in order for the resulting perceptual belief of an experiential proposition to have warrant. What matters for warrant is that we are actually appeared to "thus-and-so," and that our cognitive faculties are functioning properly according to an appropriate design plan aimed at truth in the formation of the belief. If (1) is discredited in this manner, we do not need to, as (2) asserts, believe the perceptual proposition (eg., "I am appeared to redly") on the basis of the

46 Ibid., 184. This is Plantinga's analysis but it is difficult to see how this position can be tenably construed as otherwise. Again, for an example of this type of view the reader is referred back to Roderick M. Chisholm, *The Foundations of Knowing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and *Theory of Knowledge*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

47 This discussion of RF and Plantinga's position is adapted form *Warrant 2*, chapter ten.
experiential proposition (e.g., "I see a red bus"). Most importantly, Plantinga
denies (3). It is not necessary for the experiential propositions to evidence the
perceptual proposition by way of inductive, deductive, or abductive argument.
Plantinga is not contending that there is no evidence whatsoever for these types
of properly basic beliefs. His claim is instead that there need not be any direct
propositional evidence for basic beliefs (in fact, Plantinga contends there
cannot be any direct propositional evidence for experiential propositions). In the
case that there is warrant by virtue of being appeared to thus-and-so, these
beliefs will be evidenced in what he calls an "impulsional" way.

Plantinga's primary point with respect to sense perception is that it is simply
a fact that we do not form perceptual beliefs inferentially on the basis of
propositional evidence and that what counts as warrant in the case of sense
perception is not that I believe that I am appeared to thus-and-so (for it appears
impossible that any human be aware of the entire scope of her phenomenal field
at any given point), but rather that I simply be appeared to in that way—with of
course the caveat remarking the need for the proper function of noetic faculties
in an appropriate environment, according to a good design plan successfully
aimed at truth. 48 When appeared to in a certain manner, we do not form our
belief in the perceptual proposition, "I see a tree", by reasoning inductively,

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48 Michael Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge provides support for Plantinga's phenomenology of
doxastic practice on this point. See Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 1958). On Polanyi's view our knowledge is more holistic than just propositional
knowledge, and involves those parts of our phenomenal field of which we are not explicitly aware, like for
instance our knowledge of how to ride a bicycle. Propositional, acquaintance, and competence knowledge
are not easily isolated in this type of case where one acts on a holistic kind of knowledge. Polanyi points
out that while few of us can articulate the "rules" of balancing a bicycle, or understand the physics involved
we can yet manage to "know" how to ride one. He says, "The urge to look out for clues and to make sense
of them is ever alert in our eyes and ears, and in our fears and desires. The urge to understand our
experience, together with the language referring to that experience, is clearly an extension of this primordial
striving for intellectual control. The shaping of our conceptions is impelled to move from obscurity to
clarity and from incoherence to comprehension, by an intellectual discomfort similar to the way our eyes are
impelled to make clear and coherent the things we see. In both cases we pick out clues which seem to
suggest a context in which they make sense as its subsidiary particulars….", Ibid., 100.
deductively, or abductively to it from the experiential proposition, "I am now being appeared to in that tree-like manner." Such reasoning may be possible, but virtually none ever do so.

Now all this is at cross-purposes with the classical foundationalist view of sense perception. The basic problem for CF is that if it were true that we formed beliefs in the manner dictated by its criteria, we would have very few beliefs (for it requires time to reason), and would have even fewer beliefs we could actually call knowledge. Also, the CF idea of epistemic duty is contrary to normal doxastic phenomena. We rarely (if ever) have complete voluntary control over, say for example, perceptual beliefs.

Perceptual Beliefs and Evidence

Plantinga's idea that perceptual beliefs are evidenced when warranted depends upon a broader phenomenological notion of evidence than the propositional type allowed by CF.49 This conception of evidence is different from propositional evidence but shares with it the idea of providing the basis for subsequent belief acceptance. A belief evidenced in this way indicates a fairly high degree of objective probability of the truth of the belief being .50

Plantinga supports his view of impulsional evidence by an abductive argument from the shared phenomenology of perceptual, memory, and a priori

49 Plantinga receives support from Thomas Reid with respect to the idea of a broad evidential phenomenological arena when Reid says, "I confess that, although I have, as I think, a distinct notion of the different kinds of evidence above-mentioned, and, perhaps, of some others, which it is unnecessary to enumerate, yet I am not able to find any common nature to which they all may be reduced. They seem to me to agree only in this, that they are all fitted by Nature to produce belief in the human mind, some of them in the highest degree, which we call certainty, others in various degrees, according to various circumstances." Thomas Reid, "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man," in Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays, ed. Ronald E Beanblossom and Kieth Lehrer, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 200-201.

50 Warrant 2, 186.
beliefs. There are two basic kinds of phenomenology involved in belief formation: (1) there is a sensuous imagery (sometimes fleeting and indistinct) of being appeared to thus-and-so, and (2) there is a perceived felt attraction or inclination to believe. The kind of phenomenology expressed by (2) is what Plantinga calls impulsive evidence. This impulsive evidence may be no more than that of a kind of "phenomenal reflection" of the fact that we do actually believe the the proposition in question. The important point here is that we have the ability to ascertain those propositions we actually believe are true and those we do not, and that this "something" by which we pick out those propositions comes with varying degrees of psychological certainty. Not all propositions are equally attractive to us; some we are very certain of, others less so, and some we absolutely reject. The basis on which we do this sorting process is what Plantinga is calling impulsive evidence.

Memory is a source replete with examples of this type of evidence. You may remember meeting Paul in California last month but there is very little if any sensuous imagery involved. I ask where it was you saw him, what he was wearing, etc. and you cannot call to mind anything except that you are sure that you did see him last month. I may perhaps try to dissuade you by saying that Paul's mother told me he has remained in Lynchburg for the past six months but still you feel certain that you saw him. You cannot help feeling a little odd that you could be so certain and so wrong, so we call Paul. Paul tells us that he had (unknown to his mother) gone on a trip to California last month to the same area that you were visiting, thus rebutting my defeater for your belief. It is this felt-

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51 This a discussion is adapted from Warrant 2, 189-193.

52 Plantinga, "Why We Need Proper Function," Nous 27:1 (1993), 68.

53 This counter-example is adapted from Ibid., 67.
attractiveness you have for the proposition "I saw Paul in California last month," the disposition that you have to accept the belief and whatever makes you feel odd at my suggestion that Paul's mother (on most accounts a reliable source for Paul's whereabouts) claims he was in Lynchburg, that is impulsive evidence.

In every case of belief across the scope of our noetic structures there may be a sensuous imagery of a certain kind but this impulsion toward that certain true belief will invariably be present. This concept of impulsive evidence is needed to adequately explain the phenomenology of experiential doxastic practice because, as seen in the example above, we rarely proportion our perceptual beliefs directly in relation to the sensuous phenomenal component. They are almost always held with a far greater tenacity. Certainly there will be phenomenal imagery involved, but our beliefs are not formed on the basis of this imagery. In fact, it appears that there are some people whose memory rarely (if ever) contains imagery; there is instead a feeling or impulsion towards a certain proposition. This is Plantinga's impulsive evidence--this doxastic state that we are in when we are strongly inclined to accept a particular true belief (and the reverse side of being inclined to reject the negation of true beliefs).

Impulsive evidence is prima facie evidence for the warrant of the belief in question. It is fallible, just as propositional evidence is, and may be lost ultima facie, but this merely reaffirms the fallibility of human knowledge. It is in this impulsive way that Plantinga contends perceptual beliefs are evidenced.

To summarize, perceptual beliefs do not need to be evidenced in the manner prescribed by CF. What is important for us to have warrant for a perceptual belief is not that we believe that we are appeared to in a certain way but that we are actually appeared to in that way. However, in the case that our
perceptual beliefs have warrant they will be evidenced impulsionally such that there is a perceived attractiveness or "rightness" about the belief.

Proper Function Revisited

The second key idea to Plantinga's account of warrant is the concept of proper function. Plantinga's proper function account of warrant falls into the general category of naturalistic epistemology in that it appeals to no standards of normativity outside of the natural sciences.

