THE RATIONALITY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF
IN A POSTMODERN AGE

by

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ABSTRACT

Enlightenment evidentialism argues that a belief is rational for a person only if that person has sufficient evidence, arguments, or reasons for that belief. Sufficient evidence under this conception of rationality typically follows a classical foundationalist system which argues that the belief that \( P \) is rational if and only if \( P \) is (1) self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible, or (2) inferable from a set of beliefs that are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible. In order to be rational about one's beliefs, a cognizer must be able to trace all of one's non-basic beliefs back to self-presenting basic beliefs which coerce (either rationally or probabilistically) one's non-basic beliefs. This approach to rationality carries with it profound implications for the rationality of theistic belief (i.e., the belief that God exists). Most non-theistic evidentialists argue that theistic belief does not satisfy the criteria for rationality because it typically fails to supply the sufficient evidence required to maintain it.

By incorporating the valid insights of three contemporary religious epistemologists (Nancey Murphy, Alvin Plantinga, and Richard Swinburne), it is argued that one can arrive at a model of rationality in which sufficient
evidence for the rationality of one's beliefs (theistic or otherwise) does not require that a cognizer trace all of one's non-basic beliefs (e.g., belief in God) back to self-presenting basic beliefs that are thought to be coercive on all rationally attentive people.

The proposed model of rationality argues that, on one level, sufficient evidence for the rationality of one's beliefs (including theistic belief) incorporates a reason-based conception of justification which may coincide with (but need not) a cognizer's attempts to offer rationally convincing evidence that one's beliefs are true or certain. On another level, being rational about one's beliefs involves attempts to marshall enough of the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence so as to be so rationally convinced of the truth or certainty of a given belief that one can no longer maintain a reasonable doubt.
To my wife, Lola, who has given unselfishly and sacrificially so that I could pursue my dream. She is a woman of noble character and great worth.

Truly iron sharpens iron
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................. iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................ viii

Chapter

1. SOME CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE RATIONALITY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF ........................................ 1

2. A TENTATIVE APPROACH TO RATIONALITY THE PROVISIONAL STATUS OF BELIEFS ...................................... 20

3. PROPER BASICALITY: A MODEST RATIONALISM .................. 83

4. THE PROBABILITY OF BELIEF ON EVIDENCE CUMULATIVE CASE EVIDENTIALISM ........................................ 149

5. TOWARD A RESOLUTION FOR RATIONALITY A MIDDLE GROUND SYNTHESIS ........................................ 217

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................ 270
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CHAPTER 1

SOME CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE RATIONALITY
OF THEISTIC BELIEF

The inquiry of this study arises out of the context of what is sometimes referred to as Enlightenment evidentialism and some current approaches within religious epistemology offered as viable responses to the conception of rationality often associated with it. This assumption, traditionally referred to as evidentialism, maintains that a belief is rational for a person only if that person has sufficient evidence, arguments or reasons for that belief.¹ The implication of this form of rationality for theistic belief is monumental. It is argued by many non-theistic evidentialists that an Enlightenment commitment to evidentialism necessarily implies that theistic belief does not stand the test of rationality because it typically fails to supply the sufficient evidence required to maintain it.²

¹Kelly James Clark, Return to Reason (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 3.

It has been suggested that until recently, the vast majority of religious epistemologies have remained within the evidentialist tradition. Some have attempted to provide the necessary evidence for rationality of belief in God, agreeing with Enlightenment thinkers that theistic belief is rational only when such a belief is warranted by sufficient evidence. This position, aptly called theistic evidentialism, embraces the Enlightenment conception of reason and argues that theistic belief is rational precisely because it does in fact meet the Enlightenment criterion of sufficient evidence.

Theistic evidentialists, according to Alvin Plantinga and Kelly James Clark, typically function under classical foundationalist conceptions of epistemology (although not exclusively) and attempt to offer evidence for theistic belief that is thought to be rationally compelling in virtue of classical foundationalist criteria for rationality. Non-theistic evidentialist objectors, however, criticize this position in asserting that theistic evidentialists have consistently failed in their attempts to provide the sufficient evidence required for rational theistic belief.

Another form of religious epistemology that is said to be a product of the evidentialist tradition is the position of theistic fideism. Theistic fideists essentially agree with

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3 It is recognized that evidentialists also employ coherentist or reliabilist theories of knowledge. Plantinga's primary criticisms, however, are directed against classical foundationalists.
the evidentialist assumption that theistic belief is rational only if there is sufficient evidence for such belief. But rather than attempting to provide evidences to meet the evidentialist's conditions for rational belief in God, theistic fideists abandon the enterprize altogether and argue that it is epistemically acceptable to hold theistic belief without being compelled to supply the requisite evidence (whether or not such evidence is thought to exist). Since theistic fideism holds that it is not necessary to provide sufficient evidence (or that no sufficient evidence exists) for rational theistic belief, many contemporary theists (both evidentialists and non-evidentialists) who maintain that theistic belief fits consistently within one's theory of knowledge, argue that the position of theistic fideism is irrational.

Notwithstanding, there are others on the landscape of contemporary religious epistemology who suggest a conception of rationality which seriously challenges Enlightenment critiques of the reasonableness of theistic belief. With the advent of Kuhnian epistemology, along with its

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4 Kelly Clark, Return to Reason, 7.


6 The reference here is to Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Cf. Kuhn's revisions of paradigm incommensurability in his second edition of the aforementioned text (1970) and his The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in
subsequent revisions by various philosophers of science,\textsuperscript{7} some recent religious epistemologists have promoted the rational acceptability of theistic belief from arenas outside the Enlightenment conception of rationality. The result of this endeavor has provided the field of religious epistemology with three contemporary, innovative and intriguing conceptions of rationality for theistic belief: (1) There is the notion suggested by postmodern thinker Nancey Murphy that claims to knowledge and rationality in both science and theology are at best tentative (or fallible) and in need of continual revision.\textsuperscript{8} Theistic belief (or a theological system) is considered rational when the evidence for that theory or belief fits the best explanation at the time. (2) There is the argument advanced by Reformed epistemologist, 


\textsuperscript{8}We will define Murphy's conception of postmodernity in more detail in chapter two. For purposes of the present study, while it is recognized that there are various forms of postmodern thought in the theological and philosophical disciplines, our focus will concentrate on Murphy's efforts to go beyond Enlightenment conceptions of truth and knowledge by rejecting all approaches to epistemic justification, rationality, and evidentialism which rely on any form of foundationalism in knowledge and correspondence in truth.
Alvin Plantinga, that belief in God is rationally acceptable apart from meeting the demands for rational and empirical certitude thought to be contained in the Enlightenment standards of evidentialism and rationality. For Plantinga, there is an appreciable difference between providing evidence for a belief (in a manner similar to Enlightenment standards) and providing the grounds or warrant for a belief (in terms of what we would expect to be the case if the belief in question is true). (3) Richard Swinburne, as a logical outgrowth of his cumulative case evidentialism for theistic belief (in which the rational case for theistic belief is offered through a series of inductive arguments in which the evidence and premises argue only for the probability of the existence of God), argues that one is rational in holding theistic belief because that belief does in fact meet adequate evidential conditions for rationality. What is offered in support of any rational belief (scientific, theistic, or otherwise) should be the best available evidence (along with standards for evaluating the evidence) that can lead one to credibly accept the likelihood (or probability) of truth with respect to the belief in question.

Both Murphy and Plantinga (albeit for different epistemic reasons) seriously attack conceptions of knowledge which are said to uncritically adopt Enlightenment standards for rationality in religious epistemology. Inherent to the Enlightenment theory of knowledge is the notion that (a) all
rational beliefs must be supported with propositional evidence or arguments, and (b) that an epistemic process of this nature most often takes place within the ranks of some form of foundationalist conception of knowledge. Consequently, while non-theistic evidentialists argue that traditional religious epistemology has repeatedly failed to supply sufficient (or undisputed) evidence for theistic belief, Murphy and Plantinga offer differing and competing conceptions of rationality that challenge the notion of sufficient evidence for theistic belief based on the Enlightenment criteria for rationality.

As a case in point, exponents of antifoundational epistemologies (e.g., Nancey Murphy and Nancy Frankenberry) argue that a rejection of all forms of foundationalism (i.e., the methodology through which a good part of Enlightenment evidentialism is thought to receive its rational impetus) in epistemology is necessary if there is to be a rational basis for theistic belief. And yet both Murphy and Frankenberry insist that abandoning foundationalism as part of a rational approach to acceptable truth-claims in science or theology does not necessarily force one to the inevitable positions of radical skepticism or relativism.\(^9\) The empirical approach

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\(^9\)This is the position held in a cogent article by Nancy Frankenberry, "Pragmatism, Truth, and Objectivity" Soundings 74 (Fall-Winter 1991): 514. See also, Frankenberry, Religion and Radical Empiricism (Albany: Suny, 1987), 4-19. See also, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Is the Postmodernist Always a Postfoundationalist? Nancey Murphy's Lakatosian Model for Theology" in Essays in Post-foundationalist Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 73-90. Also, there are different forms of foundationalism, and as we will see, Nancey
espoused by Frankenberry, for example, argues that such alternatives do not exhaust the epistemic possibilities available for those who reject foundationalist models for producing acceptable claims to truth in conceptual endeavors.\(^{10}\) Frankenberry and other antifoundationalists further insist that an absence of all forms of foundationalism in religious knowledge does not necessarily warrant a position that all constructions of meaning are relative and incommensurable. Rather, they argue, it is precisely through some anti-foundational theory of knowledge that one is not forced to epistemological skepticism and a purely arbitrary methodology for seeking an intellectual warrant for preferring some beliefs and ways of knowing over others.\(^ {11}\)

The contemporary significance of antifoundationalism for postmodern thought is, as scientific theologian Nancey Murphy has stated, found in a thorough rejection of the

\(^{10}\)Frankenberry, "Pragmaticism," 5.

exclusive scientific empiricism and evidentialism undergirding Enlightenment epistemology.\textsuperscript{12} The impetus for Murphy's language comes out of some recent conceptions of knowledge in the philosophy of science. Murphy's writings advocate a postpositivistic methodology for theistic belief which she claims complies with the current standards of evidence within the philosophy of science.\textsuperscript{13} She further proposes that theistic theories take on a new collaborative effort with science, one that concerns itself with the extent to which an epistemology adequate for science should approximate an epistemology suitable for the truth-claims of religion.\textsuperscript{14}

At another point on the spectrum of concepts of rationality is the revolutionary notion of rationality evidenced in the writings of Reformed epistemologist, Alvin Plantinga.\textsuperscript{15} Plantinga, among others, approaches the issue


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 192.


of rationality on the assumption that the classical foundationalist model for rationality is no longer a viable option in epistemology. A critical feature of Plantinga's system is his argument that classical foundationalism does not satisfy its own criteria for rationality. Classical foundationalism holds that belief $P$ is rational if and only if $P$ is either (a) self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible or (b) inferable from a set of beliefs that are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible.\textsuperscript{16}

By consequence, then, theistic belief that is argued for (and ultimately accepted) under a classical foundationalist system of rationality is neither a basic belief nor inferable from such beliefs. According to this analysis, religious epistemologies based on classical foundationalism are on the same tenuous epistemic grounds as their non-religious counterparts.

Since classical foundationalism is said ultimately to fail as a compelling theory of knowledge (and consequently fails as part of a system of rationality), Plantinga contends that religious epistemologists should abandon altogether any epistemic system which cannot satisfy its own conditions for rationality. By rejecting the Enlightenment's reliance on classical foundationalism and evidentialism, Reformed epistemology will essentially follow the literature contained in Clark's volume.

\textsuperscript{16}Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?" 24-25.
epistemologists like Plantinga argue that there no longer remains a legitimate evidentialist objection to theistic belief (i.e., belief in God). The reason is that belief in God is thought to escape any objections based on the evidentialist assumption of rationality. Plantinga's approach to rationality is thought to go beyond the limits of traditional evidentialism and offer less rigorous and demanding criteria for what is legitimately rational and basic among one's set of beliefs. Plantinga argues that beliefs of this nature are in fact rational, even though they do not satisfy the conditions for rationality under classical foundationalism.

With the work of Swinburne, there is a return to the program of theistic evidentialism. Swinburne also attempts to show that theistic theories and beliefs can follow a model of rationality consistent with scientific theorizing. His approach, however, differs significantly from Murphy's in that he argues that such a methodology is one in which our best inductive arguments of the available evidence can result in conclusions of probability for theistic belief; that is, we can judge our theories and beliefs on evidence (including theistic belief) to be more likely true than not.

Swinburne's system further differs from Murphy's in that he accepts a form of correspondence in truth, and argues for an epistemic structure which is essentially foundational in nature. It will be suggested that his approach comes
closest to satisfying the features necessary to an adequate model of rationality. Swinburne will argue, for example, that there are degrees of rationality which increasingly account for greater evidence and greater likelihood of truth. The highest degree of rationality one can apply to a belief (theistic or otherwise) is one in which a cognizer has in fact verified a belief as true on the total available evidence. All other acceptable degrees of rationality are such that a cognizer may have good reason to continue questioning what the evidence delivers in terms of the likelihood of truth.

The Dissertation Question

It may be stated, then, that the epistemic theories underlying the systems of Murphy, Plantinga, and Swinburne represent some of the most influential attempts at formulating a concept of rationality for belief in God among the religious epistemologies currently fashionable as either (a) offering alternative answers to the evidentialist assumption that surfaced out of the classical foundationalist epistemology of the Enlightenment, or (b) in some way satisfying the 18th-century evidentialist objections forever enshrined in the tomb of Humean skepticism. The central question of the present study may be put forth as follows: Do the aforementioned systems of nonfoundational religious epistemology (e.g., Murphy), Reformed epistemology (e.g., Plantinga), and theistic evidentialism (e.g., Swinburne) provide tenable models of rationality for belief in God? If
not, what are the necessary features which make a belief (whether scientific, theistic, or otherwise) rational? Such an inquiry attempts to make a distinction between the content of religious belief (e.g., the trinity) and the specific epistemic reasons that warrant or justify theisitic belief as being rational.

Various secondary questions naturally arise out of this concern. For example, if it can be established that the evidentialist assumption is not without its own epistemic difficulties, as Plantinga suggests, then to what extent are theistic evidentialists compelled to provide only what evidentialists would accept as sufficient evidence (either rational or empirical) for theistic belief? Additionally, must one reject all forms of foundationalism in epistemology, as does Murphy, if one is to have an acceptable notion of rationality for belief in God? Are epistemic systems that fail to supply evidentialist notions of sufficient reasons for theistic belief necessarily fideistic in nature? Or is it possible to offer, as C. Stephen Evans and Merold Westphal suggest, a middle ground theory of rationality for theistic belief that attempts to strike a balance between the epistemological arrogance of evidentialism and extreme systems of irrationality, relativism and skepticism?¹⁷ In addressing these concerns, our purpose is to offer a

¹⁷See, for example, their Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 3.
constructive analysis of the internal logic of the systems in question (as opposed to their historical developments) and provide a plausible system of rationality which draws upon various credible epistemic features residing within those systems.

As we will see, Murphy and Plantinga offer competing systems of rationality in response to what Alvin Plantinga refers to as the collapse of classical foundationalism in epistemology. As such, the evidentialist objection since Hume and the Enlightenment is ultimately satisfied in the adoption of rational systems incommensurable with the form of rationality embraced under the original objection. And as we will further see, while some contemporary theistic evidentialists are committed to developing rational systems for theistic belief which attempt to provide evidential responses to the objections raised by non-theistic evidentialist (e.g., Richard Swinburne's cumulative case evidential arguments), Murphy and Plantinga offer rational systems for belief in God which attempt to escape evidentialism altogether. The cognitive claim of theistic belief, they assert, is ultimately satisfied in a context that accepts the criteria of an entirely different system of rationality, one that is at the same time consistent with

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18 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 60-61. See also, "Is Belief in God Rational?" in Rationality and Religious Belief, ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 7-27.
either the dictates of scientific knowledge or some other alternative form of rationality. But is there a more preferable alternative to the three systems mentioned above? Is there, for example, an option for rationality in theistic belief that combines the positive features of all three epistemic models?

The Purpose of the Study

It is the intention of this study to suggest that a more tenable model of rationality for theistic belief may be found in a synthesis of certain epistemic features of Murphy's postmodern scientific epistemology for theology, Plantinga's Reformed epistemology, and Swinburne's cumulative case evidentialism. The impetus for such a synthesis is fueled in part by the role philosophy of religion plays in furnishing a substantive epistemology for the acceptable truth-claims of theistic belief in an increasingly scientific and technological society. The form of epistemology we ultimately embrace as satisfying the conditions for what constitutes rational claims in science and religion will in turn radically shape the future epistemic practices of these conceptual enterprises. This particularly concerns the type of claims that can be legitimately constructed and accepted by adherents of both disciplines.

Since the advent of Enlightenment standards of rationality, the claims of religion and theology appear to have cowered increasingly in the face of modern conceptions of
scientism. If, however, it can be argued effectively that the truth-claims of both science and religion do in fact share the same essential epistemic conditions for rationality, then perhaps future discussions between the two disciplines can progress along more acceptable lines without either enterprise capitulating to indefensible criteria for rationality.

Qualifications on the Areas of Inquiry

In attempting to meet this agenda, it must be stipulated that it would be impossible in a study of this length to deal adequately with the extensive literature devoted to the whole discipline of religious epistemology. The following factors, then, have been brought into consideration: first, our primary objective is to identify the essential features to each of the models of rationality indicated above. While it is recognized that the respective epistemic systems up for consideration have broader application to a wider range of concepts within the realm of theistic belief, our focus will be to consider the inner logic that constitutes these rational systems and offer analysis with respect to whether the features and criteria of these systems do in fact provide adequate approaches to rational theistic belief. It will be suggested that there are inherent difficulties to each system, and that such difficulties require further criteria to make a stronger argument for rational belief (theistic or otherwise). Second, in keeping with the many studies in religious epistemology involved in
investigating the rationale for theistic beliefs seeking a middle ground between epistemological arrogance and relativistic skepticism,\textsuperscript{19} the present study proposes to contribute to this discussion by attempting a synthesis of the three forms of religious epistemology described above.

\textbf{The Method and Scope of the Study}

In order to develop the proposed project successfully, chapter two will set forth the essential tenets of Nancey Murphy's brand of postmodern rationality. Discussion will ensue with respect to some of the positive contributions in this line of thinking. Much of Murphy's thinking is done in the silhouette of recent philosophy of science (Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend, and Imre Lakatos) in which a clarion call has been sounded against scientific positivism's role in modernity as the final arbiter of rationality and certitude in the truth-claims of the social sciences of which religious knowledge plays so crucial a role. It is anticipated that the epistemic concerns raised in this chapter will set the tone and rationale for the remainder of the study.

Murphy proposes what she regards as a thoroughly postmodern alternative to modern notions of rationality in

Murphy is chosen specifically for her scientific methodology which emerges as a natural outgrowth of the epistemology of recent philosophy of science. It will be argued that, when compared against the rational systems of Plantinga and Swinburne, Murphy's brand of postmodern epistemology represents the most radical step away from the rationality of Enlightenment evidentialism. This chapter will review her insights and suggested modifications of recent philosophy of science and offer initial critiques of the epistemic limitations inherent to the Lakatosian system she proposes as a viable rational approach to theistic belief.

Chapter three will investigate the manner in which the rationality of Alvin Plantinga's Reformed epistemology is offered as a competing alternative against postmodernism in the rejection of classical foundationalism in religious epistemology. Once again, the purpose of this chapter will be to define Plantinga's notion of rationality and consider its

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insights and potential limitations in offering a credible approach to the rationality of theistic belief. Initial criticisms will be offered for the purposes of directing the project toward its ultimate objective of a middle ground position incorporating various epistemic features in all three systems.

Chapter four will consider Richard Swinburne's cumulative case evidentialism for theistic belief. The rationale for reconsidering an evidentialist model of rationality for theistic belief surfaces out of the argument that there are fundamental epistemic principles that govern rational claims to truth (whether scientific, theistic, or otherwise), and that such a system of rationality does in fact follow (and need not jettison) a moderate foundational structure of evidentialism. Swinburne's notion of rationality (as a form of evidentialism) involves the epistemic features necessary to avoid the tendencies toward relativism that are often inherent in many postmodern systems (e.g., Murphy's Lakatosian model of rationality). It will be argued that his system salvages many of the positive features of foundationalist structures of epistemic justification, while at the same time offering a tempered view of the prospects of evidentialist arguments that follow an inductive and probabilistic approach to the rationality of belief.

Chapter five, then, will propose an actual concept of rationality that borrows from various insights of the three
systems considered, yet without succumbing to the problems they have been shown to have. That is, after examining the critical features in the rational models of Murphy's antifoundational epistemology, Plantinga's Reformed epistemology, and Swinburne's rationality for theistic belief based on its probability on evidence, chapter five will seek to contribute to the field of enquiry by incorporating certain features from the rational models of all three systems in the attempt to arrive at a model of rationality which seeks a middle ground position between the rational certitude of evidentialism and the potential forms of pragmatism and extreme relativism characteristic of many recent rational systems.
CHAPTER 2
A TENTATIVE APPROACH TO RATIONALITY
THE PROVISIONAL STATUS OF BELIEFS

It was indicated in chapter one that recent challenges directed against Enlightenment standards of rationality have urged epistemologists on the contemporary scene to advance novel (or significantly revised) conceptions of rationality to show that one is rational in holding one's beliefs. Fueled by the belief that we are experiencing a new crisis in our ability to provide rational claims to knowledge in the cognitive disciplines, particularly in science and religion, many critical thinkers in the field of religious epistemology, particularly scientific theologian Nancey Murphy, are focusing their efforts on building a marketplace of remarkably innovative and provocative options for the rational justification of theistic belief.¹ It is at the horizon of this context that we observe one of the most elaborate efforts

(fueled by recent philosophy of science) aimed at exposing what are thought to be the weaknesses of traditional models of rationality in demonstrating when one is rational in holding the basis claim of theism.

Nancey Murphy proposes a model of rationality in which she argues that religious epistemology has both the ability and the obligation to provide rational support for theistic belief. Like many current models of rationality, Murphy's criticisms of evidentialist conceptions of rationality are rooted in a thorough rejection of any form of epistemology (whether in philosophy, science or religion) which attempts to rationally support its cognitive claims according to Enlightenment (modern) conceptions of truth, justification, and rational belief. Murphy's model for the rationality of cognitive claims in theism, for example, advocates what she views as an approach which complies with the going standards of evidence and rationality currently fashionable within certain models of rationality in the philosophy of science.²

Murphy's model of rationality is directed against all forms of (or attempts at) certainty in knowledge. This, she contends, is most often associated with classical foundationalist approaches to rationality. Foundationalist theories of knowledge take a limited class of beliefs (i.e., epistemologically basic) to have a privileged epistemic status. It is thought that basic beliefs are self-justifying, and so they do not stand in need of any further justification from other beliefs. Non-basic beliefs, on the other hand, require justification by appeal to basic beliefs. Murphy believes that all forms of certainty and foundationalism in knowledge represent epistemic commitments that make it difficult for us to revise our beliefs or theories in light of new evidence. The foundationalist commitment to basic beliefs that are indubitable, for example, betrays a methodology which she believes is far too strict and unworkable for any model of rationality. Since the foundationalist commitment is one of invoking a transcendental guarantee that is unattainable in the empirical world, it is a methodological commitment that is incoherent with the project of developing a rational account of how knowledge is acquired.


Cartesian certainty and indubitability (an unworkable model in the thinking of many contemporary epistemologists),\(^5\) what is needed is a rationality model that is much more open to the possibility that our current scientific (or theistic) beliefs may be wrong and in need of serious revision.

Murphy's model of rationality, then, contends that one is rational in holding one's belief on the basis of evidence that fits the best explanation at the time. This requires specifying a criterion for choice between competing theories and beliefs. Evidence that represents the best explanatory fit is the kind of evidence that is likely to offer solutions to the anomalies of our previous theories and beliefs, so long as those solutions do not represent ad hoc explanations of the data. Such a model of rationality for theistic belief follows an essentially Lakatosian model of reasoning, in which our theories and beliefs about the world are at best tentative and provisional. Even if our beliefs are thought to be true in

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some correspondence sense, Murphy's contention is that there is no likelihood that we could know this for certain, given our rational and evidential limitations.

One is not rational if one holds one's beliefs with certainty. For this would suggest that one is not open to the possibility that future evidence could falsify a given belief. We are justified (and consequently rational) in holding our beliefs on the basis of a wide variety of experiences and other beliefs, even though we fully expect them to be provisional and tentative, so long as our reasons for holding them square with the current standards of rationality in certain approaches to scientific theorizing. Verification of a belief's truthfulness, then, is not so much a matter of determining whether a belief corresponds to the world (while this may be possible), but rather of determining whether a belief is likely to be unsurpassed in its claims. On this conception of rationality, it is highly likely that most views, because they are provisional in nature, will be surpassed. The reason for this, as we will see, is that Murphy's criterion for the truthfulness of a belief must be consistent with what she views as the tentativeness of one's belief. Beliefs are at best tentative because the evidential reasons for holding them must comply with the best explanatory fit available at the time.

As we will see, Murphy's system represents the furthest move away from the model of rationality we will
propose as being a more adequate approach to demonstrating the rationality of our beliefs on evidence. Her rejection of approaches to rationality based on foundationalist theories leads to an inevitable relativism in truth and knowledge which is unnecessary on our model of rationality. We will argue in chapter five that problems of certainty in rational belief (including theistic belief), while not requiring the sufficient evidence of Enlightenment evidentialism, can be adequately resolved by appealing to a model of rationality that accounts for appropriate evidence of the right kind and amount.

The Postmodern Context

It is no easy task to get a grasp on Murphy's notion of rationality in cognitive and conceptual activities, especially where it concerns the matter of truth and epistemic justification that are so closely associated with admittedly postmodern systems of religious epistemology and theological prolegomenon. While much of Murphy's thinking focuses on scientific and theological theorizing, we can make reasonable application of the essential features of her model of rationality to the matter of rational belief on evidence. It may be necessary, therefore, at the outset of a survey of Murphy's particular brand of postmodernity to distinguish it
from the more popular forms of postmodernism familiar to the
theological enterprise.  

Although the term postmodern is often employed to
represent collective efforts on the part of some thinkers to
go beyond Enlightenment conceptions of knowledge and truth
(i.e., the concerted effort at rejecting all approaches to
epistemic justification, rationality and evidentialism which
rely on any form of foundationalism in knowledge and
correspondence in truth) some thinkers such as David Griffin
have attempted to show that a more precise use of
postmodernity refers to "a diffuse sentiment rather than to
any set of doctrines. . . ." While Griffin's description
appears to cover much of the essence of postmodernism, and
while the various forms of postmodernism do share certain
characteristics in common, Griffin more importantly goes on to
capture some of the more salient features of postmodern
theology which result in clear distinctions within the

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6See, for example, David Ray Griffin, "Introduction:  
Varieties of Postmodern Theology," in Varieties of Postmodern  
Theology, ed. David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, and Joe  
Holland (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989),  
1-7. See also, the abundance of primary and secondary sources  
on deconstruction (mostly on Derrida) listed in Gary John  
Percesepe's challenging article, "The Unbearable Lightness of  
Being Postmodern," Christian Scholar's Review 20, no. 2  
(1990): 118-35; and Merold Westphal, "The Ostrich and the  
Boogeyman: Placing Postmodernism," Christian Scholar's Review  

7David Griffin, "Introduction to SUNY Series in  
Constructive Postmodern Thought," in Varieties of Postmodern  
Theology, xii.
movement, most notably, the distinctions between its deconstructive and constructive forms. 8

The more deconstructive brand of postmodern theology, argues Griffin, attempts to overcome the modern (Enlightenment) worldview by eliminating "the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world, and truth as correspondence." 9 In contrast to this deconstructive brand of the movement, writes Griffin, is a far more constructive form of postmodernism:

It seeks to overcome the modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts. This constructive or revisionary postmodernism involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious institutions. It rejects not science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview. 10

Given these distinctions, it is helpful to see that Murphy's model of rationality is probably closer to a constructive form of postmodernism. She contends, nevertheless, that it is not possible to go beyond the tenets of modernity (i.e., traditional approaches to rationality based on evidentialism).

8Although Griffin describes four basic types of postmodern theology (e.g., constructive, deconstructive, liberationist and restorationist), our purpose at this point is to provide a place for Murphy's brand of postmodernism by comparing and contrasting its relation with the deconstructive and constructive aspects of the movement. See, for example, Griffin's "Introduction: Varieties of Postmodern Theology," in Varieties of Postmodern Theology, 2.

9Griffin, "Introduction to SUNY Series," xii.

10Ibid., xii.
if one's system continues to cling to outdated concepts, such as foundationalist theories of knowledge, referentialism and representationalism in the philosophy of language, truth as some form of correspondence, and atomistic notions of the human person (individualism) and historical meaning.  

While Murphy agrees with some postmodern efforts to reject any notion of truth as correspondence, she explicitly argues, however, for the construction of a model of rationality which attempts to formulate criteria for theory choice (and rational belief) that those of the more deconstructionist brand typically want to jettison.  

Murphy's postmodern constructive thought, however, differs to some extent from the form of constructionism described in Griffin's taxonomy of postmodern theology. Murphy contends that the very arguments between 'mainline' epistemologists and their skeptical opponents have shifted. The modern framework tended to presuppose foundationalism in epistemology as the one commensurable feature among them, but the dawning of postmodernism (if it is truly postmodern) brings with it a whole new realm of epistemic possibilities. Her particular style of postmodernism is characterized by changes in the last

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12 See, for example, Murphy's description of Lakatosian Theology in Theology in an Age of Scientific Reasoning, 183-192.
fifty years in three specific domains of philosophical discourse: epistemology, philosophy of language, and metaphysics:

In epistemology and philosophy of science, there was the rejection of foundationalism in favor of the holist views of the likes of Quine and Kuhn. In philosophy of language, there was the shift from theories of meaning based on reference or representationalism to a focus on the social uses of language, found especially in the works of Austin and Wittgenstein. Murphy believes this represents a gestalt switch far more radical than other constructive approaches representing a synthesis of modern and premodern worldviews. The shifts in the philosophical areas mentioned above are so incommensurable with modern conceptions of thought that there is no modern mooring that can safely harbor them. But they do not, for Murphy, represent aimless driftings toward the horizon of relativism; rather, they simply represent a different range of options than was the case in modernity.

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13Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 2.

14Ibid. While the philosophical ramifications of Murphy's postmodern paradigm are far-reaching, the scope of this study is to limit our discourse to its implications for the rationality for theistic belief. For the application of her system in the broader context of theology, see Nancey Murphy and George F. R. Ellis, On the Moral Nature of the Universe: Theology, Cosmology, and Ethics (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, and C. J. Isham, ed., Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action, 2d. ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993 and 1996); and Robert John Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur Peacocke, eds., Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action (Vatican City State and Berkeley, Calif.: Vatican Observatory and Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1995).
Thus, while Murphy agrees with other constructionists that the modern conceptions of the so-called rational approach to both scientific and theistic belief can no longer be supported, she does not support the retreat to fideism so characteristic of those forms of late modern theology. As Griffin points out, those features often represented theological statements which were not open to a public investigation of the evidence and typically appealed "to criteria of validation other than the public criteria used in science and science-based philosophy, that is, self-consistency and adequacy to generally accessible facts."\textsuperscript{15}

In attempting to answer the various challenges of the evidentialists, Murphy notes that theologians are often hesitant to draw close connections between theological and scientific theories "for fear that as science progresses the theories current today will be replaced, and the theological formulations will then have to be abandoned as well."\textsuperscript{16} Rather than being caught in the same relativizing as the medieval theologians who tied their formulations to Aristotelian cosmology, Murphy argues that theistic theorizing (and theistic belief) can escape the quandary of accommodating to the requirements for rationality in traditional approaches

\textsuperscript{15}Griffin, "Introduction: Varieties of Postmodern Theology," 2.

\textsuperscript{16}Murphy, "Truth, Relativism, and Crossword Puzzles," 299.
to science. The way to do this is by adopting a new concept of rationality consistent with recent philosophy of science.

In Murphy's analysis, the Middle Ages are often characterized as enjoying a coherent worldview. In such a worldview there were places for both science and theology. But Murphy argues that this characterization of that era is probably a myth. She argues instead that the various theories offered as satisfying the data (and anomalies) of both science and theology (e.g., scriptural descriptions of a seemingly flat earth and the emergence of a Copernican theory of the solar system) were in every way as incomplete and incoherent as in our present time. The real difference between the two eras has to do with the dominance of one discipline over another. Whereas in the Middle Ages theology dominated the first moves of inquiry, the present context is characterized by the formative position of the natural sciences. Neither methodological starting point is acceptable due to what Murphy believes are inherent epistemic problems. Instead, Murphy argues for the warrant of a new approach to theorizing across the two disciplines. She writes:

However, a picture of science and theology as different regions of the same puzzle should remind us that theology cannot be governed exclusively by the demands for consistency with science (and other areas of knowledge), but is also to be constrained by its own clues--that is, by its own proper sorts of data, including the practices and experiences of the religious life.  

17Ibid., 307.
This approach proposed by Murphy seeks to offer a position whereby theists are neither forced to follow a model of rationality consistent with modern (Enlightenment) notions of scientific theorizing, nor abandon the responsibility to provide rational support for belief in God. So the data for theistic theories (or beliefs) will be different (e.g., the communal consensus' assumed non-referential and non-representational nature of religious language and experience), and such theorizing will follow a basically Lakatosian model of rationality.

In setting the stage for her Lakatosian proposal, Murphy draws heavily upon Jeffrey Stout's analysis of the way in which David Hume's challenge to theism produced radical changes in epistemology through the modern period (in philosophy, roughly, from 1650 to 1950) and the consequences of those changes on theology and ethics. In his recent work on the history of philosophy, author Wallace Matson notes that Hume's Dialogues was not meant as an attempt to demolish religion altogether, but simply to argue that "the inference from the alleged design in nature to an infinitely wise, powerful, and good Author of nature is invalid." Stout,

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18 Murphy, Theology, 3. See also, Jeffrey Stout, Flight from Authority (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

however, directs his readers to two significant turning points in epistemology that resulted from Hume's challenge:

The first was the rejection of the medieval concepts of knowledge based upon the study of the authorities and deductive reasoning in favor of the modern period's foundationalism—that is, the concern with the reconstruction of knowledge on self-evident foundations (whether intuitionist or empirical). The second (still in progress) is the substitution of a holistic approach for that very foundationalist doctrine.²⁰

It is Murphy's contention that modern epistemology, which is so closely identified with foundationalism, must find its replacement in epistemological holism and Lakatos's research programs of probable reasoning. Murphy's postmodern notion of rationality is one which is characterized by at least three fundamental features, as indicated above: First, there is the rejection of foundationalism in epistemology for a form of post-foundationalism similar to Quinian holistic coherentism. Second, there is a change from an exclusively representational and referential use of language to a much greater emphasis on J. L. Austin's and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language which views language as action, and meaning as use. Like Austin and Wittgenstein, Murphy does not entirely deny a referential element to language, but she does argue that it's use is far more limited than previously believed. Murphy

contends that the referential element in language has little or no value for theorizing in theism. Third, there is the replacement of an emphasis on the individual as the sole arbiter of what is rational (i.e., Cartesian certainty) with a renewed sense of the importance and irreducibility of community.\textsuperscript{21} For purposes of our discussion, however, we will concentrate on the manner in which Murphy's rejection of foundationalist theories results in a model of rationality in which our beliefs (including theistic belief) can be tentative and provisional at best.

\textit{The Emergence of Tentative Beliefs: A Survey of its Historical Roots}

Murphy's application of Lakatosian philosophy of science for the justification of cognitive claims in religion is a clear attempt to retrieve theistic belief from the grasp of fideism and deliver it to the world at large through the public criteria of a scientifically credible epistemology. It is Lakatos' postmodern model that, according to Murphy, will take the debate beyond the realm of scientific realism (which she thinks even in its more critical form is an attempt to

salvage modern conceptions of the referential and representative theory of language, as well as correspondence in truth) and offer a truly non-foundational model of rationality. Scientific realism, for example, holds that science progressively arrives at true, "or approximately true theories about the real, theory-independent world 'out there' and does so in a rationally justifiable way."22

The Lakatosian model of rationality that Murphy propose is closer to a form of rational nonrealism. Rational nonrealism holds that, while science is an objectively rational discipline (i.e., we ought to accept good scientific theories), it does not necessarily aim at giving us true or approximate truth in the correspondence sense. Rather, science attempts to provide a variety of other epistemic functions (e.g., synthesize sense data, predict and control phenomena).23 When applied to the rationality of theistic belief, for example, concepts such as justification, truth, and objectivity convey profoundly different meanings. The quest for certainty in truth (from a correspondence sense) is replaced with degrees of relativism in knowledge, but such an effort, argues Murphy, need not exist without the means to


23Moreland, Christianity and the Nature of Science, 140.
arbitrate, in a nonarbitrary fashion, between equally coherent epistemic options.24

Murphy's system is fueled in part by concerns over the epistemic relativism surfacing out of recent abandonments of the quest for certainty in evidentialist theories of knowledge. In order to avoid the trend toward relativism (and in order to continue to offer good evidence and reasons for the rational claims of theism), Murphy proposes a model of rationality that she believes entirely redefines traditional notions of truth and knowledge (i.e., epistemic justification). What begins to emerge is a model of rationality in which truth and knowledge are viewed at best as an adequate solution to the previously unresolved epistemic problems so characteristic of theorizing across the conceptual disciplines of science and theology. Murphy's answer to this is her proposal for theology to adopt the probable reasoning theory of Lakatos's scientific research programs. Before we give a closer examination of Lakatos's theory, it is worth noting what Murphy believes we stand to gain by the acceptance of her proposal: First, it is intended to go beyond the realism debate in offering a more substantial basis on which both theology and science can stand up to philosophical

24Nancey Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics, 52-62. See also, Nancey Murphy, Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda, 106-9; and her Reasoning & Rhetoric in Religion (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 260-67.
scrutiny; and second, it is said to block the move to theological relativism that so often results out of the discourse of pluralism and the historical and social conditioning of knowledge.25

The rationality model of Imre Lakatos' scientific reasearch programs follows a course of reasoning similar to a number of prominent thinkers in recent philosophy of science (e.g., Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend).26 Its historical roots can be traced back to the attempts of the logical positivists to set forth a criterion of demarcation to distinguish between science and metaphysics, and to reconstruct all (scientific) knowledge from experience.27 The verification theory of meaning was an attempt by the logical positivists to establish a criterion of demarcation between propositions which were thought to have meaning and those which did not. A subsequent theory of confirmation ultimately resulted as well. The logical positivists employed the verification theory of


26In addition to Murphy's analysis, see Ian Hacking's Emergence of Probability (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

meaning as a way of demonstrating that a sentence has no meaning unless one could specify its verification procedures. In its most rudimentary form, the theory of confirmation was meant to show that any statement whose meaning was not potentially verifiable on the basis of sense experience was meaningless—it was not to be regarded as science.\textsuperscript{28}

The most noted response to the verification principle was that the principle itself was not verifiable. But there were other problems as well. Murphy notes that sense data do not provide a very handy starting point for the meaning of propositions: they occur only once; they are private, and equally problematic, our language has an awkward way of referring to them.\textsuperscript{29} The major shift away from this line of thinking came out of Karl Popper's new theory of demarcation (i.e., a modification to the concept of what makes science scientific). Popper held that science is characterized by the fact that its theories are falsifiable.\textsuperscript{30} The theory that should be accepted as being the most scientific is the theory that is the most highly falsifiable, yet not in fact falsified.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28}Murphy, Theology, 52. See also, Arthur C. Danto, Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 55.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., 53.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid. See also, Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Popper's work was originally published in 1935.

\textsuperscript{31}Murphy, "Acceptability Criteria," 284.
Popper's methodology represented a decisive shift from the logical positivists. First, the claims of science, rather than relying on the principle of verifiability for their rational acceptance, would find such acceptance on the basis of whether a theory could be falsified (i.e., whether one could state in advance what will count as falsifying it). Second, his theory of demarcation of science was not offered as a theory of meaning. The statements that did not count as science were not considered as nonsense in the way that was true for the logical positivists. Murphy notes a further quality of Popper's theory that had a significant role in the shift to probable reasoning:

A second important change was in the data: Popper's basic statements were reports of repeatable experiments or observations rather than the philosopher's sense data. Such reports are not incorrigible; if called into question they can always be tested by attempts to falsify further observable consequences drawn from them. Here we see the beginning of the end of the logical positivists' foundationalism in that science is no longer seen to rest on an indubitable foundation.\(^{32}\)

We see with Popper, then, the beginnings of what would come to be understood as a post-positivistic theory of scientific knowledge. Carl Hempel, another scientist within the ranks of the neopositivists, sought a deductive connection between theory and observation. Statements describing observations were to be tested by initial hypotheses and auxiliary hypotheses which would ultimately confirm the connection between theory and data. The hypothesis (a law or theory), as

\(^{32}\)Murphy, Theology, 54.
Murphy notes, "is then tested by the deduction of further observable consequences from it, which, if borne out by experiment or observation, are taken to confirm the hypothesis. Likewise, when a consequence is not borne out, the theory is disconfirmed."\(^{33}\)

Neopositivism was seen to be the system which would show that science was subject to cumulative growth and the objective testing of all its assertions. But with the advent of philosophers of science such as Paul Feyerabend and Thomas Kuhn, the neopositivist notion of progress in science was challenged. Both Feyerabend and Kuhn pointed out that science does not follow the simple process that Popper projected.\(^{34}\)

As Murphy correctly points out, Kuhn's major contribution was "to show the dependence of theory choice in science on factors other than observation and logic."\(^{35}\) Kuhn argued that, rather than the successive accumulation of knowledge, the history of science could be seen as a succession of paradigms. While the term clearly carries much broader conceptual notions for understanding a number of theories and data, "paradigm" is

\(^{33}\)Ibid., 55.


often used synonymously with the idea of a theory and refers to the accepted examples of problem solutions in a given field. Each paradigm has its own set of laws, theories, applications, and instrumentation that are employed to accommodate the solutions to puzzles particular to that given paradigm. Those who work within a given paradigm are said to share the same view of science and the same rules and standards for scientific practice. In Popper's view of science, falsification was proposed as a method that would replace verificationism. But the standard criticism against Popper's view was that the discordant data used to falsify a theory were seldom seen to do just that. Accepted theories were rarely replaced in the absence of an alternative theory. Science typically viewed the discordant data as falsifying the auxiliary assumptions used to support the primary theory.\textsuperscript{36} These auxiliary assumptions were subsequently subjected to modification without affecting the accepted theory.

Kuhn's point was to argue that science progresses by radical shifts between paradigms. It is the paradigm as a whole—with all its standard rules, puzzles, solutions, and associated theories—that scientists accept at any given time. The data and observations up for review are always interpreted in terms of a given paradigmatic worldview. Kuhn asserted that there are no theory-independent data; all data are

interpreted in light of a given paradigm. Furthermore, since these paradigms control how one interprets data, as well as the standards and rules that are used in experimenting with the data, Kuhn argued that rival paradigms are incommensurable. The critical factor in Kuhn's reasoning comes at the point in which he asserts that there are no independent data that provide scientists with the ability to arbitrate between competing paradigms. It is to this notion of science that Lakatos was responding. In Murphy's analysis, Lakatos's view of scientific rationality is one in which it is necessary to specify the criterion for choice between competing research programs.37 In Kuhn's view, a paradigm is chosen for any number of reasons. The typical choice of a paradigm is based on its problem-solving ability. One paradigm may be better equipped to solve the anomalies that led its competitor into crisis. Other reasons for paradigm choice could be based on simplicity or accuracy of empirical fit. What is essential to understand from the Lakatosian perspective is that, unlike the methods suggested by Popper and Hempel, once a paradigm is accepted, its basic laws and theories are not subjected to testing by falsification or by further hypotheses; they are simply assumed and used for solving the various problems encountered by the paradigm.

Kuhn's thesis has a direct impact on Lakatos's scientific research programs in that Kuhn's ideas represent,  

37Murphy, Theology, 59.
as Murphy states it, "the total replacement of foundationalism with a holistic view of science." To accept a paradigm is to accept, for a variety of reasons, all at once the complete and unquestioned worldview of that paradigm. Only when its problem-solving ability appears to be outweighed by a growing number of anomalies is the paradigm open for replacement. The upshot of Kuhn's analysis is that the reasons behind revolutions in science (i.e., radical paradigm shifts) have little or nothing to do with a normative method of change.

There is no identifiable method of rationality that accounts for revolutions in science (i.e., there seems to be no way of accounting for why one chooses one theory over another, given the normal practice of science). One of the central tenets of Kuhn's analysis of scientific revolutions is that the scientific community could not speak in terms of the kinds of theories that ought to be accepted; rather it could speak only in terms of those theories which have ultimately surfaced through the history of science as being the champions of a particular problem-solving quest. What is now necessary to bring post-positivism into full bloom is a system which

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38 Ibid., 57.

39 This is the same criticism Murphy states of Stephen Toulmin's analysis of the history of science. Although he is able to describe why various changes took place in science (similar to Kuhn's thesis), he is not able to propose a normative methodology for science. See Toulmin's Foresight and Understanding (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). Murphy's point is to demonstrate that Lakatos takes the necessary steps in such a direction (Theology, 56-58).
purports to account for the rational features that underlie
the construction and acceptance of scientific theories. Murphy proposes that this is found in the work of Imre
Lakatos.

*Modern verses Postmodern Conceptions
of Rationality*

Murphy proposes that rational theorizing in theology
take on a new collaborative effort with science, one that
cconcerns itself with the extent to which an epistemology
adequate for science should approximate an epistemology
suitable for religious epistemology.\(^\text{40}\) At the center of
this discussion is Murphy's contention that philosophers of
religion can (and should) employ a system of rationality which
offers the kind of evidence that could count as the data for a
scientific theology.\(^\text{41}\) Inherent in this method is the
conviction that any form of foundationalism must be replaced
by a system of epistemological holism.\(^\text{42}\) This holism is
based in part on the notion that no clear distinctions can be
drawn between the basic and nonbasic beliefs so characteristic

\(^{40}\) See, for example, Nancey Murphy, "Philosophical
Resources for Postmodern Evangelical Theology," *Christian

\(^{41}\) Murphy, *Theology*, xii.

\(^{42}\) This, as we will see, involves her three-part system
of (a) the rejection of all forms of foundationalism; (b) the
rejection of referentialism in language; and (c) the
substitution of community in place of individual atomism in
theistic theorizing. It also involves her notion of
tentativeness, fallibilism, or probable reasoning, including
her notion that truth is what is insurpassable.
of foundationalism. There are no beliefs (or set of beliefs) that have a privileged epistemic status (or self-justifying starting points) that is rationally coercive on all reasonably attentive people.

The Problem With Foundationalism

Murphy's Lakatosian model of rationality for theistic belief is a model which denies the adequacy of foundationalist theories of knowledge. Murphy argues that both empirical and rational attempts at locating foundational categories of beliefs to serve as justification for the rest of knowledge have failed. She states that there is a sort of Murphy's Law working against the foundational epistemologist:

Whenever one finds suitably indubitable beliefs to serve as a foundation, they will always turn out to be useless for justifying any interesting claims; beliefs that are useful for justifying other claims will always turn out not to be indubitable, and in fact will be found to be dependent upon the structure they are intended to justify.

We can see this playing itself out by taking a brief look at the inner logic of empiricist foundationalism. The modern empiricists tended to recognize that ordinary reports about what one perceives are corrigible. So the way to recover certitude in synthetic claims was to make claims about one's

43Ibid., 194.

44In its most fundamental form, Murphy's Law states that "whatever can go wrong will."

45Murphy, Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism, 90.
perceptions themselves. The immediate mental objects of perception became one's "sense-data," and this was what served as the true foundation for empirical knowledge. It's not so much that one "sees a brown dog," but rather, it's that one "seems to be seeing a brown dog." What was incorrigible was the claim of one's sense-data, because it was thought that there was no imaginable way in which they could be overridden or corrected. Sense-data were thought to be indubitable.46

The problem with this, argues Murphy, was that the gain in certitude of the foundation was offset by the problem of how to use appearance-statements to justify claims about a real, objective world. The deliverances of certainty along these lines were too harsh, and as a result, there was a shift (especially among philosophers of science, such as Karl Popper) to focus attention on ordinary scientific facts. The upshot of this was that Popper and others recognized "both that the facts themselves could be called into question and that the structure of scientific theory resting on these 'piles' was only probable."47 Empiricist foundationalism reached its end, argues Murphy, when it became a generally accepted notion within the philosophy of science that scientific facts are theory-laden. And further, it is not just scientific facts that are dependent upon theoretical interpretation, as Kuhn

46 Ibid., 90.

argued, but it is also true with respect to the construction of the experimental apparatus used to make our observations of the world (e.g., the construction of an electron microscope and interpretation of the images it produces).  

The quest for rationalist foundations, says Murphy, does no better in offering us certitude about our beliefs. With respect to Descartes' so-called foundational beliefs (i.e., his "clear and distinct ideas"), what turns out to be indubitable in one intellectual context is rather questionable in another. Murphy thinks, as she argued in the case of empiricist foundations, there is a tradeoff between utility for justifying important claims and indubitability. So when Descartes argued (e.g., in the premise to his argument for the existence of God) that there is at least as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in the effect, Murphy points out that it is not only difficult to understand what this means but there is also no way of knowing that it must be true. His questionable premise does not offer us certitude, even if it is useful in his argument for the existence of God. On the other hand, Descartes' cogito ergo sum ("I think, therefore I am") does have foundational certitude, but without proof of God's existence (and the guarantee it provides for the veracity of sense experience), there is no way to argue

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48 Ibid. See also, N. R. Hanson, Patterns of Discovery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). Cf., Thomas Kuhn's, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.
from Descartes' inner thoughts to the existence of an external world.\textsuperscript{49}

Other efforts at certitude suffer from the same kinds of difficulties. Immanuel Kant's "synthetic a priori knowledge" may have been useful in giving us a distinction between empirical knowledge and some other kind of knowledge not dependent upon experience, but there has been no consensus about how to define this other kind of knowledge. Philosophers recognize as unsuccessful the attempts that have been made to argue that formal systems, such as logic or mathematics are examples of synthetic a priori knowledge; the deductive consequences of such systems, while necessarily true, are not necessarily true of anything in the world. That is, when we attempt to apply them to reality (e.g., using a system of geometry for navigation in space), the calculations are not always reliable or certain.\textsuperscript{50}

For reasons like these and others, Murphy argues that we should abandon the foundationalist structure of the justification of beliefs (including theistic belief) and replace it with a new model that will more adequately represent the way we come to have rational beliefs. Murphy thinks that theistic theorizing along foundationalist lines parallels problems of the same kind of theorizing in science and philosophy. She claims, for example, that when

\textsuperscript{49}Murphy, Beyond Liberalism \& Fundamentalism, 92.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.
conservative theists "were forced to admit that the biblical
texts contained contradictions, a common move was to argue
that only the original autographs were inerrant."51 She
further writes:

This claim is incorrigible (since all of these are lost)
but the incorrigibility comes at the cost of needing to
ground theology on something inaccessible to contemporary
theologians; the lost autographs are inerrant but useless.
This parallels the empiricists' move to (inaccessible)
sense-data in the observer's mind. And parallel to the
recognition of the theory-ladenness of scientific data is
the recognition of the theory-ladenness of biblical
interpretations--the hermeneutic circle.52

Furthermore, the problem of incorrigibility of theistic belief
on the basis of ordinary religious experience is that we have
no consensus in terms of what this inner experience is. If
theists attempt to correct this problem by paralleling Popper
and the other neo-positivists (i.e., to recognize ordinary but
fallible experience as the foundation), we have yet another
problem parallel to that of the ordinary theory-ladenness of
scientific data. Different religious communities will tend to
choose their criteria according to their previously accepted
theories.53

A Nonfoundational Holism

Murphy's answer to the problems of foundationalism is
found in part in W. V. O. Quine's holistic theory of

51Ibid., 93.