Defining proper function is a difficult task, but Plantinga agrees with Ruth Millikan who said, "Having a proper function is a matter of having been 'designed to' or of being 'supposed to' (impersonal) perform a certain function."\(^{54}\)

Plantinga insists that Millikan's somewhat vague notion of proper function has some very pervasive intuitions at work in it. The fact that we all intuitively understand what it means for something to function properly, Plantinga takes as support for the viability of his application of the term to epistemic equipment.\(^{55}\) Furthermore, "Biological and social scientists . . . continually give account of how human beings or other organisms or their parts function: how they work,)

\(^{54}\) Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 17. Ultimately Plantinga rejects Millikan's account of proper function primarily because of her proposed necessary and sufficient condition to 'x's functioning properly in doing A' of x needing to have properly functioning ancestors. Millikan defines this idea of the involvement of ancestry in proper function around her concepts of 'reproductively established property', reproducitively established character', and the like. Plantinga demurs, contending that neither artifacts nor natural organisms need (in a logically necessary way) this idea of ancestry as either a necessary or sufficient component in the establishing of their proper function. Larry Wright defends a position similar to Millikan in "Functions," Philosophical Review (1973): 82 ff., where he defines proper function as, "The function of X is F means (a) X is there because it does F, (b) F is a consequence (or result) of X's existence." Unlike Millikan and Wright, Plantinga thinks that the term proper function in reference to an organism is inadequately explained in their Darwinian fashion as that which allows it to survive and proliferate as this entails a vicious type of circularity which in the end comes tantamount to acknowledging his super-naturalistic account. See his discussion in Warrant 2, 201-204 & 210.

what their purposes are, and how they react under different circumstances." 56

Despite the lack of a forthcoming analytic definition of the concept of proper function, Plantinga insists that it is at least a workable concept in epistemic theory, particularly if we cannot seem to operate without it (much in the same way biologists cannot operate without an at least workable definition of what proper function means). The way Plantinga means to use it then, proper function refers to a normative use of functional generalizations such as are commonly employed in biology, psychology, sociology, etc. 57

**Rationality as Proper Function**

Our analysis of Plantinga's overall account of warrant is complete. What is important to our central question of the rationality of belief in God is how he specifically views the broader notion of rationality via this idea of proper function.

The picture we see emerging is a view of rationality in terms proper function that sounds very much like a psychiatric or psychological use of the term sanity. 58 This of course is not at all unusual given Plantinga's explicit naturalized approach to epistemology. On this reading, rationality connotes the absence of malfunction in the deliverances of reason. That is, we are rational in our beliefs if our abilities to reason within our limits as humans are functioning with no obstruction or cognitive malfunction. When taken in the context of his epistemic theory, we may be rational (in the broad psychiatric sense) in our

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56 Warrant 2, 6.

57 This is the end of our discussion of Plantinga's account of warrant as proper function. There is of course, many more things that could be said and many more arguments and objections to be given and answered, (his idea of design plan and max plan for instance), but the core of Plantinga's argument has been given and he has done a very good job of answering the key objections that have presented themselves. For further discussion of his notion of proper function I refer the reader to Plantinga's Warrant 2, chapters 1, 2, & 10; "Why We Need Proper Function," Nous 27:1 (1993): 68; "Warrant and Designing Agents," Philosophical Studies 64 (1991): 203-215.

58 This discussion is adapted from Plantinga treatment of this topic in Warrant 1, 136-137.
beliefs if they are formed according one of the different design plans mentioned earlier in this chapter (i.e., those parts of our cognitive faculties aimed at reproduction, survival, etc.), even if those beliefs are false and and have little warrant. Epistemically a belief is rational in Plantinga's sense if it produced with no cognitive malfunction in that part of our design plan aimed at true belief production.
CHAPTER THREE
BELIEF IN GOD, PROPER BASICALITY, AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

In the preceding two chapters we established Alvin Plantinga's conception of rationality as proper function which is grounded in his epistemic theory which says that a belief of ours has warrant for us if it is produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties in an environment appropriate for them, according to a design plan aimed at truth. Plantinga's Reidian foundationalism in turn produces a permissive criterion for properly basic beliefs--so permissive in fact, that Plantinga claims that belief in God may be appropriately considered a basic belief. Plantinga's contention is that Christian theistic belief can rightly be considered one of these rational, properly basic beliefs, grounded only in experience. We now turn to this claim of his and will examine how Plantinga's epistemic theory translates into support for non-evidential (in the typical propositional sense of evidence) belief in God and what experiential conditions there might be for his particular claim that this supports Christian theistic claims.

Belief in God as Properly Basic

According to RF, basic beliefs are proper when (among other things) they are grounded in experience. That is, if we are operating without any cognitive abnormalities, when in certain specific epistemic contexts, certain specific beliefs appropriate to these contexts will have warrant for us. Plantinga rightly contends that beliefs in God can be one of these properly basic beliefs for us. This section will examine two grounds for belief in God as properly basic.
Divine Perception

The first of the grounds that could validate belief in God as properly basic is direct experience of God. Many Christian theists claim to have direct religious experience of God. These experiences include situations like ones where, after deceiving her best friend, Mary forms the belief that God disapproves of her; or John, while viewing some intricate or exquisite piece on nature forms the belief that God made all of this. These types of experiences are often taken by theists as having epistemic value. These experiences where God seems to present Himself directly to the human consciousness that we are concerned with, not the more radical anti-cognitive claims of mystical religious experience linked with ineffability. We are interested in those experiences which precipitate propositionally communicable beliefs about the existence of God of the kind illustrated above. Following the title of William Alston's book, let us call these doxastic practices Divine Perception (DP).¹

Divine Perception and Sense Perception

The basic argument here is that DP is a doxastic practice that is closely analogous to sense perception (SP). It is argued that the beliefs

(i) God disapproves of me.

and

(ii) God made all of this.

are perceptual beliefs as much as

(iii) I see a red fire-truck.

and

(iv) I see a tree.

In each case I form the experiential belief\(^2\) on the basis of my consciousness having been appeared to incorrigibly. Propositions (i)-(iv) all share the distinction of being psychologically direct for me; this seems hardly arguable. The question comes over whether they are epistemically direct--i.e., whether they are properly basic.

In cases (i) and (ii) I form the experiential belief on the basis that I have been appeared to "Godly" (i.e., in a God-like-way). Likewise, I form belief in (iii) on the basis I have been incorrigibly appeared to "red fire-truckly" and in (iv) because I have been in the same way appeared to "treely." If (iii) and (iv) are properly basic beliefs, then upon experiencing the phenomenology of being appeared to in a manner appropriate to an omnipotent, omniscient omnibenevolent being it is appropriate that, given our cognitive faculties are functioning properly in a suitable environment according to a design plan aimed at truth, we have been appeared to Godly.\(^3\)

A priori there is no good reason to suppose that a being identical to the above definition of God could not communicate directly to our consciousness and that the resulting beliefs be knowledge in the properly basic, non-reflective way. If God (as defined above) is the both the initiator of DP and the creator of human perceptual abilities that are able to perceive their external world in a direct fashion, then it is reasonable and not seriously begging any questions to assume that, given the appropriate phenomena, He could also have created us with the capacity to have non-inferential direct knowledge of Him.\(^4\) It seems

\(^2\) See chapter two for the distinction between a perceptual belief and its accompanying experiential belief.

\(^3\) Beilby, "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity," 7.
only fair to grant that, as it has not been demonstrated that DP is impossible for a person in any and all circumstances, "it should be taken as prima facie justification for her beliefs in God."\textsuperscript{5}

**Divine Perception and Properly Basicality**

What Plantinga really proposes is not that belief in God is basic, but rather the beliefs that God disapproves of me and that God is speaking to me. From this point of view it may be incorrect to speak of belief in God as properly basic; but not much follows from this. It is also true that the more abstract propositions

(v) There are red fire-trucks.

(vi) There are trees.

including\textsuperscript{6}

(vii) The world has existed for more than five minutes.

(viii) There are other persons.

are not in themselves basic, but rather the more specific and concrete propositions of (i) and (ii) and

(ix) I had breakfast an hour ago.

and

(x) That person is pleased.

In each of these instances it is a case of using language a bit loosely to say that (v)-(viii) are properly basic, but of course these propositions are necessarily entailed by propositions (iii), (iv), (ix), and (x). There seems to be no harm to

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\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{6} Propositions (7)-(8) are borrowed from Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?" in Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology, ed.R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 138.
speak this way in these cases, particularly as there are no other compelling arguments for beliefs like (v)-(viii), and we would easily grant that propositions (iii), (iv), (ix) and (x) are adequate grounds for (v)-(viii). It would be arbitrary to impose a different standard upon (i)-(ii).

To concur with Plantinga, we only call belief in God properly basic in a loose sense; our main point here is that propositions like (i) and (ii) which necessarily entail belief in God are grounded in experience and therefore share all the rights and privileges that pertain there unto.

A second point with respect to belief in God as properly basic being grounded in DP is that it is not being claimed that when God is perceived in this manner that He is being perceived in the totality of His infinitude. DP may be thought by atheist objectors to be the products of wishful thinking (or have some other naturalistic explanation), because they may not see how it could be that the infinite be perceived by a finite; particularly in the absence of their own experiences of that sort. They may find it incoherent to suppose that God could be presented to the human consciousness for He is by definition immaterial and infinite and therefore not experiencable by any of our finite sensory equipment.

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7 This is the thrust of Plantinga book God and Other Minds (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967) where he argues that we have little by way of non-circular evidence for the existence of other minds apart from our own. This of course is not a problem if the case may be that allows for non-circular evidence--like Plantinga's externalism does--unlike the evidentialist objector who cannot. Plantinga further discusses this in "Self-Profile," in Alvin Plantinga, ed. James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985), 55 ff. Briefly stated, arguments for other minds by analogy are problematic mainly because they commit a hasty generalization, arguing from one particular instance, my own, to a generalization to all bodies. As Louis Pojman says, "It is as though I discovered that I disliked eating eggs and generalize to the conclusion that therefore everyone in the world dislikes eating eggs (other people must eat them under duress)." What Can We Know? (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1994), 234. Jonathan Dancy notes that the problem of other minds is perennial for classical foundationalists and that for them, "our knowledge of ourselves is secure, while that of outsiders is problematic." Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 67.

8 "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?", 138.
To begin with it is not claimed that all people experience DP, or even have equal ability to do so.⁹ We are saying it has happened and therefore can (for at least some humans). Also, the mere fact that someone (or group of people) finds it difficult to comprehend how it could be so does not ipso facto make it impossible or irrational. Finally, it does not follow that we must see all of a thing to see some of it, and for what we see to be an accurate reflection of its nature. Beilby points out that, "Even if a road were infinitely long, one could still observe it and learn something of its nature by seeing a part of it."¹⁰ This objection to DP eventually collapses into an egocentric predicament because, as we have already noted, DP and SP are in the same epistemological boat. If appropos our above propositions (iii), (iv), (ix), and (x) we may not also on their basis assert the truths of (v)-(viii) we will have no way of reasonably justifying our beliefs in other minds, the belief that the world has existed for more than five minutes, or that there is an external world with fire-trucks and trees. We look with suspect upon people who take such ideas seriously, we do not hail them as bastions of rationality. As Alston points out, it seems unjustifiably arbitrary to assume that our experiential capacity has been exhausted by the five senses.¹¹ The argument here is not that all of God is perceived by the individual, but rather only that God communicates with us that part of Himself that is communicable to us or perceptible by us--that we univocally share and can by analogy understand to be true of Him. As David K. Clark said, "God speaks in a language that humans

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⁹ Historic Christianity has posed an answer to this with its doctrine of the Fall of humanity into sin and our subsequent sin nature. Plantinga speaks of the noetic effects of sin. If this is correct it is certainly plausible that not every atheist may have the ability to perceive God. We will return to to this later in this chapter.


¹¹ Perceiving God, 17.
can understand just as a mother with a Ph.D. in physics speaks to her two-year-old in his vernacular.\textsuperscript{12}

The third and final point on DP is that grounding belief in God as properly basic in DP is epistemically circular. We have already seen in chapter two that \textit{pace} externalism, Plantinga's account of warrant is epistemically circular: warrant comes by properly functioning cognitive faculties and these faculties are deemed as functioning properly when they are established as such inductively. Again, this is not to endorse circular reasoning in a coherentr 13

Again, this is not to endorse circular reasoning in a coherentr sense--what Alston calls a maximally epistemically circular situation--where each perceptual belief is used twice: once as the tested and once as the tester.\textsuperscript{13} In fact, Plantinga says contra coherentism, "Warrant cannot magically arise just by virtue of a large evidential circle. (If I go around the circle twice, do I get twice as much warrant?)"\textsuperscript{14} The circularity endorsed here is not evidential, it is only circular in the broad sense that perceptual beliefs and proper function of cognitive faculties are established by the standard methods of empirical investigation.\textsuperscript{15} And as we have established that SP and DP are on a par, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander--i.e., we must establish the circumstances in which we say a cognitive faculty is properly functioning with respect to DP in much the same way we do it for SP; inductively. That this is the case should not cause much excitement; it is rather as one would expect it--we establish our other sources of

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Dialogical Apologetics} (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 21.


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Warrant}, 78.

\textsuperscript{15} See chapter one of this document.
knowledge in this way. Our empirical investigation, as Alston goes on to say, must:

In the absence of any promising suggestions to the contrary, ... go to the very sources of belief credentials of which are under scrutiny. Epistemic circularity is no more avoidable in this matter than it is in the assessment of basic secular sources of belief.  

Epistemic circularity does not by itself disqualify the argument for it is not a vicious circle. We take SP to be reliable circularly; by establishing a track record of reliability which can only be done by presupposing the reliability of sense perception. We are ultimately forced to admit an epistemic circularity in establishing SP as a reliable cognitive function. It should not be a source of embarrassment that on Plantinga's account, belief in God as properly basic on the grounds of DP is, in the final analysis, on the same epistemically circular grounds as SP.

To recap our argument so far: belief in God may be properly basic if grounded in Divine Perception. This DP, is a doxastic practice that bears analogues to Sense Perception. DP does not strictly ground belief in God as properly basic, but rather beliefs which necessarily entail God's existence, in the same way that perceptual beliefs do not strictly speaking ground belief in the existence of the objects they entail. Further, DP is not perception of the fullness of God and it is non-viciously epistemically circular. It appears that all things considered, DP and SP are in the epistemological situation.

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16 "Knowledge of God," 42.

Testimony

There is a second ground for belief in God as properly basic and that is when it is grounded in testimony. Plantinga’s position on basic beliefs has utilized what Richard Swinburne has called the Principle of Credulity which concerns itself with our grounds for believing that things are as they appear to be to us.18 Swinburne applies this to the experiences of others and formulates a further Principle of Testimony and says that "other things being equal, we think that what others tell us that they perceived, probably happened."19

Thomas Reid called the mechanism by which we humans form beliefs on the basis of testimony the credulity disposition.20 Plantinga, in a similar vein, argues that testimony is an independent source of warrant and that beliefs produced by it (again iff our cognitive faculties are functioning properly, etc.) are epistemically direct—i.e., properly basic.21 Plantinga is not claiming infallibility for these beliefs, or that they are necessarily true as Swinburne claims.22 Plantinga is merely claiming, pace Reid, that "it is part of out design plan to learn from testimony; your telling me thus and so in fact gives me evidence for thus and


19 Ibid., 271-272. Swinburne goes on to qualify what he means by "other things being equal" as meaning "the absence of of positive grounds for supposing that the others have misrepresented or misremembered their experiences, or that things were not in fact as they seemed to those others." Ibid., 271. Swinburne has in mind what Plantinga calls belief defeaters; see chapter two of this document.


21 Plantinga discusses warrant and testimony in, chapter four, "Other Persons and Testimony," in Warrant 2, 77-88.

22 The Existence of God, 260, 272.
so."23 Plantinga’s criterion for warrant by testimony is essentially that a belief has warrant for us, if it has warrant for the person who testifies to it. Warrant for testimonial beliefs thus involves an epistemic chain.

Religious claims tend to rely heavily on testimonial claims, whether from Scripture (in the case of Christian theism), or from contemporary religious experience. Reliance on testimonial claims is endemic for religious claims and some would even say (if granted the failure of natural theology) for belief in God. The question here is whether or not testimony can adequately ground basic belief. If it can, testimony must be allowed to ground belief in God as basic as well.