52Ibid.

53Ibid., 93-4.
knowledge. The holistic theory differs from foundationalism in at least two respects: First, there is no requirement for intrinsically indubitable (unrevisable) beliefs. On a holistic account, there is no sharp distinction among types of beliefs (i.e., there are no self-justifying basic beliefs upon which all other non-basic beliefs depend). Beliefs differ only in terms of degrees, that is, how far removed a belief is from the boundary of experience. Second, in contrast to foundationalism (in which the direction of rational assent is one that only moves up from the foundational basic beliefs), holism has no preferred direction of reasoning. The reasoning picture of holism is one in which there are many different kinds of connections among beliefs in the web. There are those of strict logical implication, but there are also weaker probabilistic arguments. Some arguments move forward to further conclusions, while other arguments may move "backward" to presuppositions.

According to Murphy, the holistic approach allows one to take into account the notion that "the data (scientific facts, interpretations of texts, or whatever) are theory-laden, partially dependent on theoretical knowledge." This is different from some of the

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55 Murphy, Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism, 94.
neo-positivists' notions that all of our data are
theory-dependent. This kind of distinction goes a long way
in showing the difference in justification between
foundationalist and holistic accounts of knowledge. In
holism, each belief is supported by its connection to other
beliefs in the web and, ultimately, to the whole. This means,
according to Murphy, that "justification consists in showing
that problematic beliefs are closely tied to beliefs that we
have no good reason to call into question. So the coherence
of the web is crucial for justification."  

The implication for justification is that when
inconsistencies arise (i.e., conflicts within the web of our
beliefs or with anomalies in our experience) there are many
ways to revise our theories or beliefs in order to restore
consistency. Murphy admits that our choices at this point
will be somewhat pragmatic, since the objective is to mend the
web with as little disturbance to the whole as possible. But
there is a sense in which the cognizer thinks that some
beliefs, such as the laws of logic are held immune from
revision, "except under the most extreme pressure from the
experiential boundary, since, with their central location, to
change them would necessitate changes throughout the web."  

\[56\]Ibid.
\[57\]Ibid.
This, of course, seems to be the crux of the matter, since Murphy seems to realize that the criteria one uses on a holistic account to restore consistency in the web are pragmatic. As we will see in chapter five, the model of rationality we will propose as a more adequate approach will suggest that a moderate (or fallibilist) foundationalism, together with a criterion for justification which accounts for an appropriate amount of the right kind, amount, and quality of evidence, is sufficient for adjudicating rationally among competing theories or beliefs.

To be sure, there are problems even within holism. For example, notes Murphy, "we can imagine, alongside our own web, a variety of competing webs, and the question then arises how to chose among them." How do we avoid relativism at this point? She argues that Quine is not too concerned with the potential problem of relativism, since, on his model, the web of beliefs takes account of the whole of knowledge. This means that it is always possible in theory to gradually alter the whole, but it is impossible to imagine replacing the entire web at once. But Quine's version of holism, argues Murphy, was conceptualized in a context where it was thought that we have a fairly circumscribed view of what counts as knowledge. As Kuhn has argued, basic conceptions of science, logic, and our everyday knowledge of the sensible world, have been challenged by a proliferation of radically different

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58 Ibid., 98.
paradigms (conceptual theories) that are evaluated and replaced as a whole. And furthermore, the theoretical elements of a paradigm help determine what will count as facts (i.e., there are no theory-neutral data).  

The Lakatosian Methodology: Specifying the Criterion

Lakatos' methodology, as Murphy indicates, was in direct response to the problem of relativism in the systems of Quine, Kuhn, and Popper. The concern was to provide a criterion for rational choice that gets us beyond Kuhn's notion that paradigms involve their own standards of success. Kuhn argued that whatever standards are universal to science (consistency, empirical fit, fruitfulness) are "insufficient to determine the choice among competing paradigms." And while Popper's program of falsification was thought to be essentially correct in Lakatos' thinking, he did want to temper Popper's program with Kuhn's insights of the

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59 Ibid., 99.

60 Murphy, "Acceptability Criteria," 284.

61 Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 52.
theory-ladeness of paradigms. Lakatos argued that, despite the notion that there are no theory-independent data and that standards for good scientific research are paradigm-dependent, one can judge rationally between competing paradigms. It is Murphy's contention that Lakatos provided science with a rational structure by specifying a criterion of choice between competing research programs. This means that research programs will always involve a set of theories and a body of data. According to Murphy's description of Lakatos's methodology, a research program is structured by the following features:

1. it includes a set of theories and a body of data;
2. one theory, the "hard core," is central to the program;
3. conjoined to the core is a set of auxiliary hypotheses that together add enough information to allow the data to be related to the theory;
4. types of auxiliary hypotheses are (a) theories of observation or of instrumentation and (b) lower-level theories that apply to the core theory in different kinds of cases; and further,
5. the auxiliary hypotheses form a "protective belt around the hard core since they are designed to be modified when potentially falsifying data are found.  

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As Murphy explains it, then, a research program (Lakatos' term for paradigms) is a "temporally extended series of complex theories whose core remains the same while auxiliary hypotheses are successfully modified, replaced, or amplified in order to account for problematic observations."64

Lakatos's contribution was to show that the history of science is not the succession of paradigms of the Kuhnian model, but one of competing research programs. Briefly put, some of these programs are described by Lakatos as "progressive" and others as "degenerating."65 Degenerating research programs are those in which the core theory is salvaged by ad hoc modifications of the protective belt. Lakatos indicates that we seem to have some notion of what these ad hoc modifications are, but it is difficult to propose criteria which could rule them out.

Murphy notes that the heart of Lakatos's methodology is found in the procedures recognized as being scientifically acceptable. She further states that a research program is said to be progressive when the following conditions are met: (1) each new version of the theory (i.e., the core theory along with its auxiliary hypotheses) preserves the unrefuted content of the previous research programs with which it competes; (2) each new theory has excess empirical content over its predecessor; that is, it is able to predict some

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64 Murphy, Theology, 59.
65 Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 52.
novel, hitherto unexpected facts; and (3) some of these predicted facts are in fact corroborated. Since the goal of Lakatos's methodology is both to provide a rational criterion for choice between competing paradigms and to demonstrate the progressive nature of science, he states that when the first and second conditions are met, a theory is said to be theoretically progressive. When all three of the conditions are met, the theory is considered to be empirically progressive. It follows from this that a theory is degenerating if it solves some of the initial anomalies of the previous paradigm, but does not allow for prediction and discovery of any novel facts. So the choices we make are among two or more competing series of theories, and the one judged most rational is the one most progressive.

An additional feature of Lakatos's methodology is found in his distinction between mature and immature science. The research program of a mature science includes both a negative and a positive heuristic, both of which are necessary for the future development of the program. These distinctions are considered by Murphy to be significant advances over the Kuhnian conception of theory choice in science. For Kuhn, the only advantage of immature science was its pre-paradigmatic nature. The goal in this setting was to focus on adopting a paradigm in order to get on with serious research. For

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66Murphy, Theology, 59.
67Ibid., 59-60.
Lakatos, however, both mature and immature science are characterized by a negative heuristic. This negative heuristic is related to the auxiliary hypotheses and simply represents the methodological rules by which they protect the hard core from falsification; that is, the falsification is directed against the auxiliary hypotheses for which suitable modifications can be made. This implies that there is a hard core set of beliefs or theories of which either one could be unaware, could assume without question, or could be treated as if they are irrefutable.68

The positive heuristic is also connected to the auxiliary hypotheses, only in this instance the auxiliary hypotheses are developed according to a preconceived plan. Lakatos describes the positive heuristic as "a partially articulated set of suggestions or hints on how to change, develop the 'refutable variants' of the research-programme, how to modify, sophisticate, the 'refutable' protective belt."69 The positive heuristic may face further modifications and variations, but it does not take place in the random and unplanned fashion thought to be the case with respect to the auxiliary hypotheses of immature science. The essential function of the positive heuristic is the


69 Lakatos, "Falsification," 50. See also, Murphy, Theology, 60.
strengthening of the protective belt (the auxiliary hypotheses) that shields the hard core theory from falsification.

The value of Lakatos's theory of scientific research programs, according to Murphy, is that it provides a methodology that is applicable to theorizing in theism. It is a way in which theistic claims to rationality can be in keeping with the standards of rationality for science. That is, in Lakatos's analysis, we have science at any point in which "there is a series of theories whose empirical content (sometimes) increases as the auxiliary hypotheses are modified to avoid falsification."70 Furthermore, mature theories are those in which the content-increasing modifications take place according to a preconceived plan. So there is said to be an objective reason for choosing one program over another "when the former has a more progressive record than its rival--that is, a greater demonstrated ability to anticipate novel facts."71

Murphy thinks that Lakatos's criterion helps answer the problem of relativism in two ways: First, Lakatos claims that research programs (conceptual theories) need to be evaluated in terms of how they change over time. The data offered in support of a theory (or belief) do not provide us with enough information for choice if they are only considered

70Murphy, Theology, 60.

71Ibid., 60-60.
at some temporal cross-section of a theory's history. Empirical progress is an intrisically historical approach. Murphy thinks that this temporal dimension of Lakatos' program is absolutely essential for any model of rationality that begins with a holistic account of justification of individual beliefs and then goes on to answer how one justifies an entire web of beliefs (one's theory or paradigm). 72

Second, in Lakatos's methodology, each research program involves a series of a temporal succession of theories, and each has a relatively slight modification over its predecessor. If the program is progressive, then each new theory is better than its predecessor (i.e., it has more empirical content than the previous theory, apart from some ad hoc hypotheses to account for it). Some of this excess content is ultimately corroborated (i.e., it accounts for novel facts), and this is what amounts to the criterion for rational choice among competing theories and beliefs. In terms of its application to theistic theories or beliefs, one must not only have access to the range of religious experience but one must also be able to formulate criteria for correctly identifying valid and reliable knowledge claims for theism. For example, one of the more pressing problems in the search for suitable data is to "finds ways to distinguish data that

72 Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 53.
have a bearing on the nature of God and those that bear only on the psychology or history of religion.⁷³

Crucial to this program for Murphy is the thoroughly postmodern idea of communal discernment as the most typical of religious practices. While it is difficult to see how her system succeeds in avoiding referentiality in language and correspondence in truth, Murphy argues that suitable data for theistic theories or claims are "constructed" out of what is thought to be a consensus on the activity of God in observable events in the life of the church. Other crucial data for theology could include scriptural texts, historical facts, sociological and anthropological data, and possibly facts from the natural sciences.⁷⁴ So it is the event of communal consensus in which the useful data for theology resides. The construction of claims about God's activity in the human life on the basis of communal consensus (i.e., discernment) is what Murphy refers to as a Christian epistemic practice (i.e., the justified data of theology). Still other criteria for what counts as the data of the experience of communal consensus includes the following: (1) agreement with the apostolic witness, (2) evidence of a Christ-like character (i.e., freedom from sin, fruits of the Spirit, etc.), and (3) consensus of the community based on prayerful discussion.

⁷³Van Huyssteeen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 82.
⁷⁴Murphy, Theology, 130.
When such criteria are met, it can be recognized with reasonable certainty that such activities represent authentic works of the Spirit, and so theology can proceed to claim it as data for theological research programs.

But it is an appeal to these kind of data that represents one of the more powerful challenges for Murphy's proposal. As van Huyssteen points out, "if her goal is to meet the challenge of probable reasoning, then not only her Lakatosian methodology, but also the data that feed into it, must conform to scientific epistemic practices." If the purpose is to offer a rational alternative to foundationalist forms of the rational justification of beliefs, then it is precisely an appeal to these kind of data that is in doubt. These choices would seem to represent prior commitments on her part (similar to foundationally basic belief), since it is difficult to state her criteria for choice. It seems that it would be difficult to show that claims about God's activity in the human life (i.e., the data for theology) on the basis of such discernments constitutes the criteria for rational choice. How could one rationally argue that such choices conform to Lakatosian criteria for rational choice, rather than the kinds of prior commitments that Murphy claims are so characteristic of foundationalist evidentialism? On this basis, there is no reason why the propositions of scripture,

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apostolic witness, and the authority of Christ should be considered criteria for judgment, since Murphy has not provided good reasons why such criteria constitute the data for a Lakatosian methodology.

It would appear, then, that these criteria have their epistemic foundation in a deeper and prior commitment. But it would seem that this is not at all commensurable with Murphy's attempt at probable reasoning and at a holistic, nonfoundational epistemology. Since her criteria for the data of theology appears to rely on prior commitments (i.e., the authority of Scripture, the Spirit, etc.), theological methodology turns out to be very different from the sciences. This would imply that Murphy's system does not avoid the kind of prior commitments identified with the foundationalist systems of rationality she hopes to replace. The final element to consider in the search for rational criteria, then, has to do with the matter of truth. This will help determine the role of community consensus in locating valid data for rational theistic claims.

*Holism and Truth*

Murphy argues that both the correspondence and coherence theories of truth do not do justice to the truth

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76 Ibid., 83-84.
claims made in science and theology. Murphy rejects the correspondence theory in favor of what she defines as a MacIntyrean unsurpassability theory. Drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre's recent work in ethics and epistemology, Murphy argues that her meaning for truth is one of unsurpassability, a standpoint which suggests that whatever is true will never be shown to be inadequate in its central contentions. For MacIntyre (whose notions of truth are applied to moral traditions), a person's intelligence is embodied and engaged in the world; it cannot stand objectively removed from a person's subjective preferences. This being the case, human judgments are 'true' only in a secondary sense. Murphy writes of MacIntyre's view:

Having an adequate grasp of reality means being able to say how things are rather than how they seem to be from some particular, partial, and limited standpoint; adequacy is known by contrast with inadequacy. Enquiry aims at

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79 MacIntyre, Whose Justice? 385. See also, Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 123.
transcending distortions and limitations; truth is teleos of inquiry.\textsuperscript{80}

This gives the impression that MacIntyre's view is a sort of realism, but what he means by "an intellect adequate to grasp reality" is the suggestion that there are a variety of dimensions of one's life that are said to conform to what is real. Truth is an intimate relation between knowing and engaging in social practices.

On MacIntyre's account, we can know which theory is true (ontologically) through the awareness of whether one's account of reality conforms to existing traditions and social practices that (a) either solve problems that their predecessors could not solve (including an explanation for why those previous systems could not solve certain difficulties), or (b) show that one's tradition has the resources for overcoming its own intellectual crises, while other existing rival theories continue to meet with persistent and intractable problems relative to their particular cases.\textsuperscript{81}

This approach, as we will see, also gives insight to the epistemological problem of the justification of a belief or theory on evidence.

In relying in part on MacIntyre's views, Murphy wants to emphasize the nature of truth in terms of the role it plays

\textsuperscript{80}Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 123.

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., 124. Murphy states that the process under (a) is what MacIntyre refers to as diachronic justification and the process under (b) is understood as synchronic justification.
in pointing out the radical discrepancies (particularly as it is understood in the correspondence view) between our older beliefs about things in the world and the world as it is now understood to be. It is not difficult to see the Lakatosian influence on her acceptance of MacIntyre's account. MacIntyre argues that it is a cognizer's recognition of a lack of correspondence between what the mind previously judged and believed, and reality as it is now perceived, which makes those earlier judgments and beliefs false. Truth for one's present mind-set (and the judgments which are its expression) is to claim that this kind of inadequacy (or discrepancy) will never appear in any possible future situation, regardless of what developments in rational inquiry may occur.\(^8\) A tradition, then, is true only if it proves to be a better alternative than its live competitors for solving problems relevant to that tradition. One may even go as far as to say that it solves "the problems of rivals that cannot be solved using the rival's own resources and, furthermore, is able to explain why things must have appeared as they did to its predecessors and contemporary rivals from their more limited or defective perspectives."\(^9\)

Murphy goes on to distinguish between MacIntyre's accounts of the meaning of truth (i.e., an adequate grasp of

\(^8\)MacIntyre, "Moral Relativism," 356-358; as quoted in Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 124.

\(^9\)Murphy, Anglo-American Postmodernity, 125.
reality) and of the criteria for vindicating truth claims. While she is apprehensive of MacIntyre's notion of meaning, she looks more favorably on his arguments for the criteria for truth. Murphy argues that an ontological conception of truth as correspondence is inadequate for a nonfoundational model of rationality. She differs with MacIntyre's meaning of truth as adequatio intellectus ad rem (i.e., having an adequate grasp of reality), insisting that it fails on the grounds that "excerpted from the corpus of his work, it is sure to be misunderstood; it may be . . . translated into a modern correspondence theory with an associated modern realism." Murphy further explains:

However, I believe his account of the criteria for vindicating the truth of claims of traditions or rival standpoints can be readily appropriated and applied to the problem of adjudicating between rival theological or religious traditions. I propose, then, that when we claim for a religious standpoint that it is true, we mean to say that in its central contentions it will never be shown to be inadequate in any future situation no matter what developments in rational enquiry may occur. . . . The criterion for making such a bold claim is survival of the sort of dialectical questioning of the standpoint in relation to its rivals that MacIntyre has so eloquently described.

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84Ibid., 118. Like most epistemic systems concerned with the possibility of making truth claims for theism, Murphy attempts a distinction between a definition of what it means to say that a thing is true (along with what she believes is consistent with a nonfoundational model of rationality) and criteria for judging whether a given claim is in fact true.

85Ibid., 125.

86Ibid.
Thus, the meaning of truth is that of unsurpassability, and her criteria for determining whether a particular theory is in fact unsurpassable is its ability to stand against its rivals in terms of its problem-solving task. Murphy, in making these distinctions, believes she has provided an adequate theory of truth in which to employ MacIntyre's account of the criteria for vindicating the truth claims of traditions.

Murphy confidently admits that MacIntyre's criterion for adjudicating between rival traditions does little to satisfy those who are committed to the correspondence theory of truth. But she goes on to urge us that with some additional steps to MacIntyre's account, the correspondence theory may be rejected in favor of her idea of unsurpassability. And while her comments are directed specifically toward the matter of adjudicating between rival scientific, philosophical, and theological traditions, I believe her essential remarks concerning MacIntyre's criteria for vindicating the truth claims of rival traditions has application to the rationality of theistic beliefs and the claims to truth that so naturally surface out of theorizing in general.87

do with the criteria for truth. Simple assertions about observable states of affairs might satisfy us with saying that a statement in some way pictures or represents the way things are. For example, "The cat is on the mat" is true iff the cat to which we refer is indeed on (not under or beside) the mat to which we refer. But Murphy argues that such notions are inadequate when we ask for criteria for truth claims regarding entire traditions. This is where she believes MacIntyre's account of the criteria proves useful. She writes:

For here we are not concerned with individual sentences in a context where language and epistemology can be taken for granted. Rather, we are concerned with the whole system of concepts, epistemological and metaphysical theories, and even "local" theories of truth!

But this concern on Murphy's part appears to confuse the ontological question of the meaning of truth with the epistemological matter of determining whether a given theory, tradition, or statement is true. One cannot automatically rule out a correspondence notion of truth simply because it is difficult to determine epistemologically whether or not certain conditions have indeed been satisfied. Murphy seems to imply that the ontological conditions that make our common assertions of empirical matters true somehow change when we go on to justify or verify the truthfulness of entire traditions. But she has provided no good reasons for concluding as such.

88Feinberg, "Truth," 4-5.
Murphy responds to this challenge by stating that, if what MacIntyre means by what she calls truth as unsurpassability is some form of correspondence, then we have no grounds for "assuming that passing MacIntyre's tests ensures that a tradition's beliefs and concepts adequately correspond to reality or correspond better than the rejected rivals." The primary reason for this is because there is no definitional connection between such justification (i.e., a theory's ability to solve problems and stand against its rivals) and correspondence. Nor can one appeal to a weaker experiential connection, since this would imply some sort of direct insight into the nature of reality. Our tendency in such a case would be to compare reality itself with our preconceived ways of looking at it and talking about it.

She writes:

The criterion (unsurpassed so far) provides the best possible evidence for truth (will remain unsurpassed), and furthermore, the criterion has a reasonable (conceptual) connection with the meaning of truth. The criterion falls short of a necessary and sufficient condition for truth--truth claims are fallible, as are all other claims. However, this is just what we should have expected; it should not be possible to have a higher degree of certainty regarding the truth of 'S is true' than of S itself.

What is critical from Murphy's point of view is that her MacIntyrean approach ensures that, should we conclude at some

89Murphy, 127.

90Ibid.

91Ibid., 128.
future date that we had been mistaken about a truth claim, it will be the result of having developed better concepts or theories (assuming that the previous systems were inadequate for solving their anomalies), not the result of a correspondence comparison of any sort between the old conceptions and "reality" itself. 92

Murphy argues that in the best of cases, "one can claim only that a given tradition at a given stage of its development is the best so far." 93 But how does this sit with those who are used to making absolute claims to truth and would argue that Murphy's position is in fact relativistic? Murphy argues that the objection can be reasonably met by pointing out that absolutism and relativism do not have to be viewed as dichotomous positions. They may be better viewed as limits on a range of possible positions regarding the decidability of truth claims. Our only real option is "to consider theorists' relative positions on the scale of possibilities in between." 94

Assessment of Murphy's Model of Rationality

It may be argued that the positive features of Murphy's program are not unique to the postmodern paradigm (i.e., such features are clearly present in foundationalist

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
models other than classical foundationalism), and as such, they may represent still useful features for a rational epistemology for theistic belief. In one sense, it may be argued that she has not entirely jettisoned the epistemic features of modernity. (1) Murphy clearly does not accept extreme forms of relativism in truth; (2) her position is a conscious effort to avoid fideism by arguing that theistic theories and beliefs should be based on an objectively rational discipline; and (3) it calls for the justification of truth-claims according to the going standards of rationality in contemporary philosophy of science.

One major response to evidentialism has to do with the rediscovery of the role of religious experience in theological reflection. The break from Enlightenment standards of evidentialism has caused some to increasingly depend on the concept of religious experience. But as van Huyssteen points out, the greatest challenge for the nonfoundationalist, however, is how to retrieve religious experience as a valid methodological starting point for theological reflection.95 Such efforts seek to construct an imaginative approach to theological reflection that begins with ordinary human experience.

It may be legitimately argued that Murphy's model of rationality does in fact espouse a certain degree of epistemic

95Wentzel van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 74.
relativism. Although she intractably denies that her position warrants this conclusion, such relativism comes as a logical outgrowth of the nonfoundationalism she attempts to employ in suggesting that theology follow Lakatos' scientific model of rationality. Murphy writes:

It must be noted, however, that the theological methodology proposed here, while providing a counter to total relativism, offers no absolutist view of rationality, even within our (loosely) empiricist worldview. There is no instant rationality in science or theology.  

Theorizing in theism flows from an anti-authoritarian and postfoundational epistemic program. The data of such a paradigm for theology illustrate its "counter to total relativism" by selecting from the manifold of religious experience those elements which claim to yield some form of knowledge of God.

Although Murphy attempts a nonfoundational theology by seeing religious experience as the primary data for theological research programs, her model of rationality lacks a well-developed theory of experience. Murphy is able to say that experience provides some ground for theological belief and its rationality (c.f., William Alston), but she is not


97 Van Huyssteen, Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology, 82.

98 See, for example, William Alston, "The Autonomy of Religious Experience," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 31., nos. 2-3 (1992): 67-87; idem, Percieving God:
able to say precisely in what manner this must take shape. We have only some subjective conviction that God is acting in our lives, but no "objective" way of establishing this conviction, or for justifying the claim. Since the data of experience (whether scientific or religious) always inevitably involve interpretation, Murphy has no objective way of establishing the epistemic reliability of communal discernments and of justifying one's conceptual frameworks.

Furthermore, as Van Huyssteen indicates, it would seem that one can hardly compare the replicable process of Christian discernment or community consensus with the disciplined control of the scientific experimental context. In fact, Van Huyssteen's form of relativism would appear to argue against Murphy's approach, contending that such a process, at best, demonstrates that both scientific and theological facts are theory-laden, that they function within the context of traditioned experience (à la Kuhn), and that "degrees of objectivity" exist and are always culturally bound.99 Such an epistemology works against a concept of objectivity in theorizing which argues that, while our conceptual frameworks do influence our interpretation of the

99 Van Huyssteen, 85.
data, we are not so theory-laden as to never get beyond our conceptual frameworks to see the data objectively.