**The Argument for Testimony as Grounds for Basic Beliefs**

Plantinga begins his treatment of testimony as a source of warranted basic beliefs with Reid’s characterization of credulity:24

> The wise author of nature hath planted in the human mind a propensity to rely upon human testimony **before we can give a reason for doing so**. This, indeed, puts our judgement almost entirely in the power of those who are about us in the first period of life; but this is necessary both to our preservation and our improvement. If children were so framed as to pay no regard to testimony or authority, they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge.

> I believed by instinct whatever they told me, long before I had the idea of a lie, or a thought of the possibility of their deceiving me. Afterwards, upon reflection, I found that they had acted like fair and honest people, who wished me well. I found that, if I had not believed what they told me, long before I could give a reason for my belief, I had to this day been little more than a changeling. And although **natural credulity** hath sometimes occasioned my being imposed upon by deceivers . . . I consider it another good gift of nature.25 (emphasis mine)

Plantinga and Reid are employing a two-pronged argument for testimony. First, testimonial beliefs are indispensable to our entire noetic situation such that any epistemology not significantly accounting for it has de facto failed. Most of

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23 Warrant 2, 80.

24 Ibid., 77.

our knowledge claims, depend to some degree, on beliefs that are held on the basis of testimony.

As C.S. Lewis was known to say, we are dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants. This is particularly in the field of scientific endeavours. Virtually all scientists rely upon the testimony of others for a significant amount of their beliefs. Furthermore, there are some types of phenomena, like ball lightening, that are justifiable for the vast majority of humans (scientist or not) only through testimony—or anecdotal evidence as Jesse Hobbs calls it.\textsuperscript{26}

The success of our intellectual pursuits depends intrinsically on the epistemic viability of belief according to testimony. Plantinga notes that our very ability to communicate linguistically depends on testimony. He points out that it seems "a matter of contingent fact, that language and testimony are mutually dependent phenomena in such a way that apart from testimony, there would be no language."\textsuperscript{27} It seems wrong headed and viciously self-referential to place (de jure) restrictions on knowledge after having (de facto) garnered the knowledge required to make those restrictions by violating the restrictions that would be set forth. The point of this first argument is that testimony is de facto an important source of warrant for our beliefs.

The second prong of Plantinga's and Reid's argument is that these testimonial beliefs we do in fact form, we do in the basic way. As Reid mentioned above, we could by reflection inductively establish the validity of what

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{26} I owe Hobbs both his terminology and the example of ball lightening. See his, "Religious and Scientific Uses of Anecdotal Evidence," in Faith in Theory and in Practice, ed. Elizabeth S. Radcliffe and Carol J. White (Chicago: Open Court, 1993),141-169. Hobbs defines anecdotal evidence as being empirical in nature with the following three characteristics: (1) it is unique and not replicated, (2) it is uncontrolled, and (3) it is taken to be an observed instance or consequence of the hypothesis in question as opposed to an argument, explanation, or conceptual analysis of it. This anecdotal rubric is broader than the scope of narrative testimony but inclusive of it (and not exclusive, therefore everything said characteristically of anecdotal evidence may be said of testimony), keeping the two in the same "epistemic bag." Ibid., 144.
\end{itemize}
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\textsuperscript{27} Warrant 2, 78.
some piece of testimony testifies to, but as also noted above in the first argument, we could not do so for all our testimonial beliefs. For example, we could not have reasoned out the seminal beliefs we formed as children via testimony. Reid points out that he would never have been able to develop beyond a mere "changeling" had he not been epistemically permitted (and able by design) to form warranted beliefs on the basis of testimony. Plantinga and Reid further agree that our basic beliefs formed this way are proper because humans have a natural inclination toward truth.\textsuperscript{28} If this were not so, it would be exceedingly difficult for us to have any warranted beliefs at all that are for the most part true, seeing as most of them we obtain by testimony of others.

This bent towards truth clues us to the fact that the design plan for our cognitive system has a social aspect to it. In reference to this Plantinga says that "the human cognitive design plan is oriented toward a certain kind of cognitive environment: the sort of cognitive environment in which our faculties naturally arose, whether by the hand of God or of evolution (or both)."\textsuperscript{29} Our cognitive faculties are designed to function in a socially interactive environment in this way so that our beliefs by way of testimony are warranted in the basic way.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 81-82.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{30} This is also how Plantinga proposes to circumvent those types of Gettier-like situations that involve an attempt on the part of someone to deceive another where the deceived person actually forms a true belief accidently (i.e., the deceiver propagated false information resulting in a true belief). Plantinga's answer to this is in short that the cognitive design plan applies not only to the individual but the entire cognitive situation in which she finds herself. When some agent contributing to the cognitive situation uses their module in the social cognitive environment to aim at something other than truth, the cognitive environment is no longer conducive to verisimilitudinous beliefs and they therefore have no warrant. \textit{Warrant 2}, 82-88.
Testimony and Levels of Warrant

Plantinga concludes that testimony is an essential but tertiary source of warrant for basic beliefs. It is at once a crucial and indispensable part of our noetic situation, but is also the least desirable source of warrant for two reasons. One, because a testimonial belief relies on other sources of belief for its own warrant.31 If we form beliefs on the say-so of others, they have warrant for us only if they first have warrant for those who told us so. At least one person in the epistemic community must have non-testimonial warrant for a given testimonial belief or that belief cannot have warrant for any in that community. As Plantinga points out, if no one in an epistemic community has any non-testimonial evidence for a certain belief then all in that community are in "big doxastic trouble."32

Second, testimony is not the most desirable source of warrant because in most situations (except in cases like the existence of ball lightening) where testimony provides some warrant for a belief, there is at our disposal some other source that would provide a superior form of warrant for that belief.33 For instance, you may tell me that the room next to us is on fire and I will therefore know that the building is on fire (of course, providing the room actually is on fire, and both our cognitive faculties are properly functioning and so on) and leave. But the fire marshall will not want to question me as to my knowledge of the fire like she would want to question you. Testimonial warrant is not quite as coercive and powerful or complete as perceptual warrant.34

31 Ibid., 87
32 Ibid., 87.
33 Ibid., 87-88.
34 This poses no problems for Plantinga for he contends that knowledge is fallible and warrant comes in degrees.
We may know things via testimony—and they really are knowledge (and most likely in the basic way)—but it is always epistemically desirable to have come to see the truths for ourselves. In most cases (except those where no other type of evidence is possible) testimony provides warrant for beliefs at an embryonic stage which must later become either grounded in perception (to remain basic), or evidenced propositionally (and lose their basic status) if they are to occupy a celebrated position in our noetic structures. This is not to say that they lose their warrant or knowledge status. This is merely to say that testimony is not the source of warrant of choice, the primary reason being that they are so susceptible to challenge from defeaters. Testimonial beliefs are entirely rational in Plantinga's sense though, for they enjoy the narrower status of warrant.

Testimony and Belief in God

Testimony then, may ground belief in God as a basic belief, particularly for children or those at the initial stages of an investigation into Christianity. But testimony will fail to sustain the noetic position of that belief with a high degree of warrant if there are no other grounds for that belief. Initially, belief in God may be properly basic if grounded in testimony (again, provided that our cognitive faculties are properly functioning and that the cognitive environment is appropriate—individually and socially—for true belief production), but perceptual grounds are much more desirable. Eventually belief in God must come to rest on those grounds if it is to continue to be centrally held in a mature noetic structure. The case is such that a testimonial belief cannot achieve the degree of warrant that perceptual beliefs do, with the same complexity and depth. Testimonial beliefs attract both rebutting and undercutting defeaters in abundance because of their second-hand nature.
There is also a notable disparity of the degree of impulsional evidence between testimonial and perceptual beliefs. We are not nearly so inclined to accept as true those propositions we believe from the grounds of testimony as those from perception; eg., "I don't care what he said, I know it's true because I saw it!" Plantinga relates an excerpt from Sigmund Freud's *The Future of Illusion*, which eloquently illustrates our point here:

I was already a man of mature years when I stood for the first time on the hill of the acropolis in Athens, between the temple ruins, looking over the blue sea. A feeling of astonishment mingled with joy. It seemed to say: "So it really is true, just as we learnt at school!" How shallow and weak must have been the belief I then acquired in the real truth of what I heard, if I could be so astonished now.