Murphy admits that, while Christian discernment and communal consensus may meet all the standard requirements of scientific data, they will not be of the same quality (reliability, replicability) as those of the natural sciences. And since good reasoning is said by Murphy only to rightfully surface out of a Lakatosian methodology of probable reasoning within the data of hard core theories, unless the truth-claims of theology can be shown to adhere exactly to Lakatos' hard core theory, one can not even be sure that the data of theology are even probable. But as Van Huyssteen has suggested, theological programs, in contrast to Murphy's thesis, have been shown not to function at all like scientific research programs. Lakatos' criteria of relative empirical progress could hardly be used to adjudicate between competing theological theories. Murphy never ultimately justifies her thesis that the most empirically progressive theological programs provide knowledge of God and his revelation to the world.

Murphy's admonitions aside, it would seem that, while clearly fashionable from the postmodern context, her theory of truth leaves us with serious reservations for the possibility of any kind of truth claim. In the first place, her

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100 Murphy, Theology, 173.
101 Van Huyssteen, 86.
epistemological procedures for the verification of truth claims or traditions (the criteria) may be consistent with her meaning of truth, but if the meaning of truth is understood as unsurpassability, how could one ever state when such a condition has been satisfied? What, exactly, does unsurpassability look like? And furthermore, from the question of procedures for verification, it does not seem that we could ever be in a position to know (with any reasonable degree of certainty) that a given tradition or truth claim is unsurpassable in the way that Murphy suggests.

Secondly, on her definition, a theoretical system or simple truth claim is always passable in that claims to truth are always fallible. In this sense, it is difficult even to know that one is moving in the direction of unsurpassability. If claims to truth are always fallible, as Murphy suggests, then we end up with a view of truth in which truth is a matter of what is pragmatic or useful for solving problems from one's perspective. This assumes, of course, that we never really get beyond our cultural, linguistic, and conceptual biases, and if this is the case (and there is no good reason to think that it is), then in what sense can we speak of truth in terms of a condition that remains unsurpassed?

Murphy's position raises the further question of what it means to say that a claim is fallible. If what makes a truth claim fallible (i.e., possibly shown to be false at some later point) is that it fails to satisfy some condition other
than one of correspondence (i.e., one's proposition or theory about a certain state of affairs does not in fact describe conditions in the world), then in what sense is it fallible and able to be surpassed? To simply say that it does not adequately solve problems is a vague answer, since, apart from a correspondence notion, it would seem that what counts as a problem (and why it should count) amounts to little more than a personal construct designed to satisfy one's pragmatic conceptions of what theories (or truth claims) should or should not do.

The point to be made here is that Murphy mistakenly employs epistemological procedures (one of being unsurpassed so far) in order to determine the ontological condition of truth as unsurpassability. This can be readily seen in her notion that 'truth' is the condition of a claim that is unsurpassable in its "central contentions." While she attempts to identify what the central contentions of a truth claim or tradition might be, once again, if it is not understood from a correspondence sense, it is difficult to state what conditions a claim that is unsurpassable must satisfy. For Murphy, the answer to this question is that such a claim must be open to being falsified at some future point. But this amounts to an epistemological matter rather than a definition for the ontological status of truth.

Equally problematic is the question of the kind and degree of evidence that would be required to show that a claim
or tradition is in fact unsurpassable. Since Murphy's ontological notion of truth (i.e., what truth is) ultimately ends up relying on her idea of the criteria and procedures for determining truth (i.e., how we know when a particular claim or tradition is in fact true), it would seem that one could never be in a position to know that enough evidence has been produced to say that a given system satisfies the condition of unsurpassability. It seems obvious that no person (or community) is in a position to have exhaustive knowledge of the relevant data, or to know which data are relevant for determining whether a given system is in fact unsurpassable. Murphy's idea of truth is inextricably connected to her criteria for epistemic verification. Thus, in the final analysis, her ontological condition for truth ultimately reduces to an epistemological criterion in keeping with her postmodern theory that truth is more a matter of what it takes to solve theoretical anomalies than an ontological reality to which we have theory-independent access (and can know in most cases that we do in fact adequately access it). It must be stated that Murphy's requirement for certainty in the quest for truth is misplaced. As we will see on our proposed model of rationality in chapter five, the matter of the truth and certainty of a claim has to do with the kind, quality, and degree of evidence one has for a given belief. This is to be distinguished from the kind of unobtainable certainty that
Murphy warns is so indicative of most foundationalist systems of evidentialism.

Van Huyssteen argues that Murphy's holistic epistemology implies more than simple communal discernment and communal consensus for contemporary theological reflection. There are foundationalist elements. While Murphy appears to disarm all forms of foundationalism in her central argument, her designation of the presupposed existence of God as the "hard core" for a theological research program (à la Lakatos) and the added contention that this hard core will always typically contain reference to God, raises the hermeneutical problem of the metaphorical and epistemic function of religious language. In addition, her attempt at a distinction between "hard core beliefs" and others that can be regarded as auxiliary hypotheses in the context of a holistic postmodern theology seems to suggest some degree of prior commitment to certain beliefs or theories having a privileged status. The "hard core beliefs" of her Lakatosian model may, in fact, lead to a subtle form of foundationalism. And this goes against her attempt at a form of rational nonrealism. 102

Murphy's holistic approach of current postmodern and postfoundational thought, argues Van Huyssteen, can be revised to make credible tentative claims through the epistemic access we have through the metaphoric nature of human language. Murphy, however, sees any attempt to define a relation between...
language and the world as a modern approach, rather than a postmodern position where words like "real" or "exists" are restricted to the meaning they obtain from being used within certain linguistic frameworks. In Van Huyssteen's approach to critical realism (an approach that Murphy rejects as attempting to salvage correspondence in truth and referentialism in language), the epistemic purpose of metaphorical language is not to transcend the world of human experience, but rather to set limits to the range and scope of our theological and scientific language. As such, Van Huyssteen argues that a weak form of critical realism (i.e., one that takes seriously the realist assumptions of the Christian faith) claims that one's subjective encounter of the world is of the same order as one's re-creation of the world in language. He argues that language is never seen as a derivative of an "objective" world and so does not find truth in a correspondence with such a world. This, or course, does not deny the existence of an extralinguistic world, but it is an epistemic affirmation that this reality is mostly encountered in language.103

As Van Huyssteen further points out, it is possible that Murphy's inclusion of God as the hard core of a theological research program reveals the kind of prior commitments if theistic claims are to reflect the criteria for rational choice exhibited in scientific theories or claims.103

103Ibid.
In the extreme form of Murphy's view, argues van Huyssteen, religious beliefs may require no explanatory support and can in the end be seen as just part of a groundless language-game. But when theological beliefs, however, "become a species of belief whose truth is 'discovered' only by means of criteria internal to the language-game itself, this leads not only to a relativistic understanding of justification, truth, and language, but to an epistemological relativism which would be fatal for the cognitive claims of theological statements."\(^{104}\)

In the final analysis, it may be helpful to see that Murphy's concept of justification (i.e., the criteria for rational choice among theories and beliefs) relates closely to her theory of truth and other notions. Rather than justification being a reason-based conception (as we will argue on our model of rationality), it ends up being a two-step process that may confuse methodological starting points and basic statements of concepts. First, from an ideological (postmodern) perspective, Murphy begins with a set of ideas about truth, knowledge, and justification (i.e., community consensus) that are simply concepts (i.e., in the way of prior commitments). Second, from a methodological starting point (where she believes she is being postmodern in her use of MacIntyre's notion of truth and Lakatos' scientific

\(^{104}\)Ibid., 89.
model of rationality), it may be that she actually ends up with foundational commitments that do not reflect a truly non-foundational and postmodern methodology. So while many of her presuppositions of content are postmodern in nature (i.e., they state points of view that deny modern notions of truth, knowledge, and language), she continues to uphold a methodology (or rational approach) that is not thoroughly divested of starting points in prior commitments, and as Van Huyssteen contends, comes suspiciously close to a subtle form of foundationalism.\footnote{Wentzel van Huyssteen, \textit{Postfoundationalist Theology} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998),}

Murphy's arguments against foundationalism, for example, may have more to do with the practical notion that no set of ideas has a privileged epistemic status. But Van Huyssteen has shown that much of her methodology does not get beyond certain foundationalist assumptions. This does not necessarily show that Murphy's conception of rationality is wrong, but it does suggest that she accepts certain postfoundational ideas without offering a truly post-foundational methodology for arriving at those ideas. This would further suggest that her system may not be a truly postfoundational epistemology. Perhaps one response to this is, given Murphy's arguments, one need not rule out in advance the possibility of a rationality model that follows some form of foundationalism. Furthermore, an adequate model of...
rationality should be able to offer a methodological starting point from which one can legitimately extract a set of ideas consistent with it. As Moreland has pointed out against Murphy's kind of approach, for example, "scientists do not always hold their beliefs tentatively, especially during periods of what Kuhn called normal science." ¹⁰⁶ What is needed, then, is a model of rationality in which the criteria for rational belief do not depend on the kind of subjective factors in Murphy's proposed Lakatosian model. As Paul Feyerabend has indicated, the proposed historicist-holism of Lakatos's approach does not provide objective criteria for knowing when it is fair to eliminate a less progressive research program, since even programs which are progressive overall are sometimes known to be degenerate for a time. ¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Moreland, Christianity and the Nature of Science, 32.

CHAPTER THREE
PROPER BASICITY
A MODEST RATIONALISM

One of the more intriguing, innovative and controversial contributions to the rationality of religious belief is found in the Reformed (or Calvinist) epistemology of Alvin Plantinga.¹ Plantinga champions an approach to the rationality of religious belief in which he contends that one is entirely rational and within one's epistemic rights in holding to the belief that God exists even though that belief is not based on prior evidence. Crucial to understanding Plantinga's epistemology is the realization that his approach

to rationality applies to only one belief, namely, the belief that God exists. This is particularly significant, given that Plantinga's model of rationality allows for the use of evidence (in the form of arguments and experience) on a wide range of other religious beliefs, other than the belief that God exists. Having stated this, however, it will be argued that certain features in Plantinga's system do represent a significant and necessary move away from Murphy's conceptions of rationality, and ultimately bring us closer to what will be proposed in chapter five as a more adequate model of rationality for one's beliefs (philosophical, theistic, or otherwise) based on a moderate form of foundationalism in epistemology. We will see, for example, that Plantinga's system retains a foundationalist structure to the justification of religious belief. And while his justification for belief in God is ultimately a non-evidentialist appeal to certain conditions (including an implicit notion of truth as some form of correspondence) in the construction of beliefs in general, his insights on the criteria for distinguishing basic from non-basic beliefs in classical foundationalism are useful to the moderate form of foundationalism critical to the model of rationality that will be suggested in chapter five.

Rejecting the stronger forms of rationality which contend that belief in God is irrational when it is held in
the absence of good arguments or evidence, Plantinga concludes that the theist is rationally justified in believing in God without having to provide evidential arguments or reasons for that belief. The result of Plantinga's work is a theory for theistic belief (i.e., belief that God exists) which seeks to offer a mediating position between the inherent difficulties of evidentialism (i.e., constantly proportioning belief to the evidence) and the seemingly frail cognitive deliverances of fideism (i.e., that belief in God is based on faith alone, in the absence of, or contrary to reason).

On Plantinga's model of rationality, one is considered rational if one holds those beliefs which naturally arise in certain conditions, and if one holds other beliefs that stem from such basic beliefs. Beliefs that naturally arise in certain circumstances or conditions are considered properly basic beliefs. Rejecting the classical foundationalist notion that one's basic beliefs (foundational) and non-basic beliefs

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(inferential beliefs) can be justified only if one provides sufficient evidence for them (i.e., in terms of certainty), Plantinga argues that a person is within his epistemic rights (i.e., is warranted, justified, and rational) in holding properly basic beliefs without an appeal to evidence in the form of arguments, proofs, or other propositions that one is rational in believing.⁴

On this model, then, one is not required to meet evidentialist requirements of sufficient evidence (as defined in chapter one) for one's properly basic beliefs to be rational. Rather, one's justification for a properly basic belief can be an appeal to the right conditions and circumstances in which those beliefs are formed. And for some people, argues Plantinga, belief in God can be a belief that does in fact satisfy those conditions and is consequently rational to hold. Plantinga refers to this as the grounds of a belief, rather than the evidence for a belief. Such grounds, however, constitute the reasons for one's beliefs. The basis for accepting one's beliefs as properly basic is the

⁴Nicholas Wolterstroff, another Reformed epistemologist who advocates many of the same tenets as Plantinga does, writes that the type of evidentialism that he and Plantinga are countering is an approach in which it is rational to believe a proposition (scientific, theistic, or otherwise) only if that proposition is believed on the basis of others of one's beliefs that constitute good evidence for it. See, for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Migration of the Theistic Arguments: From Natural Theology to Evidentialist Apologetics," in Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion, ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 38-9, n. 2.
prima facie assumption that one's cognitive (noetic) faculties are functioning properly in environments suitably designed for those faculties to function as they were intended.

Belief in God as Properly Basic

The central tenet of Plantinga's thinking is his claim that a person's belief in God can be a properly basic belief (i.e., that one is within one's epistemic rights to hold a belief without an appeal to arguments or evidence).\(^5\) By belief in God Plantinga means "belief that God exists, distinguishing this notion from aspect of God's character or attributes (e.g., to trust God in some way).\(^6\) Furthermore, Plantinga's system is directed in part against theists (e.g., natural theologians) who agree with the evidentialist assumption that theistic belief is rational for a person only if that person has sufficient evidence or arguments or reasons for that belief. Both non-theists and theists, it is argued, self-consciously attempt to use premises that all rational beings are obliged to accept.\(^7\) Plantinga, however, proposes a theory of knowledge, belief, and rationality that rejects

\(^5\)Dewey J. Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 176. Hoitenga further notes that Plantinga's notion of belief in God as a properly basic belief is the central feature in his thinking that reflects the influence of Reformed theological thought.

\(^6\)Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 18.

\(^7\)Clark, 4. Cf., Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic," 41.
the evidentialist objector's first principle that it is irrational to maintain belief in God without the support of evidence or argument. As we will see, Plantinga's position requires a complete rethinking of the very concept of rationality. It further argues that there are "grounds" for belief in God, although not in the sense that would be acceptable either for the evidentialist objector or necessarily for the natural theologian. 8

Rationality and Classical Foundationalism

Critical to Plantinga's model of rationality is his argument that individuals regularly hold a wide range of everyday beliefs which they have never attempted to support with evidence or arguments. Such beliefs are properly basic for them. They are rational in holding those beliefs without evidence, and they are probably right about their beliefs. Furthermore, argues Plantinga, one can be rational in holding other beliefs that stem from one's properly basic beliefs. This follows an essentially foundationalist structure, and if Plantinga can successfully make the case that some people come

to hold belief in God as a properly basic belief (and are rational in doing so), then the evidentialist requirements of sufficient evidence do not apply to them. In order to make this point, Plantinga questions the way in which evidentialists within a classical foundationalist epistemology typically attempt to make the distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs on the basis of evidence. He does this first by introducing the idea of a noetic structure:

A person's noetic structure is the set of propositions he believes together with certain epistemic relations that hold among him and these propositions. Thus some of his beliefs may be based on other things he believes; it may be that there are a pair of propositions A and B such that he believes A on the basis of B.9

But a proper understanding of noetic structures, argues Plantinga, must go beyond the simple distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs.10 There are three ways of classifying the contents of our noetic structure if one is to have an accurate account of rationality in classical foundationalism: first, a person's noetic structure typically includes a specification of which of his beliefs are basic and which are non-basic. This, to be sure, is not always easily identifiable. Plantinga admits that it is abstractly possible that none of one's beliefs are basic (e.g., a person might hold just three beliefs, A, B, and C, and believe each of them on the basis of the other two). While this might appear


10Ibid.
irrational or unlikely, that is not to say that it couldn't be done. Likewise, it's also possible that all of one's beliefs are basic (e.g., a person may hold many propositions, but believe none of them on the basis of any others). Secondly, a noetic structure will include an index of degree of belief. A person may hold some beliefs more firmly than others. For example, I hold the belief that $1 + 2 = 3$ more firmly than I believe that there are polar bears in Alaska. Thirdly, an account of a person's noetic structure will also include something like an index of depth of regression. Some beliefs are on the periphery of one's noetic structure, that is, they are not crucial or necessary to one's belief structure; one's noetic structure would not collapse if such beliefs were found to be wrong. I may, for example, accept certain beliefs, and may even hold them firmly (e.g., there are some large boulders on the top of the Grand Teton), but if I were to give them up, the essential makeup of my noetic structure would remain the same.

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11Ibid., 192.

12Ibid.

13Ibid., 192. See also, Louis P. Pojman, "The Contemporary Debate on Faith and Reason: Fideism and Rationality," 131. Pojman notes that in Plantinga's system, the beliefs within one's noetic structure are not all the same in terms of their roles or level of importance. Some beliefs are more central to our doxastic system than others, so that the falsification of some beliefs will have a more critical effect on one's rational system than the falsification of others.
The concept and analysis of noetic structures serves at least two critical functions in the development of Plantinga's model of rationality: (1) it provides a lucid awareness of the primary characteristics and going standards of rationality that comprise a traditionally evidentialistic program of epistemology; and (2) it provides the necessary features of rationality that Plantinga salvages en route to his own model of rationality.14 But Plantinga's primary concern at this point is whether the classical foundationalist has made a good case for how he knows that a given proposition is self-evident and belongs to the category of basic beliefs.15 The classical foundationalist will insist that a basic belief can't properly be accepted on the basis of any other belief. And as Plantinga remarks, "in a rational noetic structure, $A$ will be accepted on the basis of $B$ only if $B$ supports $A$, or is a member of a set of beliefs that together support $A."^{16}$

Plantinga's model of rationality rejects the approach of both natural theologians and atheists who tend to rely on classical foundationalism as a means of establishing the rationality of belief through arguments, proof, and

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15Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?" 21.

evidence. The epistemic notions that underlie these objections are put forth by Plantinga in the following terms:

The reformers mean to say, fundamentally, that belief in God can properly be taken as basic. That is, a person is entirely within his epistemic rights, entirely rational, in believing in God, even if he has no argument for this belief and does not believe it on the basis of any other beliefs he holds.

Plantinga argues that the classical foundationalist criteria for proper basicity (i.e., a proposition is either self-evident, or incorrigible, or evident to the senses) are not necessary conditions for proper basicity. This does not mean, however, that asserting the proper basicity of belief in God means that such a belief is either groundless or irrational. Instead, belief in God is "warranted" by virtue of its being basic to one's noetic structure (i.e., it is produced under the right circumstances or proper conditions).

Foundationalist theories in general (e.g., the epistemological theory found in Aquinas, Descartes, Locke and others) teach that our beliefs may be divided into two categories: (1) beliefs that depend on other beliefs (i.e., inferential or non-basic beliefs) and (2) beliefs that do not depend on other beliefs and which therefore can be called basic or foundational. Respected epistemologist, John L. Pollock, provides the following characteristics of foundationalism:

17Ibid., 187. Plantinga defines natural theology as the attempt to prove or demonstrate the existence of God.

18Ibid., 191.
Foundations theories . . . take a limited class of "epistemologically basic" beliefs to have a privileged epistemic status. It is supposed that basic beliefs do not stand in need of justification—they are "self-justifying." Nonbasic beliefs, on the other hand, are all supposed to be justified by appeal to basic beliefs. Thus the basic beliefs provide a foundation for epistemic justification. 19

Non-basic beliefs are justified by the epistemic relation they hold to basic beliefs; that is, in order for a non-basic belief to be rational, it must be inferred from or rendered probable by a basic belief.

Evidentialism

In classical foundationalism, the beliefs of one's noetic structure are justified only when considered properly basic as a result of fulfilling certain non-inferential criteria, or when they are based on other beliefs which are ultimately inferred from properly basic beliefs found at the bottom of a tree-like construction of beliefs. Plantinga expresses classical foundationalism in the following terms:

A proposition $p$ is properly basic for a person $S$ if and only if $p$ is either self-evident to $S$ or incorrigible for $S$ or evident to the senses for $S$. 20

But as Plantinga goes on to say, classical foundationalism typically takes theistic belief as being routinely excluded from the foundation, since it is thought to lack the certainty that is usually associated with other types of foundational


20 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 59.
beliefs. Plantinga puts this in terms of the close connection between evidence and classical foundationalism:

Aquinas and the evidentialist objector concur, then, in holding that belief in God is rationally acceptable only if there is evidence for it—only if, that is, it is probable with respect to some body of propositions that constitutes the evidence. . . . This is a picture or total way of looking at faith, knowledge, justified belief, rationality, and allied topics. 21

If theistic belief is not basic then it must be rendered or demonstrated probable by beliefs that are properly basic. The argument, then, is theistic belief (as opposed to a basic belief) requires evidence, proof, or argument if it is thought to be rational. 22

Plantinga is responding to a particular brand of classical foundationalism articulated in the nineteenth century evidentialist epistemology of W. K. Clifford. Taking the evidentialist notion of rationality which preceded him (e.g., Locke and Hume) to even greater lengths, Clifford adds an ethical component to, as Plantinga states it, "the idea that the strength of one's belief ought always to be

21 Ibid., 47-48.

22 See, for example, John M. Frame's analysis of Plantinga's position in The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), 386. While classical foundationalism requires evidentialism, Frame's point may be to show that in Plantinga's model of rationality, the converse is also true, that, at least from a historical perspective, evidentialism tends to presuppose some form of foundationalism. From a conceptual point of view, however, evidentialism can also follow a coherentist or a reliabilist system as well.
proportional to the strength of the evidence for that belief." Clifford argues that one is not rational in holding a belief that has been accepted on insufficient evidence. Furthermore, we have an ethical duty not to accept a belief in the absence of good evidence:

That duty is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from pestilence, which may shortly master our own body and then spread to the rest of the town. . . . To sum up: it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

With respect to theistic belief, then, every person possesses a set of propositions (one's noetic structure) such that a person's belief in God is rational if and only if it is evident with respect to those beliefs. Such an assemblage of beliefs is divided into basic and non-basic beliefs. There are various logical and epistemic relations that hold among the two categories of beliefs in one's noetic structure, and all non-basic beliefs are said to be properly inferred from basic beliefs.

The Collapse of Classical Foundationalism

As stated above, a crucial feature of Plantinga's model of rationality is the notion that we have wide range of everyday beliefs (e.g., beliefs of memory, observation,

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23Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 24.


25Ibid., 344 and 346.
testimony, etc.) for which we have not marshalled evidence. We are rational in holding them, and it is highly probable that we are right in holding them. If this is the case (and it usually is), then why is it so difficult to consider the possibility that one can be rational if one comes to hold belief in God in the same way? Such a belief, according to Plantinga, would qualify as properly basic belief, and as such, it would also be among the foundations of one's noetic structure.26 Plantinga first responds to this notion from the classical foundationalist perspective:

The answer, on the part of the classical foundationalist, was that even if this belief is true, it does not have the characteristics a proposition must have to deserve a place in the foundations. There is no room in the foundations for a proposition that can be rationally accepted only on the basis of other propositions. The only properly basic propositions are those that are self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses. Since the proposition that God exists is none of the above, it is not properly basic for anyone; that is, no well-formed, rational noetic structure contains this proposition in its foundations.27

But it is precisely the classical foundationalist form of evidentialism that is rejected by Plantinga and other Reformed epistemologists. And as Wolterstorff argues, for example, it is impossible to derive all human knowledge from classical foundationalist notions of basic belief. That is, one cannot find enough basic propositions to make up the foundation and

26 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 59.

27 Ibid.
then go on from there to derive the sum-total of one's knowledge.\(^{28}\)

It is through a closer look at the principle of classical foundationalism that Plantinga is able to determine whether belief in God is indeed properly basic and should be included within the foundations of one's noetic structure. This principle, argues Plantinga, contains two claims:

first, a proposition is properly basic if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, and, second, a proposition is properly basic only if it meets this condition.\(^{29}\)

While we might concede the first claim, it is Plantinga's contention that the second claim reduces many of our beliefs to the level of the irrational. It does so because, with respect to propositions that are self-evident and incorrigible, most of the beliefs that, as Plantinga puts it, "form the stock in trade of ordinary everyday life are not probable.\(^{30}\)

Plantinga points out that many of our everyday beliefs, for example, beliefs of memory (e.g., the belief that

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\(^{29}\)Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 59.

\(^{30}\)Ibid.
I had breakfast this morning), perceptual beliefs (e.g., the belief that I am presently sitting in front of my computer), and beliefs in other minds (e.g., the belief that my wife is not merely some sophisticated humanoid form, but a person possessing a mind similar in essence to my own) cannot plausibly be shown to be derivable from self-evident or incorrigible propositions. Plantinga writes:

But many propositions that do not meet these conditions are properly basic for me. I believe, for example, that I had lunch this noon. I do not believe this proposition on the basis of other propositions; I take it as basic; it is in the foundations of my noetic structure. Furthermore, I am entirely rational in so taking it, even though this proposition is neither self-evident nor evident to the senses nor incorrigible for me.31

Further, argues Plantinga, the grounds for classical foundationalism's criteria for proper basicity is itself self-referentially flawed. The reason for excluding religious beliefs from the foundation (i.e., proper basicity) cannot itself be justified on a foundational basis.

The foundationalist criteria for proper basicity cannot itself be justified on a foundational basis; it is neither a basic proposition, nor is it plausibly derivable from basic propositions. Quite simply, argues Plantinga, the criterion is neither self-evident or evident to the senses or incorrigible. Nor does it seem that one will be able to provide good arguments for it (deductive, inductive, probabilistic or whatever) whose premises are self-evident or

31Ibid., 60.
evident to the senses or incorrigible and whose conclusion is the very criterion of proper basicity. So one can not be rational in accepting it.\footnote{Ibid., 60-61. Plantinga's assessment is similar to the argument that has often been employed against the logical positivists' verification principle (i.e., that the principle itself is essentially neither a proposition that is true by definition, nor empirically verifiable). Cf., John M. Frame, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, 387, n. 19.}

The classical foundationalist approach to the justification of beliefs, then, is a self-defeating position, since the theory cannot justify its key criteria for proper basicity. This being the case, then, the evidentialist objection lacks force. As such, there is no reason why belief in God should not itself be properly basic, that is, included in the foundation of our noetic structure. It is argued by Plantinga that such a position places us within our epistemic rights to hold belief in God without any evidence or reasons along the lines of traditional evidentialism.

Reformed Foundationalism

Plantinga makes the strong contention that the difference between classical foundationalism and the form of weak foundationalism for which he argues has much to do with the different conceptions of reason which appear to govern the thinking patterns of the theist and the non-theist. For Plantinga, this is the conviction that the two groups disagree
as to what are the deliverances of reason.\textsuperscript{33} Since the rationality for theistic belief is not derived from classical foundationalism's unworkable criteria for proper basicality (and indeed neither are many other beliefs that we take as basic), Plantinga claims that it is "entirely acceptable, desirable, right, proper, and rational to accept belief in God (i.e., belief that God exists) without any argument or evidence whatever."\textsuperscript{34} Theistic belief in God, according to Plantinga, is no less a deliverance of reason than we find to be the case with perceptual truths, self-evident truths and truths of memory.

Plantinga's claim that theistic belief in God is properly basic represents what Hoitenga calls the heart of Reformed foundationalism.\textsuperscript{35} The very nature of the claim is what distinguishes Plantinga's position from a long and lofty epistemic tradition. Foundationalism, as Plantinga observes, has been the epistemic staple among such fabled philosophical minds as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and the contemporary epistemologist, Roderick Chisholm.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33}Plantinga, \textit{Reason and Belief in God}," 90. Plantinga provides an excellent autobiographical sketch of his philosophical studies under William Harry Jellema of Calvin College in his \textit{"Self-Profile,"} in \textit{Alvin Plantinga}, ed. J. E. Tomberlin and P. Van Inwagen (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1985), 3-36.

\textsuperscript{34}Plantinga, \textit{"Reason and Belief in God,"} 39.

\textsuperscript{35}Hoitenga, 180.

\textsuperscript{36}Plantinga, \textit{"Is Belief in God Rational?"} 13.
But as Hoitenga remarks, Augustine is conspicuously absent from Plantinga's list, since (unlike a traditional foundationalist) Augustine teaches that belief in God is an immediate deliverance of reason. Thus, while Plantinga views some form of foundationalism as a normative thesis about the nature of rational noetic structures, he ultimately embraces a form of weak foundationalism which essentially involves two claims:

Suppose we say that weak foundationalism is the view that (1) every rational noetic structure has a foundation, and (2) in a rational noetic structure, non-basic belief is proportional in strength to support from the foundations. When I say that Reformed thinkers have meant to reject foundationalism, I do not mean to say that they intended to reject weak foundationalism. On the contrary; the thought of many of them tends to support or endorse weak foundationalism.

But the distinction between the two versions, as indicated earlier, is found in the criteria set forth for proper basicity. The assumption on the part of some is that, once a cognizer accepts a weak form of foundationalism, strong

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37 Hoitenga, 180.

38 Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," 193. See also, Gary Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 80-1. Gutting seems to take Plantinga's weak foundationalism as being a favorable position among those who tend to hold some form of anti-foundationalism. (e.g., Sellars and Quine). Plantinga's weak foundationalism might be misconstrued as a form of coherentism, a view which requires the justification of every belief in a rational noetic structure by its coherence with the totality of the structure's beliefs. Plantinga's version of weak foundationalism, however, only requires a non-evidential justification (or grounding) of its properly basic beliefs, and as such, cannot be regarded as a form of coherentism. This will be treated more fully at a later point.
foundationalism seems a necessary further step, since without criteria for what may be taken as basic there could be rational noetic structures that took almost any absurd set of beliefs as basic. But, as we will further see, it is this kind of thinking that betrays the very notion of rationality that Plantinga so adamantly rejects. For it is precisely the criteria for proper basicity set forth in the strong versions of foundationalism that Plantinga, as a Reformed epistemologist, finds objectionable and problematic.

The Problem of a Criterion for Proper Basicity: The Great Pumpkin Objection

Plantinga's program for the rationality of religious belief draws heavily upon the Reformed tradition in its attempt to demonstrate that theistic belief clearly falls outside the unworkable criteria for proper basicity in classical foundationalism. Plantinga's contention is that the evidentialist objection to theistic belief can be voiced only in the context of an unworkable criterion for basic belief as it is originally set forth in classical foundationalism. Even attempts by evidentialist objectors to modify the classical foundationalist criteria for basic

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39 Gary Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, 81. Gutting argues that it is precisely this version of weak foundationalism (and its correlative dismissal of classical foundationalism) that tends to fuel the arguments of many contemporary antifoundationalists.

40 See, for example, Herman Bavinck, The Doctrine of God, trans. and ed. William Hendriksen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1951), 41-80.
belief, argues Plantinga, do not give us a workable criterion. For example, some think that the criterion is salvaged if, along with the notion of a belief being self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible for a person, the belief in question is also accepted as basic by nearly everyone.41

But Plantinga says of this modified version of the criteria:

Not nearly everyone takes [the belief] as basic; I do not, for example. Nor is it self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. So unless we can find an argument for it from propositions that meet the conditions it lays down, we shall, if we believe it, be believing a proposition that is probably either false or such that we ought not believe it. Therefore we ought not believe it, at least until someone produces such an argument for it.42

So an appeal to agreement (i.e., that a belief can be basic if it is accepted by nearly everyone), then, cannot successfully modify classical foundationalism's criteria for proper basicality, since it is not clear that everyone takes even the modified criteria as basic. Rather, what is needed, in Plantinga's estimation, are epistemic notions that go beyond classical criteria for the rationality and justification of our beliefs.

In a highly criticized move (appearing to many as an uncomfortably close form of relativism),43 Plantinga

41 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 62.

42 Ibid.

43 Plantinga has received a good deal of criticism on this matter. See, for example, C. Stephen Evans, "Kierkegaard and Plantinga on Belief in God: Subjectivity as the Ground of Properly Basic Religious Beliefs," Faith and Philosophy 5,
attempts to answer the problem of arriving at criteria for proper basicity by suggesting an inductive approach to religious experience. Louis P. Pojman has observed that Plantinga's view of proper basicity is subject to the criticism that it opens the door to all sorts of irrationality in the foundations of our noetic structure. But the reason why belief in the Great Pumpkin cannot be considered properly basic, argues Plantinga is that (in keeping with Reformed epistemologists agreement with Calvin) "God has implanted in us a natural tendency to see his hand in the world around us; the same cannot be said for the Great Pumpkin, there being no Great Pumpkin and no natural tendency to accept belief about the Great Pumpkin."44

The point is that Plantinga does not believe we can arrive at deductive criteria for what count as the basic beliefs of one's noetic structure which, as Gutting remarks, allows for belief in God but excludes belief in the Great Pumpkin and other absurdities.45 Since Plantinga believes

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45 Gutting, Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism, 82.
that establishing criteria for proper basicity along evidentialist lines is both difficult and unnecessary, he contends that theistic belief is properly basic and therefore rational by virtue of its being grounded in the proper conditions. An absurdity such as belief in the Great Pumpkin, on the other hand, is groundless and consequently lacking the necessary conditions for proper basicity.

Now similar things may be said about belief in God. When the Reformers claim that this belief 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. 46

So we see justification for a properly basic belief in Plantinga's model of rationality as resting on certain conditions other than a cognizer's other beliefs. One can point to the grounds for theistic belief, argues Plantinga, in much the same way we can point to the grounds of our memory beliefs, our beliefs in physical objects, and our beliefs in other persons.

Hoitenga has stated that the argument for the resemblance between the grounds for theistic belief and the grounds for other properly basic beliefs involves the matter of whether theistic belief is "similar to other properly basic beliefs that fall outside the criterion of classical foundationalism, and the objection that belief in God is too

46 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 80.
But it is precisely the grounds for properly basic beliefs (whether theistic or otherwise) that Plantinga thinks constitute their justification and consequently provides a link, as Hoitenga notes, "between the idea of properly basic beliefs and a theory of knowledge as justified true belief." The evidentialist who relies on the classical foundationalist criteria for proper basicity, therefore, cannot deny the justification (and thereby the proper basicity) of theistic belief simply because the theist appeals to the grounds for justification rather than the criterion for justification. Plantinga contends:

Must one have such a criterion before one can sensibly make any judgments--positive or negative--about proper basicity? Surely not. Suppose I don't know of a satisfactory substitute for the criteria proposed by classical foundationalism; I am nevertheless entirely within my rights in holding that certain propositions are not properly basic in certain conditions. Plantinga's conclusion, then, is that the criteria set forth by modern foundationalists for what counts as a necessary and sufficient condition for proper basicity does not follow from obviously self-evident premises by obviously acceptable

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47 Hoitenga, 186.

48 Ibid.

49 Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," 196.
arguments. And it is precisely this point that paves the way for Plantinga to argue that theistic belief is grounded (and thereby justified) on conditions other than the evidence from other beliefs. In some ways his position is similar to William Alston's argument that rational belief in theism is similar to rational belief in physical objects. In other words, argues Alston, we have certain kinds of experiences (call them religious) that tend to confirm theistic belief, and this is no less rational than it is for one to believe in physical objects on the basis of sense perception.

While there may not be any clear criteria for distinguishing between unacceptable and acceptable candidates for proper basicity, Plantinga believes his suggestion of a broadly inductive methodology serves to establish the required moorings that work against extreme forms of relativism:

We must assemble examples of beliefs and conditions such that the former are obviously properly basic in the latter, and examples of beliefs and conditions such that the former are obviously not properly basic in the latter. We must then frame hypotheses as to the necessary and

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50Ibid., 197.

51William P. Alston, "Christian Experience and Christian Belief," in Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983), 103-34. Alston comments, for example, "I take as my starting point the conviction that somehow what goes on in the experience of leading the Christian life provides some grounds for Christian belief, makes some contribution to the rationality of Christian belief. . . . I am not suggesting that this is the whole ground or that it can do the whole job" (103).
sufficient conditions of proper basicality and test these hypotheses by reference to those examples.\textsuperscript{52}

Plantinga is clearly aware that, as Pojman expresses it, "each community will assemble a different set of examples of beliefs and accompanying conditions, so that there is no reason to assume that everyone will agree on the examples."\textsuperscript{53} The point that Plantinga wants to make is that theists will likely consider theistic belief to be entirely proper and rational, most likely not on the basis of other propositions they hold, but simply because it is basic for them and properly so (given the conditions or circumstances in which they arise). The fact that other non-theists may disagree with theistic criteria for proper basicality (based on inductive factors) is inconsequential to Plantinga. He argues that theists are responsible only to their own set of examples.\textsuperscript{54} The criteria for proper basicality, then, are in Plantinga's estimation "reached from below rather than above; they should not be presented ex cathedra, but argued to and tested by a relevant set of examples."\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52}Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 76.

\textsuperscript{53}Pojman, \textit{Religious Belief and the Will}, 133.

\textsuperscript{54}Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 77.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid. Cf., Gutting, \textit{Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism}, 83. Gutting remarks: "In sum, then, Plantinga's defense of the claim that 'God exists' may be properly basic for the Christian is as follows: there are no obviously correct criteria for proper basicality; therefore, we must develop such criteria inductively on the basis of obvious examples (clear cases) of properly basic propositions. For the Christian (at least one whose belief in God does not rest on
Plantinga has argued up to this point that one can be rational in believing in God (as a properly basic belief) even if one does not hold that belief on the basis of evidence. Furthermore, one can maintain properly basic belief in God even though one cannot provide criteria for what counts as evidence for or against a belief's truth. But while one does not have to supply evidentialist requirements of sufficient evidence in order to be rational in holding a properly basic belief, Plantinga contends that such beliefs are rational only when formed under conditions that confer justification on the one who accepts them as basic.\footnote{Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 82.} Plantinga means by grounds or conditions, the non-evidential reasons or circumstances that give rise to a properly basic belief. Thus, a properly basic belief in Plantinga's estimation, is not necessarily one that is infallible or even incorrigible. The justification accorded to the basic beliefs in one's noetic structure is only a \textit{prima facie} or defeasible justification. One is rationally justified in giving up a basic belief (including belief in God) if one finds some good reasons for

\begin{flushright}
\textit{inferences from other propositions) 'God exists' is one of those examples.}"
\end{flushright}
disbelieving. There well may be good reasons for disbelieving properly basic beliefs.\(^{57}\)

But as Plantinga further remarks, while one is not rationally required to accept theistic belief exclusively on the basis of arguments and evidence, it does not follow that arguments are irrelevant to the proper basicality of theistic belief. Nor does it follow that arguments based on other propositions a cognizer holds as basic could not show theistic belief to be false. One who accepts theistic belief as basic can still be open to the possibility of giving up that belief if one is offered arguments from other propositions one already holds as true.

But it is also rational to consider the possibility that an argument against the proper basicality of theistic belief may in fact show that there is a problem somewhere else in one's noetic structure.\(^{58}\) So with respect to the rationality of theistic belief, one is not committed in advance to hold it in the teeth of any evidence or argument that could count against it. One can then accept belief in God as basic without accepting it dogmatically; that is, the proper basicality of theistic belief need not be embraced in such a way that ignores any contrary evidence or argument.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\)Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God*, 82-83.

\(^{59}\)Ibid., 83.
The reason for this is because of what Plantinga refers to as the "justification-conferring conditions" of properly basic beliefs. Plantinga's contention is that such justification-conferring conditions can provide only *prima facie* rather than all-things-considered, or *ultima facie* justification:

My being appeared to treely gives me a *prima facie* right to take as basic the proposition *I see a tree*. But of course this right can be overridden; I might know, for example, that I suffer from the dreaded dendrological disorder, whose victims are appeared to treely only when there are no trees present. If I do know that, then I am not within my rights in taking as basic the proposition *I see a tree* when I am appeared to treely.  

The purpose of Plantinga's distinction is to indicate the intended rational deliverances associated with these two forms of justification. *Prima facie* justification, argues Plantinga, places one in a rational structure in which one is within one's *epistemic rights* in accepting a proposition. *Ultima facie* justification, on the other hand, provides the truth-conferring conditions in which it is rational for one to accept a proposition in a manner equated with *knowledge*.  

This being the case, then, it is necessary to see that the terms *grounds* and *evidence* express entirely different

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60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 84. Plantinga states that a condition that overrides a cognizer's *prima facie* justification for *p* is a *defeating condition* or *defeater* for *p* for that cognizer. Also, defeaters are initially *prima facie* defeaters, given the possibility that the defeater can always be defeated. See also, John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, 37-39.
epistemic notions in Plantinga's thinking. While one may claim justification for a belief on the basis of either grounds or evidence, one does so, as Hoitenga points out, in substantially different ways:

The difference is that evidence consists of beliefs on the basis of which other, nonbasic beliefs are held (and thereby justified), whereas grounds are not beliefs at all, but conditions or circumstances that occasion properly basic beliefs, and thereby justify them without being formulated as beliefs.62

If one hopes to provide justification for a belief along evidential lines, then, one does so on the basis of one's doxastic state; that is, as John Pollock states, "the justifiability of a belief is a function exclusively of what beliefs one holds."63 Pollock writes:

It seems that in deciding what to believe, we cannot take account of anything except insofar as we have beliefs about it. Consequently, nothing can enter into the determination of epistemic justification except our beliefs. Thus all an epistemological theory can do is tell us how our overall doxastic state determines which of our beliefs can be justified.64

Doxastic theories, as Pollock notes, are exhausted by two mutually exclusive subcategories, foundations theories and coherence theories.65

To provide justification for a belief in terms of evidence, then, is to agree that both one's non-basic and

62Hoitenga, 189.
63Pollock, 19.
64Ibid.
65Ibid.
basic beliefs require evidence. But Plantinga's model of weak
foundationalism differs from stronger versions in that, while
non-basic beliefs are justified on the basis of their relation
to the basic beliefs of one's noetic structure, basic beliefs
receive their justification on the basis of the grounds that
give rise to the belief in question. Hoitenga expresses this
epistemic relation in the following manner:

To have grounds for a belief . . . is to hold it in such a
way that there are conditions in which it arises and that
justify it, even though the believer may typically be
unaware at the moment of what those conditions are. Being
unaware of them, one does not formulate beliefs about them
on the basis of which he holds the belief, which is
precisely what makes that belief a basic belief. One may,
of course, be able to point to some of the grounds for
one's basic beliefs if asked, but that is a different
matter. 66

So, then, to have evidence for a belief is to be consciously
aware of the other beliefs one holds in support of that
belief. In contrast, to have grounds for a belief is to hold
that belief as a result of the conditions in which the belief
arises, whether or not one is consciously aware of those
conditions at the time that they give rise to the belief in
question.

Plantinga argues that when we consider perceptual
beliefs, memory beliefs, and beliefs ascribing mental states
to other persons (e.g., "I see a tree"; "I had breakfast this
morning"; and "That person is in pain"), we have beliefs that

66 Hoitenga, 188.
are typically taken as basic; but such beliefs, Plantinga suggests, are far from groundless.\textsuperscript{67} Plantinga writes:

Upon having experience of a certain sort, I believe I am perceiving a tree. In the typical case I do not hold this belief on the basis of other beliefs; it is nonetheless not groundless. My having that characteristic sort of experience—to use Professor Chisholm's language, my being appeared treely to—plays a crucial role in the formation of that belief. It also plays a crucial role in its justification.\textsuperscript{68}

Justification for a belief on the basis of grounds, then, does not involve an appeal to other beliefs but some characteristic experience that accounts for the conditions in which the belief arises. As will become more clear, it is the experience itself (of which one may be quite unaware) that, as Hoitenga observes, "constitutes the ground of the basic belief by contrast with one's (consciously) having or giving evidence for it."\textsuperscript{69} And as Plantinga further remarks, "being appropriately appeared to . . . is not sufficient for justification; some further condition—a condition hard to state in detail—is clearly necessary."\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{67}Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 78-79.

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., 79. In the case of ascribing mental states to other persons, for example, Plantinga states that if one sees someone displaying typical pain behavior, then that is good reason to think that person is in pain. But one does not take the displayed behavior as evidence for that belief. One does not infer that belief on the basis of other beliefs one holds. But one's perceiving the pain behavior forms the ground of one's justification for the belief in question.

\textsuperscript{69}Hoitenga, 188.

\textsuperscript{70}Plantinga, "Reason and belief in God," 80.
A belief, then, is properly basic, justified and rational only in certain conditions that can account for its justification and the ground of the belief itself.\textsuperscript{71} We, therefore, argues Plantinga, may apply the same concept to theistic belief. One reason for this is found in Plantinga's appeal to Calvin's idea that God daily discloses and reveals to us innumerable conditions that create in us the disposition to take theistic belief as properly basic.\textsuperscript{72} Plantinga goes on to contend that, indeed, there may be many circumstances (i.e., religious experiences) that one might count as grounds for the proper basicality of theistic belief:

There are therefore many conditions and circumstances that call forth belief in God: guilt, gratitude, danger, a sense of God's presence, a sense that he speaks, perception of various parts of the universe. A complete job would explore the phenomenology of all these conditions and of more besides.\textsuperscript{73}

Plantinga, however, is quick to point out that in actuality one comes to accept the simple belief that God exists more specifically as a result of a number of other basic types of propositions that are formed through these conditions and circumstances. Such beliefs as: "God is speaking to me"; "God has created all this"; "God disapproves of what I have done";

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Ibid.}


\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Ibid.}, 81.
"God forgives me"; and "God is to be thanked and praised," argues Plantinga, are all propositions that are only properly basic in the right circumstances. The conclusion in Plantinga's thinking, then, is that since these propositions are properly basic, they each self-evidently entail that God exists.

Plantinga's conception of the grounds of religious belief, then, is largely contingent upon his idea of the nature of religious experience. What constitutes rational and justified theistic belief is the grounds in which the belief arises; the grounds themselves must take place under proper conditions. These proper conditions are, as Plantinga has already indicated, conditions in which the details are difficult to state. To gain an indication of what these conditions might be, it is necessary to briefly turn our attention to the basic features of Plantinga's more complete theory of justification set forth in his notion of the proper function of our cognitive faculties and the warrant for theistic belief. 74

The Warrant for Theistic Belief

If one is not required to marshall evidence in order to be rational in holding a properly basic belief, what must be the case if one is not to be arbitrary or irrational in determining what rightfully belongs in the foundation of one's noetic structure? Plantinga has argued that a person is not required to supply evidence for one's properly basic beliefs, since we regularly form such beliefs without it, and we are considered rational and probably right in doing so. His arguments for warrant, proper function, and design plan, then, are all part of a model of rationality which attempts to argue that the rationality for one's properly basic beliefs still involves the matter of justification (or the non-evidentialist notion of warrant), even if that justification is non-evidential in nature. That is, one can have reasons for why one is considered rational in holding a properly basic belief, but those reasons are not required to conform to evidentialist notions of sufficient evidence. Sufficient evidence, according to evidentialist standards, is typically an appeal to arguments and one's other beliefs. The point of warrant, proper function, and design plan, according to Plantinga, is that they are non-evidential in nature. Thus, if it can be shown that one can have a model of rationality in which the justification of one's properly basic beliefs do not

require evidential reasons, then Plantinga is one step closer to making his case.

Furthermore, Plantinga realizes that his criteria for being rational do not guarantee that one is right. But if it can be shown that one's properly basic beliefs are formed under the proper conditions, then being rational about one's properly basic beliefs does not require that one verify one's beliefs as true along evidentialist lines of verification. What is required for rationality, according to Plantinga, is that a cognizer's reasons for holding a properly basic belief (e.g., belief in God) are consistent with the circumstances which warrant that belief. On Plantinga's model of rationality, there is a high probability that one is right about one's beliefs without the need to verify them as true. Thus, the warrant (and consequent rationality) for a properly basic belief exhibits certain characteristics that set it apart from the form of rationality typically allied with the evidentialist notions of the criteria for proper basicity in classical foundationalism.

75Hoitenga, 189. Hoitenga has argued that Plantinga at this point is attempting to satisfy Plato's account of justified true belief in the Theaetetus (i.e., that knowledge is more than direct acquaintance with an object, or accepting a proposition on testimony, as are suggested in the approaches to knowledge in Plato's Republic and the Meno, respectively). However, rather than following a classical foundationalist (and internalist) model for justification, Plantinga will suggest an externalist model of warrant as a more rational and acceptable system of justified true belief. See also, William Alston, "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," Monist 68, no. 1 (January 1985): 58.
As we have seen, Plantinga makes a distinction between evidence for a belief (i.e., the reasons a cognizer offers for a given belief in terms of other beliefs or arguments he accepts, and of which he is typically aware) and grounds for a belief (i.e., the conditions that make a belief warranted and rational, even if the cognizer is not aware of those conditions at any given time). Giving evidence for a belief consists of the cognizer's conscious access to the other beliefs in one's noetic structure that are used in support of a given belief. This type of evidentialist approach to the rational justification of one's beliefs is typically allied with an internalistic account of the epistemic relation among beliefs in one's noetic structure (i.e., the notion that one's beliefs and perceptual states are states to which the cognizer has direct access and of which he is aware at some level). The grounds for a basic belief, on the other hand, take on an externalistic justification (i.e., more than just the internal

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76See, for example, John Pollock, Contemporary Theories of Knowledge, 22. A good example of an internalist approach to theistic belief can be found in the natural theology of William Paley (1743-1805). In Paley's argument for the design of the universe (the teleological argument), Paley formulates beliefs about the orderliness of the universe (e.g., the analogy that the universes' complex design presumes a divine intelligence in much the same manner as a watch's complex design presumes a finite intelligence) and infers the existence of God from these beliefs. For a brief introduction to Paley's argument, see John H. Hick, Philosophy of Religion, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 23-26. For a more extended treatment, see Robert E. D. Clark, The Universe--Plan or Accident? (Philadelphia: Muhlenburg Press, 1961). See also, Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, Philosophy of Religion, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988).
states of a cognizer enter into the justification of beliefs). But what remains problematic for Plantinga and epistemological theories in general is that, as Plantinga laments, "It is widely agreed that belief, while necessary for knowledge, is not sufficient for it." What else is required? Whatever this further element may be, argues Plantinga, "it is either epistemic justification or something intimately connected with it."

Another characteristic of Plantinga's theory of knowledge as justified true belief is, as previously stated, found in his distinction between prima facie and ultima facie (or "all-things-considered") justification. Plantinga's example of the "dreaded dendrological disorder" mentioned above, serves as ultima facie evidence which may override his prima facie evidence that "being appeared to treely" gives him the right to take as basic the proposition I see a tree.