Testimonial belief may ground a naive belief in God as properly basic but it is far more epistemically preferable to have that belief grounded in perception as was discussed above in the preceding section of this chapter.

Belief in God as Properly Basic and Religious Pluralism

In chapter three thus far, we have seen that belief in God can be grounded in perception (as Divine Perception) or testimony as a properly basic belief. The epistemically preferable way to ground belief in God as properly basic is in perception. The religious skeptic may object that this position is untenable owing to a deficit in her own experience of DP. What is more, says the skeptic, there is a multiplicity of mutually incompatible religious claims. How are we to adjudicate between them on Plantinga's proper functionalism? Is it not the case that on the above construal of DP, and belief in God as properly basic that any and every claim may be seen as a rational, properly basic belief—including Linus's belief in the Great Pumpkin that returns every Halloween? This has become known as the "Great Pumpkin Objection" (GPO).

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35 Plantinga quotes in Ibid., 88.
There are really two objections here: (1) Plantinga's criteria allows for virtually any belief to be properly basic. And (2), Plantinga's inductive method for establishing criteria for proper basicality does not settle issues between competing religious claims.

Plantinga's primary response to (1) is that this objection fails to understand his methodology and misses his key distinction between evidence and grounds. He says,

The central point here, however, is that a belief is properly basic only in certain conditions; these conditions are, we might say, the ground of its justification and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself. In this sense basic beliefs are not, or are not necessarily, groundless beliefs.

Now similar things may be said about belief in God. When the Reformers claim that belief in God is properly basic, they do not mean to say, of course, that there are no justifying circumstances for it, or that it is in that sense groundless or gratuitous.37

Evidence and grounds both function to provide warrant for a belief but do so in different ways.38

In responding to GPO Plantinga is concerned with grounds for belief in God. He argues that the grounds for establishing properly basic beliefs is generally inductive, much like the reliability of sense perception (eg., that a certain colour shade is magenta and not red or maroon or purple). Keep in mind that Plantinga is avowedly doing epistemology naturalistically and is an externalist. He contends that we are not without some clear cases of warranted beliefs and that we do (at very least) have a workable understanding of what it means (under normal circumstances) to have properly functioning cognitive faculties. From


38 Evidence provides warrant on a believed -on-the-basis-of relationship between beliefs and is necessarily internal to our noetic structures (see chapter one). Grounds for beliefs confer warrant according to conditions or circumstances and are external to our noetic structures. See R & BIG; Plantinga, "The Foundations of Theism" Faith and Philosophy 3 (July 1986), 306; and also Dewey Hoitenga, Jr., Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga (New York: State of New York University Press, 1991), 187-191.
these we can work toward establishing universal principles for warrant rather than vice versa. The criteria for properly basic beliefs "should not be adapted a priori and handed down ex cathedra." David K. Clark notes that Plantinga is not claiming that we cannot distinguish between warranted and unwarranted beliefs, "rather, it is that no one is likely to find one general rule that will draw this distinction simply and cleanly in all cases."

At the time of Plantinga's early response to the GPO he had not yet written his two volumes on warrant and had not yet developed his key concept of impulsional evidence. Plantinga's original point still stands; the GPO crucially misses his important distinction between evidence and grounds; belief in God may not be propositionally evidenced but there are grounds for it. Now that Plantinga has further defined his position and his notion of warrant there is a normative element in the establishment of the criteria for properly basic beliefs--in particular, that belief in God is properly basic and belief in the Great Pumpkin is not. According to Plantinga, when belief in God is properly basic for a person it will be evidenced in his impulsional way.

Plantinga's response to (1) is that in appropriate circumstances, when our cognitive faculties are properly functioning according to design plan aimed at truth, we will form a warranted basic belief in God. This minimalistic criteria for properly basic beliefs does not require him to accept just any belief as rational and/or properly basic; only those that are grounded by being formed by properly functioning cognitive faculties (in an appropriate epistemic environment according to a design plan aimed at truth). The accompanying impulsional

39 Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?", 140.


41 Dialogical Apologetics, 45.
evidence and the cognitive proper function caveat, in tandem with the cognitive environment stipulation provides prima facie warrant for basic beliefs. With respect to theistic belief, this will not result in an unduly large subset of basic beliefs.

However, on Plantinga's construal, the subset of properly basic theistic beliefs is still greater than one. James Beilby illustrates this predicament well with the following story:\(^{42}\)

Imagine four philosophers—an atheist, an agnostic, a Muslim, and a Christian—in four parallel and identical universes. Each are hiking along their favourite mountain trail one day when a mistep leaves them desperately clinging to a tree root in peril of their lives. While hanging from this root a voice says to them, "I am here. Do you believe me?" Of course the Christian immediately responds, "Yes Jesus. I do." The Muslim, recollecting similar stories in the Koran replies, "Yes, Allah, I do." The agnostic and the atheist are not quite sure what to make of this when the voice says something more; "If you believe in me, let go." The Christian and the Muslim immediately respond. The atheist thinks a little and decides that there is another climber just out of sight on the trail above and lets go as well. The agnostic, believing that the combination of corned beef in his sandwich at lunch and the stress of a near-death experience is playing havoc with his mind hangs on until his strength gives way. After falling only a foot and landing on a ledge, the agnostic praises his good luck, the atheist looks about to thank his anonymous friend, and the Christian and Muslim thank their respective Gods.

\(^{42}\) This story is adapted and condensed from "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity," 1-2.
Plantinga admits that with his response to GPO and his method for arriving at criteria for proper basicity, there is a connection between metaphysics and epistemology for the things we take to be properly basic will be to some extent dictated by, among other things, our anthropology. That is, the sort of beings we think humans are affects the kinds of things we think they can perceive.\textsuperscript{43} In "The Foundations of Theism,"\textsuperscript{44} Plantinga answers Jay VanHook and Phillip Quinn's variation on GPO which, \textit{appropos} (2), argues that if Plantinga's procedure for determining proper basicity is correct, Moonies, Muslims, Buddhists, including Great Pumpkinites could, by the same inductive procedure, come up with conflicting criteria. Therefore (so Quinn's objection goes), a criterion arrived at in Plantinga's prescribed manner cannot be used to adjudicate between other claims arrived at in the same manner. If Plantinga holds to his particularist inductive method for determining proper basicity, is he not also dedicated to a Rortian epistemological relativism?

In response to this type of objection Plantinga says that "it is indeed true that if people start with different beliefs as to which propositions are properly basic in various circumstances, then following the method I sketched, they may well come to different conclusions. But why think this is a defect in the proposed method?"\textsuperscript{45} Plantinga wants to remind us on this point that warrant is intimately connected with truth, and truth has a non-negotiable objectivity about it. While

\textsuperscript{43} Warrant 2, 183 n9.

\textsuperscript{44} Faith and Philosophy 3 (July 1986), 298-313.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 302-303. On this point Plantinga accommodates the "social construction of science" movement of Jurgen Habermas and others in the Frankfurt school who see not only data as theory-laden and theories as paradigm-laden but also paradigms as culture-laden. "The design of research is not given to us by nature. The kinds of questions we ask, the type explanations we seek, and even the criteria of rationality we use are all socially formed." Ian Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science: The Gifford Lectures, 1989-1991, Vol. I, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 75.
maintaining that the criteria for proper basicity is community-relative, Plantinga is not committed to therefore espouse an epistemological relativism.\textsuperscript{46}

Properly basic beliefs provide prima facie, not ultima facie warrant. It is therefore plausible to say that belief in God could be properly basic for a Christian and not for an atheist. Of course, one of them has a mistaken criterion and is therefore wrong, but given their original disagreements (like perhaps, a different anthropology) this does not mean that they have a bad method, rather different epistemic starting points. John Apczynski poignantly observes that Plantinga's prescribed methodology for proper basicity "should be taken to mean that all reflective persons have to identify and examine the conditions of proper basicity that inform and guide them as members of specific historical communities of inquiry."\textsuperscript{47}

Plantinga grounds belief in God in historical traditions of inquiry that provide each person with a criteria of assessment. This grants us prima facie epistemic rights (i.e., makes those beliefs among the deliverances of reason) for us to adopt the basic beliefs of that community--proper function, epistemic environment, etc. determine the \textit{truth} of those beliefs.