77 Pollock, 23; and Hoitenga, 190. See also, John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939). Hoitenga suggests that Baillie's understanding of our knowledge of God through the order of nature as a mediated immediacy (e.g., an experience of observing the starry heavens above mediates my immediate awareness of God) is a good example of Plantinga's notion of grounds.


79 Ibid.

80 Hoitenga, 190. Plantinga goes on to argue, however, that properly basic beliefs are regarded as having more epistemic warrant (i.e., non-evidential justification) for belief since a cognizer holds such beliefs on the basis of the circumstances or conditions which give rise to them, rather than on the basis of arguments or evidence. See, for example,
On a prima facie level, then, there is nothing intrinsic about properly basic beliefs that keep them from being false, and on this basis, they cannot be equated with knowledge. It is only on the basis of "all-things-considered" (or ultima facie) evidence that a properly basic belief can constitute knowledge. This is further illustrated in Plantinga's distinction between weak and strong forms of justification. Plantinga once again bears this out in the example of being appeared to treely:

_Being appeared to treely may confer on me, not merely the prima facie right to believe that there is a tree present, but the more impressive epistemic condition of being such that if the belief in question is true, then I know it. Call that condition strong justification. Being thus appeared to may perhaps also lay obligations on me; perhaps in those conditions I am not merely within my rights in believing that there is a tree present; perhaps I have a prima facie obligation to do so._

Hoitenga believes that Plantinga's remarks at this point are indicative of his attempt to establish a theory of knowledge as justified true belief, even though an initial glance at Plantinga's notion of the grounds for proper basicality may seem to make justification superfluous to his theory. In addition to the grounds that confer on someone the right to believe there is a tree present, for example, there are also the further conditions of knowledge that the belief is true and that there is an obligation for the cognizer to believe


81 Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," 85.
it.\textsuperscript{82} Apart from Plantinga's qualified notion of warrant (and the externalism in which it is based), the grounds that constitute a properly basic belief do not provide a sufficient reason for taking such a belief as knowledge. That such beliefs may ultimately constitute knowledge is a matter altogether different from a theory that can explain the circumstances which legitimate it as knowledge.

Plantinga's model of rationality at this point appears to follow, as Louis Pojman remarks, "a version of naturalized epistemology, which, if it succeeds, solves most of the puzzles of a theory of knowledge, and so wins out as the most comprehensive (though admittedly still incomplete) system available.\textsuperscript{83} In its most basic form, naturalized epistemology is directed against all forms of epistemology that focus on the normative notion of justification. Inspired by the philosophy of W. V. O. Quine, naturalized epistemology argues that classical foundationalism's quest for certainty is

\textsuperscript{82}Hoitenga, 191.

a fundamentally flawed method that has failed in its attempts to ground our claims to knowledge. Quine contends that we must give up traditional a priori epistemology (i.e., setting forth conceptual criteria for knowledge and then applying them to science) and embrace instead a form of empirical or cognitive psychology. Such a cognitive process reduces epistemology to simply a descriptive examination of the relation between the small amounts of sensory stimulation which constitute our empirical observations and the vast measure of conceptual conclusions we draw from them. We do not have epistemic access to the world as it is in itself; we have only the reports of our sensory evidence from which we form a behaviorist naturalism through prediction and verification.

Plantinga's theory of proper function, then, is an externalist account of naturalized epistemology (i.e., an account of knowledge in which a cognizer is rational in holding a belief in terms of the conditions or circumstances which warrant that belief). Whatever is specifically meant by

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84 See, for example, W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in The Theory of Knowledge, ed. Louis Pojman (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1993), 322.

85 Pojman, What Can We Know? 170-171. Cf., W. V. O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," 325. Pojman notes three central theses to Quine's epistemology: (1) The attempt to ground knowledge through a priori criteria has failed; (2) skepticism's program to undermine classical epistemology becomes a pseudoproblem in naturalized epistemology; and (3) epistemology (and true belief) is subsumed under the aegis of science, which is itself merely an extension of common sense and based on the method of verification (171).
the property of warrant, Plantinga states that when it is combined with true belief (and setting aside Gettier problems), it results in knowledge.

Plantinga admits at the outset that there are many cases in which our beliefs, though true, cannot have warrant. One reason for this is that many true beliefs are formed in the context of some sort of malfunction of the cognitive faculties. A belief is warranted only in conditions or circumstances in which one's cognitive faculties are functioning according to a design plan in an environment for which it was intended. In addition, Plantinga's theory of proper function is set in contrast with internalist, coherentist, and reliabilist theories of warrant, all of which, as William Hasker remarks, "he criticizes on the grounds that they would ascribe warrant to certain beliefs which we can readily see, intuitively, to be unwarranted."  

86Plantinga, Warrant and Proper Function, 32-40. Plantinga qualifies this notion of warrant by stating that it requires setting aside the epistemic problems originally brought to our attention in Edmund Gettier's famous article, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Analysis 23, no. 6 (1963): 121-3. Gettier's main contention is that we often hold many beliefs that turn out to be true entirely by accident, and in such cases, it seems difficult to accept these beliefs as constituting knowledge. Plantinga's point is to show that Gettier problems actually afflict internalist epistemologies to a far greater extent than they afflict externalist epistemologies.

William Hasker's summary of Plantinga's theory is particularly helpful:

A belief is warranted if it is produced by our epistemic faculties when they are functioning properly—that is, in accordance with their design plan—in an appropriate epistemic environment. Thus, the notion of "functioning properly" is understood in terms of "design plan," where the latter idea may be initially understood on analogy with the design of a manufactured object such as a camera or a computer. For a theist such as Plantinga, the idea of a design plan can be taken quite straightforwardly to refer to the way in which God, in creating human beings, intended for their cognitive faculties to function.88

In setting forth the features of this system, Plantinga is attacking what he considers to be unworkable theories of epistemic dutifulness, coherence, and reliability.89 A brief examination of the main features of Plantinga's notion of proper function, then, should provide the final step for obtaining a sufficient insight into his argument for the rationality of theistic belief.

Plantinga argues that warrant associated with internalist notions of justification is conceived in terms of epistemic duty fulfillment or deontological internalism.90 Such deontological notions of justification typically involve classical and modern forms of foundationalism, but they will

88 Ibid., 66-67.

89 Plantinga, "Justification and Theism," 403.

also include versions of coherentism as well. On the externalist side of things, Plantinga is claiming to go beyond rel\-iabilism which, while being a close approximation to the true theory, is ultimately unable to deliver warrant due to problems of generality and defeating counterexamples.

In the dispute over the proper analysis of the concept of epistemic justification, Roderick Chisholm states that both internalists and externalists are agreed that the issue of justification is one that "distinguishes knowledge from true belief that is not knowledge." As indicated earlier, Plantinga is responding to internalist epistemologies which hold that justification of one's beliefs entails accessibility to the reasons for those beliefs. Plantinga argues that

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91 Plantinga, Warrant: The Current Debate, 162. See also, Roderick Chisholm, The Foundations of Knowing (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) and Theory of Knowledge, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989). In his article, "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function," 3, Plantinga notes that there is more than one important internalist tradition, but according to the dominant tradition (as represented in the previously cited volumes by Chisholm), it is the Cartesian tradition of positive epistemic status that is essentially connected with the fulfillment of epistemic duty and the satisfaction of our noetic obligation. When we think of justification for positive epistemic status, it is this Cartesian tradition which epistemizes true belief in terms of duty fulfillment. See, for example, Richard Foley, The Theory of Epistemic Rationality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). Plantinga also includes among internalist traditions, John Pollock's "Epistemic Norms," Synthesis 71 (April 1987): 61-95 and Pollock's Contemporary Theories of Knowledge, 123-79.


93 Chisholm, Theory of Knowledge, 75.

all forms of internalism fail on the grounds that the accessibility requirement is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for positive epistemic status, nor is positive epistemic status merely a matter of one's ability to fulfill one's epistemic duty or obligation. Evidence alone is not a sufficient condition for warrant (or positive epistemic status) because we might imagine a context in which a person has evidence for a particular belief while experiencing a malfunctioning of his or her cognitive faculties, resulting in a lack of warrant for belief (e.g., the famous Cartesian demon or brain-in-the-vat scenarios).

In an example closer to home, Plantinga tells of a incident his father had in meeting a man in a Grand Rapids psychiatric hospital who complained that he wasn't getting the credit he deserved for inventing a new form of human reproduction, "rotational reproduction," as the man called it. This novel method of reproduction eliminates the need for sex. Instead, you simply suspend a woman from the ceiling with a

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95 The main stock of Plantinga's Warrant: The Current Debate is given to the inherent difficulties of the various forms of internalism in providing the justifying connection between true beliefs and knowledge. The basic import behind his criticisms is to show that positive epistemic status is not simply a matter of aptness for fulfillment of one's epistemic duty or obligation, nor is having accessibility to the reasons for one's beliefs a necessary nor sufficient condition for positive epistemic status. The few examples provided below should be adequate to illustrate Plantinga's problems with internalist epistemologies. See, for example, Plantinga's, "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function," 12.

rope and rotate her at a high rate of speed. The result of the rotational process is a large number of children, enough to populate a city the size of Chicago. That, said the man, is in fact precisely how the city of Chicago was populated, and he was simply looking for the recognition he was due for this important discovery.97

Plantinga uses this case to show that there are many times when having evidence does not imply warrant. Even if the man's beliefs fit his evidence (perhaps he remembers reading about rotational reproduction in a Chicago paper and recalling that the writer neglected to give him credit for having invented it), it is clear they have little or no warrant. His beliefs, argues Plantinga, do not have "the property . . . of which is sufficient, together with true belief, for warrant."98 So the problem lies not with a failure of fit between the man's beliefs and what he finds internally available to him: the problem is that his cognitive faculties are not functioning properly; he is insane.99

Plantinga's rejection of internalist notions of justification (i.e., the volitional normativity of epistemic deontology) is what leads him to embrace some form of externalism. If external conditions yield the correct

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
results, then one is warranted in holding the belief in question and has knowledge. Pollock remarks of this approach:

The reliability of a cognitive process is a contingent matter. For example, a cognitive process on which we place great reliance is color vision. Color vision is reasonably reliable in the normal environment of earth-bound human beings. But if we lived in an environment in which the colors of our light sources varied erratically, color vision would be unreliable. The reliability of a cognitive process cannot be assessed a priori. It depends upon contingent matters of fact. Thus reliabilism makes epistemic justification turn on contingent matters of fact. Cognitive essentialism is false on this view.\textsuperscript{100}

It is Chisholm's contention, however, that externalist systems can be made to work only if they are supplemented by internal justification concepts. If such is the case, then Plantinga has not yet established that internal concepts must be replaced by external ones.\textsuperscript{101}

Plantinga argues that reliabilism (a form of externalism) is closest to his own theory, but like internalism and coherentism, it must ultimately be rejected on the grounds that it would ascribe warrant to beliefs that are clearly lacking in warrant. A belief has warrant in reliabilism to the extent that it is the product of reliable belief-forming processes.\textsuperscript{102} There is no warrant where the external conditions are not present, and this is the case

\textsuperscript{100}Pollock, \textit{Contemporary Theories of Knowledge}, 23.

\textsuperscript{101}Chisholm, \textit{Theory of Knowledge}, 77.

\textsuperscript{102}Hasker, "Proper Function, Reliabilism, and Religious Knowledge," 69-70. See also, Chisholm, \textit{Theory of Knowledge}, 77-81.
regardless of how hard we attempt to fulfill our epistemic
duty. But beliefs having little or no warrant can be formed
by reliable belief-forming processes. One reason for this is
that reliabilism cannot solve the problem of generality in
which belief-forming processes can be either too specific or
too generic.

Despite reliabilism's ability to bypass many of the
problems associated with internalism, and despite the fact
that it explains the features of justified belief in the light
of natural processes determined by or reduced to psychological
or physicalist characteristics, it has difficulties explaining
exactly what is to count as a reliable process.\textsuperscript{103} In its
broadest sense, a reliable process is a series of activities
that results in one's acquiring or retaining that belief.\textsuperscript{104}
But there are problems with this approach.

For one thing, it is difficult to know what percentage
of true beliefs the process must be able to produce in order
to be considered reliable. For example, one could not be
considered justified the first time one comes to have a true
belief as the result of a reliable process, since a successful
track record has not yet been established.\textsuperscript{105} In addition,
the problem of generality leads to difficulties in determining
what is a natural process. At any point in which I form a

\textsuperscript{103}Pojman, What Can We Know? 132.

\textsuperscript{104}Chisholm, Theory of Knowledge, 78.

\textsuperscript{105}Pojman, What Can We Know? 132.
belief, there are many different process types that are contributing to that belief. The process activities that lead to my current belief that it is cloudy today are brought about by such factors as the perceptual process, the visual process, processes that occur on Thursday, processes that lead to true beliefs, etc. To what extent such factors represent natural processes is difficult to state.

**Design and Proper Function**

Plantinga's argument for the rationality of theistic belief, as we have seen, gains its force from externalist epistemic practices that go beyond the difficulties of internalism, coherence, and reliabilism. Plantinga describes his externalism in the following terms:

*Design plan and proper function are interdefinable notions*: a thing (organism, organ, system, artifact) is functioning properly when it functions in accord with its design plan, and the design plan of a thing is a specification of the way in which a thing functions when it is functioning properly. . . . The first condition for a belief's having warrant, as I see it, is that it be produced by faculties functioning properly. But this is by no means sufficient. A second condition is that the cognitive environment in which the belief is produced must be the one or like the one for which it was designed. ¹⁰⁶

So even if one's epistemic faculties are functioning properly (i.e., in accord with its design plan), if one should suddenly be transported to a wholly different and alien cognitive environment, one's beliefs may have litte or no warrant. Thus, for Plantinga, a belief is warranted (including a

properly basic theistic belief) only if the cognitive faculties involved in its production are functioning properly according to a design plan and environment aimed at the production of true beliefs.

Pojman indicates that Plantinga's requirement of an appropriate cognitive environment allows him to circumvent Gettier-type counterexamples. The cognitive mechanism designed to pick out middle-sized objects, notes Pojman, was not meant to pick out facade barns at a distance.\textsuperscript{107} Proper function according to a design plan is said by Plantinga to follow certain parameters:

In exploring the notion of design plan, therefore, we must keep close to the front of our minds the way things go in these central and paradigm cases. We must therefore bear in mind the way in which a radio, say, or a rope, or an airplane, or some other kind of artifact can be said to function properly, and what the connection in those cases is with a design plan.\textsuperscript{108}

Design and proper function, Plantinga observes, "is not a description of how things work under just those circumstances (as in the paradigm cases) the designer plans for or takes into account; it includes a much broader set of circumstances."\textsuperscript{109} What this essentially involves is how a thing will work so long as it retains its approximate present structure in circumstances operating in conjunction with the natural laws that do in fact obtain. Plantinga defends his

\textsuperscript{107}Pojman, \textit{What Can We Know?} 154.

\textsuperscript{108}Plantinga, \textit{Warrant and Proper Function}, 21-22.

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., 23.
version of the design plan against such anomalies and places it instead in the context of the proper cognitive environment.

Proper function, then, is necessary for warranted belief, but as Plantinga argues, it is not sufficient. There are possible situations in which our cognitive faculties are functioning according to a design plan, yet still result in beliefs with little or no warrant. Plantinga explains this in terms of a visit to the distant planet of Alpha Centauri:

Conditions there are much like they are on earth; indeed some of the inhabitants of the planet are (physiologically speaking) surprisingly similar to human beings. Conditions there are propitious for human life; still there are subtle epistemic differences. Cats (or their Alpha Centaurian counterparts) are invisible to human beings; but they emit a sort of radiation unknown on earth, a radiation which works directly on the appropriate portion of a human brain, causing its owner to form the belief that a dog is barking nearby. An Alpha Centaurian cat slinks by; you form the belief that a dog is barking nearby. There is nothing the matter with your noetic faculties, but the belief in question has very little positive epistemic status for you. . . . The problem is that your cognitive faculties and the environment in which you find yourself are not properly attuned. The problem is not with you cognitive faculties; they are in good working order; the problem is with the environment.\textsuperscript{110}

Plantinga's point is that our human cognitive faculties are not designed to function properly under every conceivable kind of circumstances. Thus in order for our cognitive faculties to function properly, they require an appropriate cognitive environment in which they were designed to function.

But even these requirements, while necessary for warrant, are still not sufficient. There are still instances

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{110}Plantinga, "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function," 33.
when our beliefs are not warranted, even though our cognitive faculties are functioning properly in an appropriate environment. Some beliefs, argues Plantinga, have purely pragmatic value despite the evidence:

Someone may remember a painful experience as less painful than it really was, as is sometimes said to be the case with childbirth. You may continue to believe in your friend's honesty long after evidence and objective judgment would have dictated a reluctant change of mind. I may believe that I will recover from a dread disease much more strongly than the statistics justify. In these cases, the relevant faculties may be functioning properly, functioning just as they ought to, but nevertheless not in a way that leads to truth, to the formation of true beliefs. But then how can I say that a belief has positive epistemic status if it is produced by one's faculties functioning properly? 111

In these kinds of cases, there are obvious benefits in holding beliefs that are inconsistent with the available evidence. Plantinga seems to indicate that this is factored into our design plan, and in the appropriate circumstances, we tend to form beliefs that are deficient in warrant. 112 Positive epistemic status, then, requires an additional element in order to be sufficient for warrant. Plantinga contends that, to have warrant, a belief must be formed out of conditions in which the "segment of the design plan is aimed at producing true beliefs." 113


113 Ibid. See, for example, Plantinga, Warrant: The Current Debate, 214. Plantinga writes, "Another way to put it: the belief has warrant only if the segment of the design plan
There is also the further stipulation that the design plan of our cognitive faculties must be a good one. Not all design plans are the same, argues Plantinga:

An angel might design my faculties, aiming at producing a rational creature whose beliefs were for the most part true. If this angel is one of Hume's lazy or incompetent or immature angels, however, then the fact that my beliefs are produced by faculties functioning properly . . . in the environment for which they were designed, and according to a design plan aimed at truth--that fact will not be sufficient for warrant. It is also necessary that the design in question be a good design: that is, that there be a substantial objective probability that a belief of that sort produced under those conditions is true. We might call this the presupposition of reliability; it is the condition of warrant the reliabilist seizes upon.114

This will include with it the element of the degree of warrant. Plantinga argues that the degree of warrant a belief has for a person is just the degree to which that person is inclined to accept the belief in question, provided that the belief is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in an appropriate epistemic environment and that the relevant segment of the design plan is aimed at the production of true beliefs.115


115 Plantinga's notion of degrees of probability is a modification of Goldman's version of reliabilism. Goldman's notion that the justification of a belief is a function of the reliability of the process or processes that caused it (where reliability is the tendency of a process to produce beliefs that are true rather than false), if understood not in terms of types of processes, but rather in the specific cognitive functions that perceive the process or processes, is no longer a theory of reliabilism, argues Plantinga, but rather his theory of proper function. See, for example, Plantinga,
A further qualification of Plantinga's system must be stated at this point. Plantinga has referred to the design plan as the "specifications, or blueprints" of the organism, which has a function or purpose, or, as Plantinga puts it, "several functions or purposes, including both proximate and more remote purposes." 116 Although it is the design plan which causes our cognitive faculties to function properly, as Plantinga intimates, it does not necessarily require a theistic interpretation. Rather, argues Plantinga, a given organism possesses a certain design that is unique to it, and evolution may well be the mechanism or process through which an organism or faculty has received optimal design. In other words, says Plantinga, it does not commit us to the position that human beings have been literally designed by God. 117 It may be that either a theistic God or evolution (or both) designed our cognitive faculties to function properly under the appropriate circumstances or in environments favorable to them. 118


117 Ibid.

118 Pojman, What Can We Know? 154-55. Pojman states that Plantinga's system of faculties functioning properly and in accord to a design plan incorporates the best of reliabilism, but avoids its weaknesses. A cognizer's belief is warranted only on the basis of: (1) a properly functioning
Plantinga's theory of warrant and proper function is, nevertheless, by his own admission, a version of radical naturalism. Claiming to follow Quine at a distance, Plantinga views his theory as entering in on the discussion of an ill-named Naturalistic epistemology, since it is quite compatible with supernaturalistic theism. Plantinga states that "the most plausible way to think of warrant, from a theistic perspective, is in terms of naturalistic epistemology." To be sure, Plantinga entertains the idea of whether a nontheist can easily "make use of this notion of working properly." But his theory is ultimately in line with theistic conceptions that our noetic faculties were designed by a theistic God who is himself "an intellectual or intellectuating being who possesses the maximal degree of knowledge."

Plantinga's point, in Pojman's words, is that up to the recent discussion, "the central thesis that knowledge entails warrant and warrant entails proper function, which in turn entails a design plan has been allowed to exist in a cognitive faculty; (2) a cognitive environment that is fitting for this kind of cognitive faculty; (3) the segment (module) of the design plan governing the production of the belief is aimed at the production of true beliefs; and (4) there is a high statistical probability that beliefs produced in this way will be true.

119 Plantinga, Warrant and Proper Function, 46.
120 Plantinga, "Justification and Theism," 411.
121 Ibid., 405.
metaphysically naturalist worldview. In the final sections of his *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga argues that metaphysical naturalism ultimately lacks a coherent notion of proper function in its evolutionary account of the accidental development of conscious and rational beings. If this is the case, then, metaphysical naturalism cannot claim warrant for its beliefs. In the final analysis, argues Plantinga, if evolution is true and our cognitive faculties are merely a product of chance and necessity, then, it may account for the fact that we have belief-forming mechanisms that result in beliefs produced in order to maximize survival, but not necessarily truth.

Plantinga's critique of classical foundationalism's criteria for basic belief, then, brings us closer to the structure of justification essential to our proposed model of rationality. Since no one is obligated to meet the classical foundationalist criteria for basic beliefs, one is rational in holding belief in God as a properly basic belief, apart from the requirement to supply evidence and arguments. Plantinga has attempted to answer the problem of classical foundationalism on two levels: first, there is the replacement of the classical foundationalist notion of justification

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122 Pojman, *What Can We Know?* 156.


124 Ibid., 216-237.
(i.e., all non-basic beliefs are justified on the basis of propositional evidence from arguments and other basic beliefs) with an inductive appeal to the circumstances or conditions in which it is rational to hold theistic belief (i.e., one's cognitive faculties performing according to their designed purpose in environments suitably designed for those faculties); and second, there is the sense in which Plantinga's model assumes that a cognizer does in fact have regular access to proper design and proper function. It seems, therefore, that an adequate response to Plantinga's model of rationality concerns the question of what criteria are being used to arrive at these two critical aspects of his system.

Assessment of Plantinga’s Model of Rationality

Plantinga argues that the classical foundationalist criterion for basic belief is self-referentially incoherent. That is, it does not satisfy its own conditions for the rationality of basic beliefs. The proposition (i.e., a proposition is properly basic for a person only if that proposition is self-evident, or incorrigible or evident to that person's senses) is not self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, though it may be rationally acceptable to some. So while this no longer obligates us to the

125 See, for example, Paul Helm, Faith & Understanding (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 185.
requirement for sufficient evidence as defined by Enlightenment evidentialism, it does not lead Plantinga to reject all forms of foundationalism. The reason is that Plantinga thinks our noetic structure does have a foundationalist character.\textsuperscript{126} Furthermore, the real issue behind Plantinga’s criticisms have to do with the sorts of beliefs that can be properly basic.\textsuperscript{127} So, once again, to borrow an expression from Roderick Chisholm, this raises the problem of the criterion.\textsuperscript{128}

Plantinga states that: (1) belief in God is properly basic; (2) not every belief is properly basic; and most importantly (3) there is no infallible criterion that would be acceptable to everyone for determining what kind of beliefs qualify as properly basic. The reason why there is no infallible criterion, argues Plantinga, is that each group of people is responsible for arriving at its own set of criteria for properly basic beliefs, and not every group will agree. What we see is that Plantinga notes the character of particular examples of rational belief (i.e., everyday beliefs in which it makes little sense to question the rationality of holding them) and argues that no criterion for what counts as rational belief is warranted if such everyday beliefs are

\textsuperscript{126}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{128}See, for example, \textit{The Problem of the Criterion} (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973).
excluded. Furthermore, it is not that we cannot provide a justification for our everyday beliefs, it is just that we are not required to do so in order to be considered rational.

The essence of Plantinga's model of rationality is that one can be rational in believing in God even if that person does not offer evidence for his belief and cannot provide criteria for what counts as evidence for or against a that belief's truth. But this raises a further and perhaps more significant point. It seems that an adequate model of rationality should be concerned with more than the question of when one is rational in holding belief in God; it should also be concerned with the question of whether one is right in holding that belief because it is true. Plantinga's criteria for being rational do not guarantee that one is right, and yet it seems that being right is important and should be a factor in an overall model of rationality. This takes us beyond the mere question of when one is rational in holding a belief (in terms of being warranted on the basis of the right conditions) and brings us to the matter of whether a more complete system of rationality ought to include attempts, if possible, to examine one's beliefs on evidence. This seems to be precisely what is at issue with respect to our more abstract beliefs like belief in God.