To further object on this point is to beg the question in favour of the internalist notion of Cartesian certainty as a criterion for knowledge. Plantinga insists that we finites have fallible knowledge--but that this is good enough. What proper basicity means then, is to sanction a belief as being the kind of belief that, when formed in the particular manner it was formed in, is as good as we get to being a non-reflective knowledge belief. Plantinga's salient point on this issue is

\textsuperscript{46} Hence Plantinga's statement, "Particularism does not imply subjectivism." R & BIG, 78. See also James F. Sennet, \textit{Modality, Probability, and Rationality} (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 141, for an explanation of Plantinga in these terms.

\textsuperscript{47} "Belief in God, Proper Basicity, and Rationality" \textit{Journal of the American Academy of Religion} 60 (1992), 308.
that the Christian community does not have to first prove its theistic claims are true for it to know those claims in the same way that an American tourist does not have to convince an aboriginal native of Papua New Guinea that there are such things as skyscrapers, airplanes and ice-cream in order for the tourist to know that these things exist.\footnote{Plantinga, "On Reformed Epistemology," 15.}

In the cases where there are conflicting theistic claims based on perception, Plantinga does not have to grant to each equipollent levels of warrant for their beliefs.

Epistemic environment could also be seen as an adjudicating factor. There may be varying levels of warrant according to the degree to which our cognitive faculties are properly functioning and the epistemic environment\footnote{Epistemic environment, it must be remembered, has a social aspect to it.} is suitable, etc., according to which the resulting beliefs may more or less be true or accurate or warranted. If the community in which a properly basic belief arises is not a suitable (or a reasonably close to suitable) environment, the belief may be somewhat distorted and not have a high degree of warrant. It is perfectly reasonable for Plantinga to argue that in the cases that there is DP and a claim different from that of Christianity there is malfunction at some point and to some degree in the fulfillment of the warrant formula.\footnote{Perhaps all a Hindu is warranted in believing from his DP is that there is a God, not his God. Maybe there are circumstances that can be articulated which show how there is malfunction somewhere in the warrant process such that his resulting formed belief does not have full warrant. This is the theme of the last section in this chapter. Epistemic environment in this way also affects the warrant of testimonial beliefs which may weaken the warrant for a testimonial belief in God based on this type of DP.}

The Christian's belief in God is completely rational grounded in DP, but the theist has recourse to additional corroborative arguments to further perform the polemical task of sorting between conflicting theistic claims to proper basicality to find the true one. Plantinga's argument is that belief in God does not need
argument for warrant and that it can be properly basic, but it does not follow that there are no such arguments.\textsuperscript{51}

James Beilby blends Plantinga's epistemology with a "cumulative case argument" to adjudicate between competing religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{52} Beilby sees the Christian who adheres to Plantinga's epistemology having recourse to natural theology, historical evidence, or religious experience as the fulfillment of promises to provide the necessary normativity for sorting between religious claims. These cumulative case arguments may certainly help in verifying the reliability of the testimonial claims and evidential claims of the Christian believer and if successful further solidify their place among the deliverances of reason. These corroborative evidences however, are neither necessary nor sufficient for a Christian to have real knowledge of God and are therefore not strictly needed. To return to Beilby's four illustrative philosophers, if ever they meet and recount their experiences, the Christian and the Muslim may defend their beliefs as rational by invoking criteria for proper basicality and DP.

In addressing this issue, we must keep in mind that Plantinga's primary intention in arguing that belief in God is properly basic is not to rebut competing theistic claims but to diffuse the claim of the evidentialist objector to theistic belief who says that the theist who has no evidence for theism is in some way irrational. Plantinga hints in his article "On Reformed Epistemology" that the

\textsuperscript{51} Plantinga's position on the arguments for God's existence has softened somewhat in the last twenty years. In God and Other Minds (1967) he takes the position that there are really no good arguments for God's existence. In 1974 however, he began to defend a version of the ontological argument that he found valid; The Nature of Necessity (New York: Clarendon Press, 1974); and God, Freedom, and Evil (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974). Recently Plantinga has been more favourably disposed to think that there are more good arguments for God's existence; see "Lecture 3: 2 Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments," (unpublished lecture by Plantinga obtained by Dr. D.W. Beck, Liberty University). In fact, Plantinga turns his epistemic theory into an argument for God's existence; Warrant 2, chapters 11 & 12; and "An Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism," in Faith in Theory and in Practice: Essays of Justifying Religious Belief, ed. Elizabeth S. Radcliffe and Carol J. White (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), 35-66.

\textsuperscript{52} "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity" Philosophia Christi 17 (Fall 1994), 10-11.
polemical question we have been discussing is a matter of truth theory, not warrant. In R&BIG he further admits that "the criteria for proper basicality arrived at in this particularistic way may not be polemically useful." We have seen hints, however, that his concept of epistemic environment may function in a more normative manner, pointing us to the truth of the Christian's belief in God, than Plantinga has thus far articulated.

**Kierkegaardian Subjectivity as Appropriate Environment**

By contrast to traditional epistemologies, Plantinga has a nonrestrictive method for establishing the criteria for properly basic beliefs. This method admittedly allows for there to potentially be competing and mutually exclusive claims to proper basicality. Plantinga's answer is that warrant entails truth but proper basicality does not; it only is a prima facie indicator of truth. We must therefore have a truth theory to adjudicate between competing claims for proper basic beliefs.

There is some promise of normativity and truth determinacy in Plantinga's warrant formula in his criterion of appropriate epistemic environment for the proper function of cognitive faculties. The criteria for proper basicality is community-relative. Cognitive environment is person-relative but community is also relevant, such that if there is a flaw in the testimonial epistemic chain, or the socially determined interpretive context for perception is skewed, the epistemic environment will not be ideally attuned to our perceptual and cognitive faculties. The belief gleaned in this deviative cognitive environ may have a less than a sufficient degree of ultima facie warrant, possibly no warrant at all.

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53 14-16.

54 77.
The dialogue in philosophy of science over objectivity/subjectivity and theory laden data and interpretive contexts is pertinent to epistemology proper and particularly Plantinga's theory. Theories and paradigms that influence scientific data must influence the interpretation of religious experience as well. Religious beliefs founded on "objective" evidence are not enough. Evidence must be processed by individual human subjects in a particular historical-cultural community. Epistemological discussions in philosophy of religion have tended to ignore this dimension while oddly enough religious traditions virtually all maintain that there is subjectivity involved in religious knowledge and often stress how difficult it is to become the kind of person required to attain religious truth.

An account of the phenomenology of DP is needed to fill out Plantinga's account of warrant. Particular attention needs to be given to Plantinga's idea of cognitive environment. Nineteenth-century Danish philosopher/theologian, Søren Kierkegaard, provides us with an example of a phenomenological account of this type that enhances Plantinga's epistemic theory and offers an answer to the GPO.

Kierkegaardian Subjectivity Defined

Kierkegaard proposed a unique, if much maligned and misunderstood, account of faith. For Kierkegaard, the object Christian faith is the incarnation which is "the absolute paradox." Faith is acquired by an act of the will, a "leap" that goes "against the understanding" and provides the potential believer with "the possibility of offense."\(^{56}\)


To have faith is to be "in truth," to lack it is to be in untruth. Kierkegaard declares his criterion for truth in Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments (CUP), saying that "Truth is subjectivity." He clarifies this saying that truth is "the objective certainty, held fast in the most passionate appropriation of inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an exister." Paradox is the occasion for truth and the incarnation of Jesus Christ is the "Absolute Paradox."

Kierkegaard's statement can be interpreted two ways. The first way is to see Kierkegaard as an irrationalist. Here the paradox is understood as a logical contradiction. The only way to be in the truth and avoid the possibility of the offense is to lay aside reason. In this way Kierkegaard may be thought to be saying (much like Rorty) that truth is subjective and that he maintained that Christianity is known to be true by a blind irrational leap.

The second interpretation of Kierkegaard does not see the need to saddle him with so rash a charge as irrationalism, but sees him as a rationalist of sorts. 

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58 CUP, 182.


60 Kierkegaard is not to be thought of as a typical rationalist in the tradition of Kant or Hegel. In fact his entire literary task was to wrest Christianity from Hegelian rationalism. What is meant here by calling Kierkegaard a rationalist is to connotate that he was not an irrationalist who stood in opposition the application of any rational principles to Christianity. For a very thorough vindication of Kierkegaard on this score, see C. Stephen Evans, Kierkegaard's "Fragments" and "Postscript" (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983); and his Subjectivity and Religious Belief: An Historical, Critical Study, (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982). For our purposes we are not trying to establish an argument for this interpretation of Kierkegaard, but are interested instead in merely defining this concept and would indicate that he may be interpreted this way. In any event, for our purposes this is how we will interpret him because interpreted this way his idea is more cogent. If Kierkegaard actually meant something different, so be it; we do not. It is the concept we are concerned with, not an engaging in a defense for an interpretation of Kierkegaard's philosophy (which, by the way, shows promise as the most accurate one); that is for another paper.
Kierkegaard is seen as pointing to the incarnation as a profound mystery, not against reason, but beyond it. On this reading, Kierkegaard is affirming an objective content to truth, but the knowing of it is by another means than pure intellectual reflection.

The difficulty in ascertaining Kierkegaard's intentions is exacerbated by the fact that he wrote CUP, as well as many of his other works, pseudonymously. It must be understood that the problem he is addressing is how an individual can be "in the truth," as Christianity stipulates one must be. For Kierkegaard, Christianity is an "existence communication" and much like Plantinga, it is not dependent on the results of argument or scholarly inquiry:

"The idea of demonstrating that this unknown thing (the God) exists, could hardly suggest itself to Reason. For if the God does not exist it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist, it would folly to attempt it. For, at the very outset of my proof, I would have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain." 62

C. Stephen Evans points out that the key to understanding Kierkegaard is to recognize that subjectivity and objectivity are not pure and distinct realms of being--they are intertwined with each other. Evans goes on to say that Kierkegaard's point is that the individual must be "permeated with the right kind of subjectivity" if she is to determine the objective content of Christianity. 63

Inwardness (synonymous with subjectivity) roughly defined is the act of an individual whereby she is subjective toward all others and objective toward herself. 64 Inwardness is this objectivity toward self whereby an individual realizes

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61 Kierkegaard writes that this is the fundamental theme of his entire literary activity: "Thus it is that the whole literary activity turns upon the problem of becoming a Christian within Christendom." "The Point of View for My Work as an Author," in A Kierkegaard Anthology, ed. Robert Brentland, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 335.


63 Kierkegaard's "Fragments" and "Postscript," 289.
her finitude as an existing being subject to time. Evans briefly defines Kierkegaardian inwardness as "the central enduring concerns [of the individual] that give shape and substance to the personality, concerns that have both a dispositional character ('a willingness to renounce the relative for the sake of the eternal'), and an episodic character ('passion is momentary')."  

Kierkegaard's point is that if we are to know the objective content of the truth, we must align our actions appropriately and be the kind of person that may receive the truth. This alignment involves an awareness of our finitude and contingency in the development of one's inward, private self as a human subject--such modes of being as humility, (appropriate) guilt, repentance, gratitude, forgiveness, grace, love, joy, peace, gentleness, etc.--resulting in a passionate commitment to the Truth (the infinite God) for one's being in the truth.

Kierkegaard's claim is that all religious knowledge is conditioned by this subjectivity or inwardness. If this is right, Kierkegaard is referring to something very like Plantinga's concept of epistemic environment as a prerequisite for truth.

Person Relativity and Religious Knowledge

In CUP Kierkegaard states that, "Within the individual person there is a potentiality (man is potentially spirit) which is awakened in inwardness to a God-relationship, and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere."  

Kierkegaard is claiming that each of us has the potential in the right

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64 Kierkegaard wrote in his journal, "The majority of men are subjective toward themselves and objective toward others, terribly objective sometimes--but the task is to be objective toward self and subjective toward all others." "The Journals," in A Kierkegaard Anthology, ed. Robert Bretall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 323.

65 "Subjectivity as the Grounds for Properly Basic Belief" Faith and Philosophy (January 1988),34.

66 Keep in mind that Kierkegaard has the same goal in mind here as we do--the truth of Christianity.

67 CUP, 220-221.
circumstances to have DP, but that our ability to perceive God depends on our epistemic environment, which is to some extent up to us. Our experiences of God must be mediated by the right kind of subjectivity.

Taken this way, Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" to Christian truth is not to be seen as a manipulation of our noetic structure where we will to believe that which by reason alone we never could, but "rather, what [we] must will to achieve is an openness to having [our] natural attitude of self-sufficiency and selfishness overturned."68

Kierkegaard is not using what Clark calls the "intellectual view of faith"69 of Aquinas where faith is a substitute for evidence—if we do not have evidence for a proposition we believe it on "faith." Faith is the function of our entire beings as a passionate commitment to Truth. Faith is not the servant of reason. Faith and reason influence each other reciprocally. What we desire to believe affects what we actually do believe and vice versa. Faith increases understanding and understanding increases faith. It is the Augustinian and Anselmian tradition of fides quarens intellectum exemplified, where faith is quite compatible with reason holistically in a non-hierarchical codependent way.70 Kierkegaard is referring to subjectivity as a life-response and action to an existence-communication, not merely an intellectual activity. Subjectivity initiates and influences the appropriate epistemic environment for theistic belief.

Alston makes the similar point that "Christian Practice" is the medium that enables us to enter into communication with God.71 Alston further says that, "if


69 David Clark, Dialogical Apologetics, 16 ff.

70 Ibid., 103.

I could not find any confirmation of the Christian message in my own experience, I would be less justified in accepting that message as fact.”

Alston and Kierkegaard share two things in common in their two respective ideas: 1) the need for DP (of some justifying sort) for religious knowledge, and 2) the conditions of subjectivity (what we are calling epistemic environment) are person-relative because they are in fact largely within our control--i.e., we have a responsibility to create the conditions upon which we may engage in DP. In Belief in God, George Mavrodes reinforces this line of thought by emphasizing that there are subjective requirements for knowledge and that any discussion of epistemological questions must this involve person-relativity. Subjectivity as the appropriate epistemic environment for DP and the fact of personal control over subjectivity make the proper basicity of belief in God dependent, to some greater or lesser degree, upon our actions.

Subjectivity as we are defining it is an art, it is something we acquire a skill for; it is not something that we fall into simply by virtue of being human subjects. As we learn the art of subjectivity, we develop a keener perception for DP. Thus, it is appropriate for Christians to speak of spiritual maturity, for knowledge of God is really a matter of personal growth. We find God within our experience only as we develop our private inner spiritual life, which amounts to conditioning our epistemic environment. To return to our anecdote of Bertrand Russell and his response to God upon the query as to why Russell was not a Believer; perhaps God would respond to Russell's objection from lack of evidence as Evans has suggested, by "asking Russell if he assiduously worked

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72 Ibid., 103.


74 See Kierkegaard, "Becoming Subjective," CUP, II, chapter 2.
at becoming the kind of person who could have recognized the evidence that God had actually provided."\textsuperscript{75}

The idea of improving DP, and disproportionate capabilities for DP across a population is not without analogues to SP. We are accustomed to people developing skill in the use of certain aspects of their physical sensory apparatus to improve their performance in a job or an athletic event. Similarly, it is true that there are those with better or worse sense perception abilities (like eye-sight) than the average person. We do not say that those with exceptional eye-sight are not properly functioning. It is not then beyond the bounds of reason to suppose that the ability for DP be unequitably distributed across a population and that it require some effort on our part to access and improve. Judging from Kierkegaard's analysis and the phenomenology of DP (for example, not everyone has it, etc.) it appears that "God has set certain standards to be met before He reveals Himself in DP."\textsuperscript{76} These standards are for us as individuals to meet.

Plantinga and Subjectivity

Our contention is that Kierkegaard’s idea of subjectivity can be seen as the suitable epistemic environment for DP functions normatively, guiding us to the objective truth content of DP. Kierkegaard claims that since God is spirit, He cannot be known in any other manner than by way of a spiritual relationship; hence the need for subjectivity. This fact also serves to provide the normativity of DP, for the one who through subjectivity becomes aware of God by DP must of necessity become aware of God's true nature.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{75} "Transformative Religious Experiences," 184.