Plantinga contributes to the discussion of rational belief pointing out that we are rational in holding many of

\[129\] Helm, *Faith & Understanding*, 186.
our everyday beliefs as properly basic, even though we have never made an evidential case for them. But even if it can be argued that belief in God can be among one's set of properly basic beliefs, it is difficult to see how this approach can be developed into a model of rationality that applies to all beliefs. One reason for this is because, as we will see in Swinburne's model in chapter four, there are many other propositions of religion and theology which Plantinga would agree are rationally argued for on the basis of evidential reasons. That is, Plantinga's argument for the proper basicality of belief in God does not seem applicable to other religious beliefs where he would agree on the need for deductive and inductive arguments, empirical evidence, and so forth in order to make a rational case. In this sense, it is difficult to see how Plantinga's model of rationality would differ from a more evidentialist approach (e.g., Swinburne) with respect to any other religious belief, other than the belief that God exists.

On yet another level, if Plantinga is right about the notion that belief in God is a properly basic belief similar to many of our everyday beliefs, then perhaps the only right response is to say that it just seems possible that we can take an evidentialist position on any kind of belief, one in which we could offer evidential reasons (at some level) for or against any of our beliefs if necessary. On the other hand, it seems much more difficult a task to show that Plantinga is
simply wrong in saying that belief in God is a properly basic belief similar to many of our everyday beliefs. It may be suggested that Plantinga seems to make too simple a parallel between our everyday properly basic beliefs and belief in God. While he is essentially correct in saying that we apply the same cognitive apparatus to both categories of belief, the fact of the matter is that people do not tend to challenge their everyday beliefs in the way that people can come to doubt their own belief in God. It could be said that if enough people were to challenge their everyday perceptual beliefs, beliefs of memory, or other mental states, it seems that we would ultimately rise to the occasion and supply better evidence for or against holding those beliefs.

Furthermore, while it seems reasonable that one can be within one's epistemic rights to hold everyday beliefs on the basis of prima facie evidence, it seem a more difficult task to show that the same applies to belief in God. As indicated earlier, while Plantinga's criteria for rationality do not guarantee that one is right (or even require one to attempt to verify one's properly basic beliefs as true), it is difficult to imagine that being right about one's beliefs does not factor in at some point. So prima facie evidence about belief in God may be a good place to start if one is to be considered rational in holding that belief, but it still seem that a more complete model of rationality will go beyond the question of
when one is rational in holding a belief and attempt to offer reasons for why one thinks one's belief is right.

It is also questionable whether Plantinga's distinction between having evidence for a belief and having grounds for a belief eliminates the need to provide an acceptable criterion for proper basicality that all rational people can agree on. If the conditions or circumstances relative to a person can constitute the grounds for that person's beliefs, it is difficult to see how beliefs (in terms of propositions arising out of various perceptual and religious experiences) would not be formed on the basis of such experiences.\textsuperscript{130} Such beliefs would constitute evidence in the way that we have been using the term. Plantinga thinks that this is not likely, since a cognizer can be entirely unaware of a belief that is grounded on certain conditions. Since the cognizer may be unaware, such grounds are not formulated as beliefs. But even if this is the case, it seems that such conditions would at best have only a temporal or limited influence. Plantinga so much as admits this when he argues that our \textit{prima facie} beliefs can face at least \textit{prima facie} defeat by counter-evidence.\textsuperscript{131}

Another area in which there seems to be a need to provide criteria for a rational and properly basic belief has

\textsuperscript{130}Helm, 188.

to do with Plantinga's views on proper design and proper function. What is it that gives us the epistemic right to believe that we have proper function and proper design in the first place? Are we not required to use these very same faculties to come to the conclusion that the design is correct, that the faculties are indeed functioning properly, and that the beliefs formed under these conditions are likely true? But if this is so, then how does this avoid being an extended exercise in question-begging?132

If Plantinga is to argue that the conditions which give rise to true beliefs do so, apart from one's being able to determine this by having access to criteria outside of those conditions, he would have to assume in advance that one's cognitive faculties are in fact functioning as they should. Furthermore, he would also be assuming in advance the proper design of the environment in which one's faculties are said to be functioning properly. That is, he is forced to use his available faculties (and rely on the available environment) to make the determination that they are in fact giving one true access to the world. Plantinga does not seem to account for the need to get outside of those conditions to judge whether they are in fact functioning properly.

Plantinga may go on to argue that such conditions are person-variant (i.e., that one need only account for the fact

132 I am here indebted to John Feinberg's thoughtful analysis of Plantinga's thinking on this issue.
that he has certain beliefs that arise out of those conditions, but even if those conditions are person-variant, it does not rule out the need to evaluate those conditions (and their subsequent beliefs) on the basis of criteria that are not person-variant. The point is that, once again, even if this allows for prima facie justification of those beliefs (and one is hence rational on that account), it seems that such rationality is short-lived. It seems more likely that a cognizer will eventually come to a point where he will want to determine whether such beliefs can be evaluated on the basis of evidence that is public and available at some person-invariant level. Such criteria seem to be the best possible way in which one can have evidence that will not simply confirm the psychological states of the cognizer.

Furthermore, Plantinga states that the conditions which give rise to properly basic beliefs should be conditions which aim at truth (presumably in some correspondence sense). But if this is true, it seems that we have no better way of evaluating whether a condition is aimed at the truth, apart from attempts to verify on evidence the propositions arising from those conditions. It seems reasonable to suggest that two people having similar conditions acting upon them (the same cognitive functions and suitably designed environment) can have quite different beliefs arise out of those conditions. This would seem to suggest that there are other criteria that are outside of the cognizer's conditions (e.g., evidence in
the form of other beliefs and propositions one holds as true) which seem to inform them. Two people having ghost-like conditions acted upon them can draw different beliefs. One may accept the condition as warranting belief in ghosts. The other may have such a condition overridden by other beliefs (in the form of public criteria) to which he holds, that is, other beliefs that seem acceptable as common knowledge.

In addition, it seems difficult to draw a parallel between conditions that give rise to tree-like beliefs (being appeared to treely) and conditions that give rise to other forms of non-basic beliefs, such as belief in the Great Pumpkin. We do not tend to challenge conditions that give rise to tree-like beliefs. But we quite regularly question conditions which are said to give rise to our more abstract beliefs. It is not just that the conditions do not warrant belief in the Great Pumpkin, for example, but it is that the public criteria of evidence does not allow for it.

Person-variant beliefs do not resolve this problem. If Plantinga appeals to the prima facie evidence that our faculties are generally to be trusted, then he is (1) relying on some degree of evidence (e.g., inductive evidence generalizations or statistical averages); (2) assuming that our faculties are functioning properly to make the judgment in the first place; and (3) he is assuming that enough people have properly functioning faculties to agree with his judgment. It is difficult to know what criteria this satisfies
if not an appeal to some level of evidence outside of one's psychological state.

It seems, then, that we can proceed with the caution that Plantinga's notion of rationality appears to circumvent one of the most critical aspects of rational belief, specifically that one must make an evidential case for any belief one holds in order to be considered rational in holding that belief. But it further seems that perhaps the next logical step is to consider whether there are criteria that account for reasons and evidence for rational belief that go beyond the mere matter of when one is rational in holding a belief. For it would also seem that rational criteria which aim at the truth of our beliefs are important factors in an overall model of rationality, criteria that can be verified on the basis of public evidence. Such is the aim of our next chapter.
We have argued in chapter three that Plantinga's model of rationality is inadequate due to its lack of criteria for what counts as a properly basic belief. Furthermore, there seems to be a need for a criterion that could provide enough evidence to rationally convince a cognizer that the conditions that give rise to one's beliefs are conditions that have successfully aimed at the truth. Our conclusion was that we need a model of rationality which can supply such criteria. We now turn to a model of rationality in which we come much closer to the criteria for sufficient evidence, even though that evidence need not satisfy the criteria of Enlightenment evidentialism.

The Probability of Theistic Belief

A Cumulative Case

A common feature among non-theistic thinkers who hold to the evidentialist assumption is the notion that there are good evidential reasons for denying that there can be a rational case for theism.\(^1\) So while theists attempt to offer

\(^1\)See, for example, J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4-6.
coherent arguments and reasons in support of its cognitive claims, in the final analysis, evidentialist objectors to belief in God argue that it lacks sufficient evidence (either of a directly verifiable empirical nature or of a self-evident propositional nature in the form of deductive proofs) for its rational defence. One current and evidentialist response to this objection is the model of rationality found in the cumulative case evidentialism of Richard Swinburne.  

Relying on models of rationality upon which we base some of our best scientific theories, Swinburne argues that there are evidences for theistic belief that make it more probable than not that theism is the best hypothesis for explaining the various phenomena of our world. Swinburne's thinking is highly influenced by the philosophy of science, and as such, his rational theories for theism are consistent with his conclusion that "the great theories and predictions of modern science concern matters far beyond our observation." He writes:

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What makes scientific theories meaningful is not their verifiability, but the fact that they describe their entities (atoms) and their properties (velocity, spin) with words used somewhat similarly to words used for describing ordinary mundane things. Unobservable entities such as atoms, for example, are commonly described through familiar examples of analogous language (e.g., that they are like very small billiard-balls and somewhat like waves, only not waves in media like water). The observable phenomena and additional background knowledge, then, make it highly probable that a given hypothesis (e.g., atomic theory) is the best explanatory hypothesis of the available evidence. So, while we may not be in a position to observe these entities directly, Swinburne correctly asserts that it is reasonable to conclude that we have knowledge of them by virtue of the phenomena we actually do observe. Theistic theories, then, may work in a similar fashion, and as such, it may be legitimate to postulate a

4 Ibid., 4-5.

5 Ibid. See, for example, Michael Peterson and others, Reason & Religious Belief (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 165. Swinburne is not assuming that we have exhaustive and indisputable knowledge of natural phenomena, nor does he assume that any specific theory is immune from revision. Rather, he believes that our current scientific theories (together with their level of confirmation) are adequate for explaining the available evidence. Serious revisions of accepted theories (in order to account for anomalies) would appear ad hoc and likely upset the whole structure of science. Swinburne's point is that there are some events (e.g., the universe's existence and design) for which we could justifiably argue there are no natural explanations that are ultimately satisfying. See also, Richard Swinburne, The Concept of Miracle (London: Macmillan, 1970), 29-32.
theistic hypothesis as the best explanation of the available phenomena.

We may briefly state Swinburne's model of rationality, then, in the following terms: In order to be rational in holding a belief, one must hold it for what Swinburne calls "good epistemological reasons," that is, for reasons one thinks are true, given the total available evidence, even if that belief cannot be verified as true. Furthermore, to be rational about one's belief is to judge that a belief on evidence is more probable than not, that is, to think that one has good reasons for believing that a belief is more likely true than not, given the total evidence. The total available evidence is in part a relation among a person's beliefs (i.e., reasoning from basic to non-basic beliefs). Total evidence consists of the set of propositions (both basic and non-basic) to which a person holds, that is, propositions that seem to be true and which that person is inclined to believe (but not solely on the basis of other propositions that one believes (e.g., reports of perception, memory, and other mental states that are forced on one by one's experience of the world).

Prior beliefs (i.e., beliefs a person may hold in advance of an investigation of the reasons for holding it) or basic beliefs are justified on both doxastic and non-doxastic reasons (e.g., other mental states, including hunches and intuitions, and other basic propositions of which a cognizer is aware). Justification on this model is a reason-based
conception, in which a cognizer may appeal to evidence in the form of other prior or basic beliefs, other mental states accepted on the basis of one's experience, or one's inductive standards (i.e., beliefs based on experience, testimony, authority, or even other factors that are not necessarily articulated). Justification follows an essentially foundationalist structure, in which non-basic beliefs are inferred from basic beliefs.

Basic beliefs are not necessarily incorrigible on evidence (although they may become incorrigible for psychological reasons). They are held with varying degrees of confidence (i.e., the degree to which one's experiences make that belief seem more likely than not). Basic propositions formed out of one's experiences and evidence ultimately become basic beliefs, unless rendered improbable by one's other basic beliefs. Basic beliefs report what a cognizer is initially inclined to believe, together with the degree of probability or initial confidence one has in them, given the available evidence.

On this model, there are degrees of rationality, depending on the extent to which one's evidence, arguments, and procedures for evaluating the evidence suggest that a belief is more likely true than not. One's calculations for a belief's likelihood of truth are not very explicit, but one is said to have certainty about one's belief in extreme cases of the likelihood of truth, that is, when one has in fact
verified one's belief as true on evidence. This further implies that the less likely a belief is thought to be true on evidence, the more one is expected to provide additional evidence for that belief if one is thought to be rational in holding it (although one is not required to verify that belief as true).

The Probability of Theories and Beliefs

One of the central features of Swinburne's rational defence of theistic belief is his move from deductive to inductive forms of arguments.\textsuperscript{6} Whereas in a sound deductive argument the premises make the conclusion certain, it is not the case that all arguments need to be evaluated by such deductive standards.\textsuperscript{7} Rather, it is Swinburne's suggestion that there can be rational arguments for theistic belief without necessarily appealing to deductive standards.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{6}Swinburne discusses the nature of inductive arguments in \textit{The Existence of God}, ch.1.

\textsuperscript{7}See Merrie Bergman, James Moor, and Jack Nelson, \textit{The Logic Book}, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1990), 10. Deductive arguments are valid if and only if it is not possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false (i.e., it is not possible consistently both to assert the premise and to deny the conclusion). Deductive arguments are invalid if and only if it is not deductively valid. See also, Irving Copi and Carl Cohen, \textit{Introduction to Logic}, 9th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), 206.

\textsuperscript{8}See, for example, Bergman, Moor, and Nelson, 11. Deductively invalid arguments may still be considered good arguments if they are evaluated by inductive standards. An argument is said to be inductively strong if the premises provide strong evidence for the truth of the conclusion. The more probable the truth of the conclusion, given the premises, the stronger the argument. An inductive argument is weak if
Stated differently, if the traditional evidence for theism (e.g., the theistic proofs) experiences a series of failures due to its reliance on purely deductive arguments, the evidence for theism can be inductively re-examined in light of its contribution to a culmulative case argument from the evidence.

While deductive arguments (assuming they are valid) make formal attempts at being sound (i.e., true) and consequently rational, Swinburne realizes that one can easily agree to their soundness simply by granting the truthfulness of the premises for the sake of the argument. But such a reasoning process begs the question. It is not rational to argue for the soundness of a valid deductive argument simply by assuming the truthfulness of its premises. Swinburne intends to offer instead a system of rationality in which one has good reasons to think that the evidence offered in support of a given conclusion (or theory) makes that conclusion more probable than not.⁹

According to a cumulative case evidential argument for theism, the hypothesis of theism is said to make better sense

of all the available evidence (e.g., a posteriori arguments like the cosmological argument for God's existence, the pattern of history and the existence of some evidence of miracles, the occurrence of religious experiences, etc.) than does any other alternative. When each piece of evidence is examined individually, the evidence is more to be expected if God does exists than if he does not. And taken together Swinburne believes the evidence to suggest that the existence of God is more probable than not. This is essentially the way Swinburne uses probability to rationally confirm that a theory is likely true. Swinburne attempts to show by the application of Bayes' Theorem that the probability of theism (i.e., prior and posterior probability) in relation to the


11Banner, The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief, 68.

evidences of the world is greater than one half.\textsuperscript{13} A brief review of the theorem is all that is necessary to consider the degree to which Swinburne's argument for the probability of theories influences his thinking on the nature and rationality of beliefs, both theistic and otherwise.

Swinburne states that the probability of any hypothesis is essentially the extent to which one proposition (or set of propositions) renders probable another proposition (or set of propositions). So the probability of a hypothesis $h$ on available evidence $e$ and background knowledge $k$ is a function of its prior probability and its explanatory power (posterior probability). Bayes' Theorem, put in these terms, may be expressed as follows:

$$P(h/e.k) = \frac{P(e/h.k) \times P(h/k)}{P(e/k)}.\textsuperscript{14}$$

Given this formulation, Swinburne suggests that our evidence can be distributed between $e$ and $k$ (where $k$ may represent mere tautological knowledge or some aspect of contingent

\textsuperscript{13}Swinburne, The Existence of God, 278. See also, John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 104-5. For a helpful introduction to the conditional probability of Bayes' theorem, see Patrick J. Hurley, A Concise Introduction to Logic, 6th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), 539-42. Bayes' Theorem is named after the eighteenth-century English clergyman Thomas Bayes (1702-1761). The conditional probability of a given theory is the probability of that theory being the case given certain evidence, and is expressed $P(A \text{ given } B)$.

knowledge). $P(h/k)$ is the prior probability of $h$, that is, how likely $h$ is to be true prior to obtaining new evidence $e$, on background knowledge alone. $P(h/e.k)$ is the probability of $h$, that is, how likely $h$ is true in light of evidence $e$ and background knowledge $k$. $P(e/h.k)$ represents the predictive ability of $h$, that is, the likelihood that $e$ will occur if $h$ (along with $k$) is true. And finally, $P(e/k)$ is the prior probability that $e$ is the case solely on the basis of $k$ being true.\textsuperscript{15} Feinberg summarizes Bayes' Theorem in the following terms:

This says that the probability of a hypothesis, given the background information and available evidence, equals the prior probability of the hypothesis times the probability that there will be evidence of the sort in the world that there is (given the truth of the hypothesis and the background information), divided by the probability that there will be the sort of evidence we have, given the background information we know.\textsuperscript{16}

Each expression of the theorem receives a numerical value, through which one then determines the probability of the hypothesis from the results of working the math problem. Probabilities range between 0 and 1, and once it is determined that a hypothesis has a greater probability than .5, it is said to be confirmed in the sense that it is more likely true than not.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Swinburne, "Does Theism Need a Theodicy?" 303-4. See also, Bringsjord, 128.

\textsuperscript{16}Feinberg, \textit{Evil}, 163.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
Not all inductive arguments have the same force with respect to the probability of the conclusion. Swinburne attempts to focus on inductive arguments for which he believes the premises make the conclusion probable, that is, more probable than not. He distinguishes between C-inductive arguments and P-inductive arguments. We have C-inductive arguments when the premises or evidence confirm the conclusion of the hypothesis in the sense that the evidence has raised the probability of the hypothesis from what it was, or would have been, apart from that evidence. We have P-inductive arguments when the premises or evidence confirm the conclusion of the hypothesis in the sense that the evidence makes the hypothesis more likely than not to be true.\(^{18}\) In other words, each of the phenomena (i.e., the evidences) renders a theory more probable than it would be without it and results in a correct C-inductive (confirmatory) argument for a given hypothesis (e.g., theism). Of course, the question is whether correct C-inductive arguments can be built together into a correct P-inductive argument showing that the final probability of a theory is greater than .5 (i.e., that the theory is likely true).\(^{19}\) And, as Swinburne admits, it is


\(^{19}\)Hick, 106. See also, Bringsjord, 128. Bringsjord argues that if each of e\(_1\), ..., e\(_6\) represent evidence in a series of six purportedly good C-inductive arguments, then where h = 'God exists,' \(P(h/e_1, \ldots, e_6 \& k) > .5\).
harder to tell when we have a good $P$-inductive argument than when we have a good $C$-inductive argument, but the primary concern is with relations of non-deductive support between certain evidence, in the light of a body of beliefs or propositions constituting background knowledge, and a hypothesis or conclusion.  

Prior Probability

Swinburne argues that a successful application of the theorem includes an assessment of the prior probability of hypotheses on tautological background information (i.e., apart from considering evidence of the sort in the world that there is). That is, "a hypothesis is confirmed by certain evidence if and only if (apart from or prior to that evidence's being observed) the addition of the hypothesis to the background knowledge or belief makes it more probable that the evidence would occur than it would be in relation to the background knowledge or belief alone."  

Swinburne refers to this as intrinsic probability. But it is unlikely that the intrinsic probability of a theory can be determined only on the basis of some tautological evidence. This leads Swinburne to adopt specific criteria (e.g., simplicity, scope, and background knowledge) as a further means of determining the prior probability of theories. The more detailed and broader range

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20 Swinburne, The Existence of God, 278.

21 Mackie, 96.
of claims that a hypothesis makes, the lower its intrinsic probability. Hypotheses that postulate fewer entities (or fewer kinds of entities) have greater intrinsic probability.\textsuperscript{22}

When considering the prior probability of a theory (e.g., the hypothesis of theism), Swinburne argues that (like scientific theories) the criterion of \textit{simplicity} is crucial. It is simplicity, argues Swinburne, which gives an explanatory hypothesis (whether scientific or personal) its greatest degree of prior probability:

\begin{quote}
The existence of God is a very simple hypothesis which leads us to expect various very general and more specific phenomena which otherwise we would not expect, and for that reason is rendered probable by the phenomena. Or rather, as with any big scientific theory, each group of phenomena add to the probability of the theory; together they make it significantly more probable than not.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

A simple theory is one which accounts for few laws, each connecting few variables. It is a theory which postulates few entities, few kinds of entity, few properties, and few kinds of property. Simple theories have fewer details to account for, and there is less chance to misinterpret the data. Swinburne contends that scientists follow the same pattern of argument to argue to the existence of unobservable entities as causes of observable phenomena.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 304-5. See also, Swinburne, \textit{The Existence of God}, 52.

\textsuperscript{23}Swinburne, "Autobiography," 10. See also, Clark, 37.

\textsuperscript{24}Swinburne, "Autobiography," 5-6.
The criterion of simplicity is also essential for Swinburne to argue his further point that a scientific explanation of the existence of the universe is too complex to account for the phenomena of our world accurately (i.e., it works against the criterion of simplicity). Scientific explanations, for example, explain phenomena in terms of the regularity of laws and some prior state of affairs. Phenomenon e is explained in terms of some prior state of affairs f (the cause) and some regularity l with respect to the way objects involved in f and e behave.  

Personal explanation, on the other hand, is when the occurrence of a phenomenon e is explained as brought about by a rational agent p doing some action intentionally. The point is that an explanatory hypothesis is likely to be more probable when it invokes fewer entities and fewer kinds of entities. Furthermore, such entities should have easily describable properties and behave in mathematically simple kinds of ways (i.e., a person having certain capacities and purposes which do not change erratically) which give rise to many phenomena. Swinburne thinks that if we cannot find a scientific theory which satisfies the criteria in attempting to best explain the phenomena, one should look for a personal explanation.  

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25 Ibid., 6.  
26 Swinburne, The Existence of God, 32.  
the phenomena in question, what we postulate should lead us to expect (to some degree of probability) what we observe.\textsuperscript{28} Using the criterion of simplicity, then, Swinburne argues that the personal explanation of theism ultimately offers the greatest degree of simplicity, and thereby, a higher degree of prior probability than any of the alternatives.

A further criterion for determining the prior probability of an explanatory hypothesis is a matter of background knowledge (i.e., our knowledge of how well a theory fits with our general knowledge of how the world works). Do the kinds of entities and laws which the theory postulates tend to agree with those which we reasonably think are the case in other fields? Swinburne suggests, for example, that if a theory postulates no unknown entities, then on background knowledge, it is more likely to be true than a theory which postulates new (or even unobservable) entities.\textsuperscript{29}

The final criterion in determining a theory's prior probability is that of scope. The narrower a theory's scope, the more it adds to the prior probability (and simplicity) of a theory. Swinburne suggests that the more objects involved or allegedly covered by a theory, the less probable it is. For the more a theory asserts, the more it is likely to explain the data inaccurately or inadequately. Hypotheses

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., 6 and 11.

\textsuperscript{29}Swinburne, The Existence of God, 52.
which have the best fit with background knowledge and are narrowest in scope are the most likely candidates for simplicity. Of course, Swinburne's criteria for the prior probability of theories do not ipso facto rule out the idea that some theories which do not satisfy these conditions are in fact more probable than not. Rather, such criteria seem to represent what Swinburne sees as the accepted pattern of science in determining a theory's prior probability. Theories, then, have explanatory power (or probability) in so far as they are able to explain the wide range of phenomena, particularly when the phenomena are not otherwise to be expected apart from the theory. The greater the theory's prior probability, the greater the theory's power to explain the phenomena, and the more likely it is to be true.30

Posterior Probability

When considering the posterior probability of a hypothesis, Swinburne is concerned with just how all the available evidence makes a hypothesis probable. In other words, given the determination that "all the relevant factual evidence is included in e, and k is mere tautological evidence, what is the value of P(h/e.k)? We may not be able to give it an exact numerical value, but the important issue

30Ibid.
is whether $P(h/e.k) > P(\neg h/e.k)$ and so $> 1/2$. Do we have a good $P$-inductive argument to the existence of God?"31

Evidences considered in determining the posterior probability of the theistic hypothesis, for example, include the existence of the universe; the universe's temporal orderliness and design; the existence of humans and animals; the fact of conscious beings, particularly human agents of limited power and knowledge, and possessing a degree of free will in which humans have opportunities to co-operate in acquiring knowledge, changing their environment, influencing history. Other forms of evidence include the occurrence of miracles; the fact of morality (which Swinburne thinks does not add evidential weight); and the existence of evil, which he also regards as having no evidential weight. Religious experience, however, is given more weight than the other forms of evidence. Swinburne contends that "unless the probability of theism on other evidence is very low indeed, the testimony of many witnesses to experiences apparently of God suffices to make many of those experiences probably veridical. That is, the evidence of religious experience is in that case sufficient to make theism over all probable. 32

In theistic terms, then, Swinburne believes that there is higher probability for the hypothesis of theism (given

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31 Ibid., 278.

background knowledge and posterior evidence) than there is for the hypothesis based on background knowledge alone, if and only if there is greater probability that the evidence obtains given the theistic hypothesis and background knowledge than there is for the evidence to obtain (given only background knowledge) apart from the theistic hypothesis.\(^{33}\)

Part of what is at stake here is whether Swinburne's model of rationality (in terms of the probability of theories and beliefs) goes beyond the suggestion that a theory (whether scientific, philosophical, or theistic) is at best in better agreement with the known data and offers a more coherent and comprehensive explanation of the data (taking future evidence into account) than alternative theories available at the time. An adequate model of rationality has to account for how it will deal with the possibility that future evidence could falsify our synthetic beliefs. It should not be difficult to see that Swinburne intends to offer a system that, while not offering deductive certainty of synthetic claims, does suggest that one's beliefs or theories will experience a level of probability that is not expected to be shown false as a result of future evidence. Such evidence is thought to be evidence of the appropriate kind and quality that it offers sufficient reason for a cognizer to be rationally convinced that it is more reasonable than not to believe that theories supported by this evidence are more likely true than not.