\textsuperscript{76} "Rationality, Warrant, and Religious Diversity," 9. Beilby is making a similar but slightly different point.
Kierkegaard illustrates this point by using the example of a social conformist who lacks inwardness, and therefore true awareness of God. How should God appear to this person and help her? Perhaps, Kierkegaard suggests, the social conformist would be able to see God if He appeared in the form of "a very rare and tremendously large green bird, with a red beak, sitting in a tree on the mound, and perhaps even whistling in an unheard of manner." God might attract the social conformist's attention true enough, but the problem lies in the fact that she would have neither direct awareness of God as God, nor any knowledge of God's true nature and character. However, as Evans says,

If . . . the knowledge of God is conditioned by inwardness, the situation is totally different. For the person who has properly developed such inward passions as gratitude, guilt, and repentance will be in the proper situation to understand such divine qualities as "the gracious giver of life," the one who offers forgiveness," and "the one who empowers the individual to make a new beginning."

Subjectivity Compatible with Plantinga

Plantinga and Kierkegaard do not have similar apologetic agendas; it would therefore be unreasonable to expect them to have identical accounts. Plantinga is aiming (more or less) at making Christian theism intellectually viable for the twentieth century intellectuals. Kierkegaard was aiming at freeing Christianity from mere intellectualism. These two divergent agendas entail very different emphases but are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

There is at least prima facie compatibility of Plantinga's epistemic project and Kierkegaard's account of truth as subjectivity. First, Kierkegaard's stress

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77 Evans makes this point in "Kierkegaard, Plantinga and Belief in God," 35. Again, it is not being claimed here that we perceive God's complete Being.

78 CUP, 219.

79 Evans, "Kierkegaard, Plantinga, and Belief in God," 36.

80 Evans, "Kierkegaard, Plantinga, and Belief in God," 26-27.
of truth as existential encounter agrees with Plantinga's analysis that the perceptual proposition, "I am appeared to thus-and-so," is adequate grounds for the more abstract, "Thus-and-so exists." Because of his apologetic agenda Kierkegaard would stress more than Plantinga that knowing the truth of Christianity is not merely intellectual, but would agree that one who is in the truth (has DP, "I am appeared to Godly") has knowledge of an objective truth content ("There is a God"). Second, they agree that God's reality is epistemically direct for us and as such is person-relative. Third, Kierkegaard and Plantinga agree that God is known only in the appropriate cognitive environment. And fourth, Kierkegaard's analysis affirms and is consistent with Plantinga's stance in the Reformed historical tradition of intellectual inquiry. We conclude that it is entirely appropriate for us to correlate Kierkegaard's account and Plantinga's.

Subjectivity Enhances Plantinga

A Kierkegaardian analysis of truth also enhances Plantinga's account of warrant in a non-ad hoc manner. First, Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity as the appropriate epistemic environment for properly basic beliefs provides a non-ad hoc way explaining how Plantinga's theory does not collapse into epistemological relativism. This thesis is phenomenologically supported and naturally entailed by prior existing hypotheses and premises, as well as being an abductively sound argument for the lack of universality of DP. It allows us to say with Plantinga's Reformed tradition that it is sin that blocks humans from universally experiencing the proper function of our noetic faculties with respect to DP so that we form belief in God properly basically. For Kierkegaard, failure to become one's true

81 This, of course, is not Kierkegaardian terminology; we have restated his idea in the current epistemological jargon that we have been employing throughout this document. We are not arguing for a unanimity between Kierkegaard's epistemology of religious belief and Plantinga's (although there may be a very good case made for strong correlations between the two). For our purposes, we are merely contending that Kierkegaard's analysis functions well within and enhances Plantinga's epistemic theory.
self in subjectivity is to be in untruth; it is to sin. The universal lack of this subjectivity (and thus, on Kierkegaard's view, sin) is not hard to demonstrate phenomenologically and cannot be seriously contested. On this construal, Plantinga's concept of epistemic environment may be seen to function as a normative criterion for properly basic beliefs.82

Second, Kierkegaard also provides Plantinga with the non-ad hoc argument for DP. God is "other" from us. He cannot appear to us as red-fire trucks do (or birds) for if He were to do so, we would not be perceiving God. It is therefore necessary that we perceive God some other way than the way we perceive other things.

Third, Kierkegaard's analysis is consistent with the received historical tradition of Christianity and provides a phenomenological account that is as one would expect propter hoc. As Alston pointed out, one would assume that if a God, as defined by Christian doctrine, exists that we would find confirmation of that in our own experience.

Fourth, Kierkegaard's subjectivity provides Plantinga with a detailed reconciliation to the discussions in philosophy of science about objectivity and subjectivity. Kierkegaardian subjectivity provides Plantinga with a cognitive environment for DP resilient to the charge of relativism while at the same time maintaining that data is theory-laden, theories are paradigm-laden, and paradigms are culture-laden.

82 There are obvious soteriological repercussions in this construal of religious knowledge. It is the author's opinion that this position in religious epistemology is not a slippery slope into heterodoxy; orthodox soteriology is completely tenable and apologetically viable from this position. An account of this is not, however, within the scope of this document. The reader is referred to those orthodox Christian thinkers who hold a soteriology compatible with this epistemology such as C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 164-165; C. Stephen Evans, Kierkegaard's "Fragments" and "Postscript" (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983); and Sir Norman Anderson, Christianity and World Religions (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1984).
Fifth, Kierkegaard's view is in line with Plantinga's naturalistic approach and provides with the grounds on which his idea of suitable cognitive environment for DP is empirically falsifiable. One may test Kierkegaard's hypothesis by living it.83

Sixth, subjectivity may also be seen ultimately as the warrant provider for testimony in Plantinga's account. There must be at least one person within the epistemic community that has warrant apart from testimony as we saw above. This warrant may of course come by way of propositional evidence, but if Kierkegaard and Alston's point is right about the need for DP for Christian belief to be completely rational and warranted, then subjectivity is necessarily the suitable epistemic environment for a Christian's belief in God to be formed.

Kierkegaard's analysis of truth as subjectivity enhances Plantinga's epistemic account, and is actually needed to keep it distinctly Christian, affirming the possibility of exclusive truth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Plantinga does not lay out clearly the facets of a suitable cognitive environment for DP; Kierkegaard does this for him. Utilizing this concept, Plantinga may affirm that belief in God is entirely rational, because it is grounded in DP; and that it is knowledge, because it is properly basic; and that it is true, because it has been produced in an appropriate environment for DP.

83 This approach could accommodate a Pascalian type of wager where the pragmatic value of belief in God may be evaluated in a cost-benefit analysis and then one approximates Christian practice and engages in Kierkegaard's idea subjectivity.
CONCLUSION

The task of this thesis has been to contend, through an examination of Alvin Plantinga's epistemology of proper function, that belief in God is rational for a person even if that person has no good propositional evidence (by way of abductive, inductive or deductive arguments) in the obtaining or maintaining of that belief, and that as such belief in God is properly basic, holding a rightful place within the foundations of our noetic structures. Our conclusion is that Plantinga's proper function analysis of warrant adequately sustains this position and that his epistemic theory is viable. There is no reason to reject belief in God as properly basic in our noetic structures. On this account belief in God is rational in Plantinga's proper function way provided it is formed by Divine Perception in the epistemic environment of Kierkegaardian subjectivity or grounded in testimony where at least one other person in the epistemic community has obtained and sustained that belief apart from testimonial warrant, and there is no cognitive malfunction.

This conclusion is commensurable with the fact that not all mature theists will agree with it.¹ There are believers for whom belief in God is properly basic, but who are also unaware of this fact. This poses no problem on Plantinga's theory of knowledge for unlike the internalist, a person need not have nor be able to give reasons for a belief to be warranted. It follows that a belief may be basic for a person even if they do not know it, or even refuse to admit that belief in God can be properly basic (they may for instance staunchly adhere to an internalist epistemology). A believer may be aware of the arguments for God's existence, and may even have some creative arguments unique to themselves

¹ C. Stephen Evans, Kierkegaard and Plantinga on Belief in God: Subjectivity as the Ground for Belief in God as Properly Basic" Faith and Philosophy 5 (January 1988), 37.
which they take to be the basis for their belief in God, when in fact they accept these proofs as evidence for God's existence based on an underlying confidence in God's existence.


Gettier, Edmund L. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Analysis 23 (June 1963): 121-123.


________. "Lecture 3: 2 Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments." Unpublished lecture obtained by Dr. D.W. Beck, Liberty University.