Swinburne's approach to the justification of theories or beliefs, then, is different from Murphy's notion that all of our current theories or beliefs are likely to be replaced by future theories thought to better explain the evidence, and that the most we can expect of our formulations is that they will be tentative and subject to revision. While Swinburne's notion of the probability of theories is offered in place of unachievable systems of indubitable certainty, it is also expected that his model can make more rational sense out of the synthetic claims of theism and allow one to reach greater levels of certitude through a cumulative approach to the available evidence. The question remains, however, whether Swinburne's model of rationality provides the kind or quality of evidence that can serve as an adequate replacement to the sufficient evidence of Enlightenment evidentialism and evidential arguments.

The Nature of Belief

Our purpose up to this point has been to see how Swinburne uses prior and posterior evidence to argue for the


35 See, for example, Antony Flew, God and Philosophy (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 141. See also, Selmer Bringsjord, "Swinburne's Argument from Consciousness," 128.
overall probability of explanatory theories. By using the same procedures of determining the prior and posterior evidence for beliefs, Swinburne thinks one can determine the probability of a given belief and why one is rational in holding it. It is Swinburne's contention that, while the concept of belief is not a completely clear one, we may still be in an epistemic position to examine what it means to hold to the concept of believing that so-and-so (e.g., that there is a God).  

Swinburne argues that the nature of belief (as suggested by public criteria) is the concept of "believing so-and-so more probable (or more likely) than such-and-such." Belief, like theories, is relative to alternatives, and according to Swinburne, the alternative with which a proposition is normally contrasted is its negation. He writes:

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\text{The negation of a proposition } p \text{ is the proposition not-} p, \text{ or } "\text{it is not the case that } p\". \ldots \text{ Normally to believe that } p \text{ is to believe that } p \text{ is more probable than not-} p. \]

\[36\text{Swinburne, Faith and Reason, 3.}\]

\[37\text{Ibid., 3-4.}\]

\[38\text{Ibid., 4. See, for example, Banner, The Justification of Science and the Rationality of Religious Belief, 101. Banner indicates that Swinburne's notion of probability here is to be distinguished from those instances where one acts on the assumption that } p. \text{ In such a case, it is Swinburne's contention that we do not have a valid instance of belief, since the assumption is held without thinking that } p \text{ is probable to any significant degree. This amounts to what Anthony Kenny describes as the "acting-as-if" behavior of the}\]
Furthermore, Swinburne seems to suggest that he sees the probability of a belief (together with its relation to alternatives) in terms of the likelihood of its truth. He thinks that one's being certain of $p$ is an extreme case of $p$ being probable, but more importantly in terms of an approach to rationality, if one does not believe that $p$ is probable, then one cannot believe that $p$ is true. Likewise, if one believes that it is more probable that not-$p$ than that $p$, then one cannot be rational in believing that $p$. In addition, it is important to understand that, while the probability of a belief does not necessarily rule out epistemic certainty (i.e., the greatest degree of evidence one can have for either analytic or synthetic statements), such certainty is not a necessary condition for a belief's probability.

Belief and Evidence

Swinburne has argued up to this point that beliefs, very much like theories, are defined in terms of probability. To believe in the proposition that $p$ is, in essence, to have the inclination that $p$ is more probable than not. The notion of epistemic justification, then, is understood in terms of the warrant, reasons, or grounds that make one justified and rational in holding a belief. So on Swinburne's account of justification, while a person does not have to verify (i.e.,


establish a belief on the basis of the total evidence available) a given belief as true, a person is rational and justified if he thinks the evidence renders it likely to be true. Swinburne refers to this as epistemic probability, and suggests that it is relative to evidence. A proposition's being epistemically probable (i.e., more likely true than not true) depends on the evidence-class relative to which the probability is assessed.  

The epistemic probability of a proposition, argues Swinburne, is determined along lines that are similar to the probability of theories. In both cases, it is a question of the extent to which the evidence in question supports a proposition or theory. But, as Swinburne recognizes, establishing the probability of a proposition on evidence is a more difficult and arbitrary task than he thinks is true in the case of theories:

The epistemic probability of most ordinary claims cannot of course be given an exact numerical value; the most that one can say about the probability of most ordinary claims is that one claim is more probable than some other claim. (If one claim is more probable than its negation, it has a probability of more than 1/2. If on the evidence a claim is certainly true it has a probability of 1; if it is certainly false, it has a probability of 0.)

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40 Ibid., 18-19.

41 Ibid., 19.
It will become clear, however, that the matter of probability and certainty with respect to one's propositions involves a host of epistemic features. That is, the epistemic probability of a person's beliefs, in Swinburne's view, concerns the evidence available to a person at the time. Swinburne's position amounts to the claim that $S$ believes that $p$ "if and only if $S$ believes that the total evidence available to him makes $p$ more probable than any alternative; that, on the total evidence available to him, $p$ is more probable than any alternative."\(^{42}\)

Part of what functions as the prior probability of a belief is what Swinburne refers to as a person's inductive standards. He states that when two or more people are attempting to judge the probability of a proposition, they may differ "not in their evidence, but in their inductive standards, that is, in what conclusions they judge to be probable on the basis of the evidence."\(^{43}\) Briefly put, inductive standards include some kind of generalization principle about the evidence. If all (or most) objects of some kind have been observed to have a certain property, then it is (very) probable that some other object of that kind will have the same property. Of course, people will differ on how many observations are needed before a judgment of high probability can be made. Most inductive standards are

\(^{42}\)Ibid.

\(^{43}\)Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 37.
identifiable on the basis of commonly accepted criteria, but some people will have inductive standards quite different from the rest of us (e.g., the Azande for whom it seems intuitively right that a spell can be cast on someone, or a gambler who, having just become the father of a baby boy, thinks coincidental resemblances of events are important and bets on a horse called "Sonny Boy"). Some inductive standards just seem intuitively right. Other inductive standards, on the other hand, may make it altogether rational for a person to accept a belief, even though that person may be unable to state those standards in propositional terms. Furthermore, not all inductive standards are grounded in experience (i.e., observation of phenomena). One such standard is the testimony principle, that other things being equal, if someone tells you that \( p \), then probably \( p \). This principle is subsequently qualified on the basis of future evidence and one's own observations. We tend to give higher probabilities to our own observations. In addition, there is the inductive standard of authority, that generally speaking, we believe what we are told on authority.\(^{44}\) But beliefs based on testimony and (when it is possible) beliefs based on authority are typically qualified by later attempts to investigation the evidence on one's own.

\(^{44}\)Ibid., 38-42.
Swinburne's point is that a person's inductive principles are his beliefs (whether explicit or not) about what makes what probable. Inductive principles, to some extent, may represent the psychological states and personal preferences of the cognizer. This is important to Swinburne's model of rationality and justification, since, like basic beliefs, one's inductive standards usually give rise to other beliefs that one finds probable by the evidence.\footnote{Ibid., 44.}

The relation among a cognizer's beliefs and the degree to which such a relation counts as evidence with respect to epistemic probability is primarily a doxastic relation (i.e., solely on the grounds of other propositions which he believes), but it can also involve other non-doxastic states as well.\footnote{Ibid.} Part of a cognizer's evidence, then, consists of the set of propositions that are basic for that person. Basic propositions are propositions which seem to be true to a person and which that person is inclined to believe, but not solely on the ground that they are made probable by other propositions which he believes.\footnote{Ibid.} Reports of a person's perceptions ("I see a clock") or what a cognizer perceives ("the clock reads 5.10"), or a cognizer's memories ("I remember going to London yesterday") or what a cognizer remembers ("it rained in London yesterday") are examples of a

\footnote{Ibid., 44.} \footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{Ibid.}
person's basic propositions. Swinburne points out that a person is inclined to hold such basic beliefs simply because he is inclined to believe that they are forced upon him by his experience of the world.

Swinburne's notion of basic belief, however, differs from that of classical foundationalism, since his idea of a basic belief is not necessarily one that requires no further justification or is indubitable. He writes:

In terming all such propositions basic I do not mean to imply either that they are known infallibly (i.e., without the possibility of error) or that they are known incorrigibly (i.e., without the possibility of the subject subsequently rationally believing that he has been in error about them) or that they are known at all. On the contrary, the subject will have different degrees of confidence in them (i.e. he ascribes to them different degrees of prior probability). 48

Much like what counts as evidence for determining the probability of explanatory hypotheses, a person's reasons for initially holding some basic propositions with a certain degree of confidence is because "his experiences have been such that it seems to him to be probable to that degree." 49

A cognizer's evidence, then, consists of the set of basic propositions which report what he is initially inclined to believe, together with the degree of prior probability or initial confidence he has in them. 50

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 20-1. Swinburne is aware of the manner in which his system differs from strong foundationalism. He writes, "The view that a man's system of beliefs must
According to Swinburne, then, it is this kind of evidence that allows a basic proposition to acquire the status of a belief (and ultimately a basic belief) unless it is rendered improbable by other basic beliefs to which a person holds. Most basic propositions acquire the status of beliefs, but some do not. Swinburne writes:

The greater the prior probability of basic propositions \( p \), and the greater the conditional probability of a further proposition \( q \) on the basic propositions \( p \) (i.e. the probability that if \( p \) then \( q \)), the greater the resultant probability of the further proposition. In so far as the subject believes that the prior and conditional probability of basic propositions ultimately be justified by their being made probable by some basic set of beliefs which just seem (on grounds of experience or reason) to the man to be so, is usually called Foundationalism. The alternative is the view that each of a man's beliefs might be justified solely by being made probable by some other belief, and so there could be an infinite regress of justification, or justification in a circle (e.g. belief A by belief B, belief B by belief C, and belief C by belief A). I do not find it coherent to suppose that each of a man's beliefs could be justified only by some other belief. . . . I assume only that in practice for humans things are not like this. Human beliefs find their foundation in beliefs whose justification is not solely in terms of other beliefs. Those called foundationalists often hold that basic propositions are incorrigible; as I say, I am not claiming that." (20-21, n.3.).

William Alston has suggested that Swinburne at this point may be too relaxed in his standards for rationality. See also, William P. Alston, "Swinburne on Faith and Belief," in Reason and the Christian Religion: Essays in Honour of Richard Swinburne, ed. Alan G. Padgett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 23, n. 3. Alston thinks (contra Swinburne) that people often hold propositions or beliefs, even when rendered improbable by one's set of basic beliefs. Alston thinks that we are closer to an acceptable definition if Swinburne's phrase, "unless other of a man's basic beliefs render it improbable" is replaced with "unless the person sees that other of his basic beliefs render it improbable."
probabilities are great, the more probable he will believe the further proposition to be. So what is notable about Swinburne's criterion for basicity, then, is his qualification that the person is not inclined to believe the proposition solely on the grounds that it is made probable by other propositions the person believes. The proposition might be believed, in part, because of its support from other beliefs or cognitive states. As such, as Alston has pointed out, Swinburne's suggestion that many different forms of perceptual beliefs may count as basic should be understood as being compatible with the view that those beliefs are partly based on other background beliefs, so long as there is at least some non-doxastic basis (e.g., experience) somewhere in the picture.

While it is clear that Swinburne's examples of basic propositions include both doxastic and non-doxastic evidence, it is always a question of prior probability as to whether a proposition gains the status of belief, and such prior probability largely influences the assessment of the overall evidence available to a person at any given time. I may, for example, have a certain experience in my room one night which initially causes me to form the basic proposition that I saw a ghost. But my evidence of what I have read and been told about the kinds of things that are in the world may ultimately

52 Ibid., 20-1.
53 Alston, 23.
make such a proposition very unlikely to me. Consequently, I do not in fact come to believe what seemed to me, on the evidence of my senses at the time, to be the case.\textsuperscript{54}

How, then, does one go about assessing a belief's probability with respect to the additional evidence at one's disposal? Swinburne admits that there is no austere manner in which he believes a person typically considers how certain evidence could count for or against the probability of a given belief. People do not tend to make very explicit calculations in holding their ordinary beliefs:

Normally for example men do not consider directly whether their evidence makes some proposition probable (or rules out some would-be basic belief), but only whether their other beliefs do this, but this is on the assumption (which can be questioned), that those other beliefs are rendered probable by evidence.\textsuperscript{55}

Swinburne further recognizes that, should a person be cognizant of the reasons why his evidence makes a given proposition probable, this does not necessarily imply that such a person could at the same time state explicitly the inductive standards (i.e., standards for how one proposition is made probable by another) which are being used.

In addition to the question of prior probability and evidence for a belief, Swinburne contends that there are no restrictions on the kinds of propositions which can function as basic. Basic propositions may include ordinary reports of

\textsuperscript{54}Swinburne, \textit{Faith and Reason}, 21.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 21-22.
things perceived and remembered, but they may also involve a person's *hunches* and *intuitions* that are thought to be justified (in terms of reasons that the cognizer thinks are true) by the experiences to which that person has been subjected but cannot justify in terms of propositions. This is important to Swinburne's model of rationality, since he follows a form of epistemic structure in which we use basic propositions to reason to other justified beliefs. Furthermore, argues Swinburne, a person may be rational for holding a belief in a proposition even if the evidence for it changes or is eclipsed over a period of time. This is so not by way of one's subjective certainty (i.e., to be strongly convinced that a belief is right apart from good evidence), but by way of memory (or some other cognitive state) of which he is aware.

Swinburne's claim for what makes one rational in holding a belief (i.e., that a man believes *p* if and only if he believes that his total evidence makes *p* more probable than any alternative) does not rule out the possibility of being rational for holding to certain beliefs for which a person cannot cite public evidence. This is not to say that a person's reasons for holding a belief can be arbitrary, or that his reasons can exclude any kind of evidence, but rather,

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56Ibid., 22. I may remember, for example, that some past investigation of historical evidence or arguments (which I no longer can recall in detail) gave me good reason to believe that Washington did not chop down the cherry tree.
it is that a person may be considered rational at the point in which he is convinced that his belief has not been overruled by any further evidence. Swinburne thinks that such beliefs help to provide a rational framework in which certain kinds of belief can be thought of in terms of the different kinds of evidence and degrees of probability by which they are supported.\(^{57}\) This offers further insights into Swinburne's model of rationality and his arguments for the various levels of rationality upon which rational beliefs are based. On this additional qualification, then, his model of rationality becomes one in which a belief is rational for a person if that person is justified in holding it for epistemological reasons, and by epistemological reasons he has in mind primarily the likelihood (or probability) of the belief being true.\(^{58}\)

By restricting a person's evidence at this point to the set of basic propositions for that person, Swinburne seems to betray some form of foundationalist structure to his model of rationality. A cognizer, for example, holds to a proposition that is rendered more likely than its negation, not "by evidence that consists, in whole or in part, of

\(^{57}\)Ibid., 23. Cf. Alston, 23. Alston believes that this statement by Swinburne is a concession to the notion that people are not always so rational as to reject a belief when it is rendered improbable by the public evidence. The crux of the matter is that if a person has enough confidence in the truth of a proposition (whether scientific or theistic), then the belief will be held even if the rest of that person's beliefs make it improbable.

\(^{58}\)Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 45; Cf., also, Alston, 29-30.
propositions that themselves are believed solely on the basis of further evidence," but on the basis of evidence that seems to have privileged status (i.e., the belief that one's basic propositions are likely true) for that person. Coherentism in knowledge (i.e., the notion that one proposition is supported by evidence from other propositions possessing no particularly privileged status) does not seem to be an option for Swinburne. William Alston, for example, sees Swinburne's restriction of evidence to basic propositions as reflecting a foundationalist assumption "that the support for all non-basic beliefs can ultimately be traced back to basic beliefs." 60

Swinburne admits that there is a sense in which privileged status is granted to certain propositions once they have become beliefs for a person. He writes:

> Once a proposition (e.g. 'there are no such things as ghosts') is admitted into the belief-corpus, it plays its part in promoting further beliefs, without the extent of its own evidential support very often being brought explicitly into question. 61

Alston understands this commitment by Swinburne to be a form of psychological foundationalism, which claims that all

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59 Alston, 23.
60 Ibid., 24.
61 Swinburne, Faith and Reason, 22.
non-basic beliefs are based, directly or indirectly, on basic beliefs. Alston states that psychological foundationalism, unlike stronger forms of epistemic foundationalism, is not so much concerned with the evidence one has in support of beliefs that are thought to be indubitable; rather, it is simply a commitment that one has toward a particular proposition, whether such a commitment is based, at least in part, upon other propositional evidence or beliefs that a person has, or whether such evidence is based solely upon something that seems incorrigible to that person.

So, psychologically speaking, one's basic beliefs can take on an incorrigible quality once one becomes convinced that they are true. While there may be a level of certainty based on appropriate evidence, there is also the sense in which Swinburne seems to admit that one's basic beliefs can be held without an appeal to propositional evidence or arguments, and they may be held with a sort of psychological incorrigibility. This is not to say that one has basic beliefs for no reason (in terms of some reason-based conception of justification), but that such reasons (e.g., reasons based on authority or testimony) seem rather clear and are typically not questioned by the one holding them unless evidence to the contrary becomes overwhelming. This, as we will see, represents a significant shift away from the system of epistemic

foundationalism in which it is argued that in order to be justified a non-basic belief must be based ultimately on basic beliefs that are thought to be self-evident, evident to the senses, incorrigible or indubitable.\(^{63}\)

It is Swinburne's contention, then, that his formula for the prior probability of ordinary beliefs is equally applicable to theistic belief, even should a person admit at the outset that the public evidence seems to count against that belief. He writes of the person holding to theistic belief:

> He must claim either that the public evidence has been wrongly assessed or that he has private evidence. He may claim that while at first sight it looks as if the various arguments do not render probable the existence of God, in fact their force has not been appreciated by the public or that there is public evidence which others have not noticed, which does render probable the existence of God.\(^{64}\)

So even an appeal to private evidence (e.g., prophetic visions) can be rational if a cognizer is claiming that his theistic belief is based on reasons or evidence similar to the awareness people have of material objects. But such an admission on Swinburne's part does not suggest that the theist (or any person) could rationally believe a proposition if the public evidence has clearly rendered it improbable and the theist acknowledges that there is no other form of evidence.

\(^{63}\)Alston., 24. This would appear consistent with Swinburne's attempts to direct the evidence for theism away from deductive arguments to the more probable evidence of inductive reasoning.

\(^{64}\)Swinburne, "Faith and Reason," 23.
Belief is Involuntary

Swinburne states that if his argument is correct up to this point, then a person believes that \( p \) if and only if he believes that the total evidence available to that person makes \( p \) more probable than any alternative. The implications of his system, then, are that a person's beliefs are a function of his basic propositions (and the degree of confidence placed in them) and his inductive standards (i.e., the way that one goes about evaluating the evidence). But Swinburne suggests that such a process is not wholly cognitive and must include the additional element of certain features that are involuntary to the knowing subject. He writes:

> If his beliefs were to be under his voluntary control, then either his basic propositions and the degree of his confidence in them, or his inductive standards, would have to be under his voluntary control. Yet our reason for trusting our basic propositions is our conviction that they are formed by outside factors independently of our will. If I were to control at will my basic propositions and the degree of my confidence in them, I would know that I would; and hence I would know that whether a proposition was among my basic propositions was not determined or even influenced by whether what it reported was the case. \(^65\)

Swinburne's remarks at this point seem consistent with his attempts to demonstrate a correlation between the inductive attitude toward scientific hypotheses and the hypothesis of theism. In fact, it is precisely because certain inductive standards (i.e., the procedures one uses to determine what counts as evidence for a proposition and to what extent) are

\(^{65}\)Ibid., 25.
not under the control of my will that they seem to me to be intuitively right and I ultimately trust that the resultant beliefs indicate how things are. Theistic belief, then, must conform to no less a rational obligation. The theist cannot adopt standards which allow the evidence to count for a belief for volitional reasons rather than through a more objective (i.e., probable) process; otherwise, argues Swinburne, one would know that one had no rational basis for trusting the resultant belief and would consequently not really believe it. 66

Furthermore, there is some indication here that Swinburne is accounting for objective and subjective distinctions in his model of rationality. He alludes to certain notions of realism and truth that appear somewhat consistent with the established views of scientific realism. Realism, for example, expresses the general view that material objects exist externally to us and independently of our sense experience. 67 And we mean by truth the basic idea of correspondence in which, as Micheal Devitt expresses it, "a sentence is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts (or to reality)." 68 Scientific realism, then, is the basic view that good scientific theories are rational (in that such

66 Ibid., 26.

67 See, for example, Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1967 ed., s.v. "Realism" by R. J. Hirst.

68 Devitt, Realism and Truth, 27.
theories are true, or at least approximately true, descriptions of the world).

It is, nevertheless, Swinburne's contention that, while a person may not be able to change her beliefs at will, she is at least in an epistemic position to change them over a period of time. We are clearly aware that additional evidence may lead to a change of beliefs. Certainly it is not difficult to see that a person can cultivate a belief by looking selectively for favorable evidence; one could, for example, consider the evidential force of certain evidence, while deliberately rejecting other potentially available evidence. I may even become convinced that I need to change my inductive standards to those more suitable to the evidence. But, as Swinburne has indicated, at any point our beliefs are dependent on the view of the evidence we have at the time, and it is only when the process of changing beliefs is a long and arduous one that we can be convinced that what the evidence supports does not depend on our will, but rather on the evidence itself.69

*Degrees of Rational Belief*

As we have indicated above, Swinburne's notion of rational belief is one of epistemic probability. But it is also Swinburne's contention that the concept of rationality is ambiguous, and the question of how far it is incumbent on a

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person to hold only rational beliefs depends, in large part, on the different kinds of evidence which are offered in support of different beliefs, together with the different ways in which such evidence is treated. In Swinburne's estimation, there are various ways in which evidence relates to a belief that make that belief rational (including different degrees of rationality). His model of rationality is based in part on his notion of justification. A person is rational (and hence justified) in holding a belief if the reasons he provides for that belief (i.e., its justification) are reasons which he thinks support the likelihood of that belief being true.

This is not to say that all of one's evidential support (or reasons) for a belief must be propositional evidence (e.g., the non-propositional belief that one is having an experience of being appeared to treely), but it does attempt to limit justification to the matter of providing one's reasons for a belief, so long as those reasons describe what one thinks likely shows that belief is true. To be sure, there are various reasons why a person may hold a belief (e.g., it offers peace of mind, or it gives one a sense of purpose), but epistemological reasons are the only reasons which deal with the matter of rationality and justification.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70}Ibid., 33.

\textsuperscript{71}Swinburne, \textit{Faith and Reason}, 45.
Swinburne argues, then, that there are various possible levels of rationality or justification which attempt to account for the relation between one's reasons for a belief and the likelihood of that belief's truthfulness on evidence. In doing so, Swinburne is arguing for a model of rationality in which a distinction is made between a belief which a person has verified as true and a belief for which there are rational reasons that support it, even though it may ultimately prove false.\(^2\) Thus, as Alston has correctly observed, a close examination of Swinburne's description of the different kinds of rationality should reveal that "the dominant direction in this list is toward greater objectivity and greater critical reflective validation."\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Rationality requires only that probability is relative to S's evidence and inductive standards. A subject, for example, must believe that he holds at least to a rational belief if he is to hold to any kind of rational belief, even though that belief may ultimately fail to be rational. Swinburne states that "a failure in respect of rationality is a failure of internal coherence in a subject's system of beliefs, a failure of which the subject is

\(^{2}\)Ibid., 45-54. See also, Alston, "Swinburne on Faith and Reason," 30. Swinburne, for example, has in mind the fact that the average man of the first century A.D. held a rational but false belief that the earth was stationary.

unaware.\textsuperscript{74} This represents a low level of truth or epistemological reasons (i.e., getting at or verifying the truth).

Rationality\textsubscript{2}, on the other hand, requires the additional element that the evidence consists of justified beliefs (i.e., reasons he thinks are true and argue for a belief's likelihood of truth) and that a person's inductive standards be the correct ones. Swinburne argues that in order for a person to have a rational\textsubscript{2} belief, that belief must be grounded in those initial propositions which his present experiences (and memories of his past experiences) justify him in holding. Rational\textsubscript{2} beliefs are also based on prior propositions which a person is justified in holding for good epistemological reasons and correct inductive standards. But rational\textsubscript{2} beliefs can also find initial support in epistemological reasons that a person may ultimately come to deny. A person, for example, can fail to have a rational\textsubscript{2} belief if the reasons for holding that belief are based on initial propositions which the person is not justified in holding.\textsuperscript{75} Of course, it's important to point out that a

\textsuperscript{74}Swinburne, Faith and Reason, 45 and 46.

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 46. Swinburne notes, for example, that a rational\textsubscript{2} belief could ultimately fail if a person claimed to have some type of telepathic experience when no conscious experience could justify it, or claimed to have seen a UFO in a context in which his sensations could justify him only in claiming that he had seen a light. In addition, a person may fail to have a rational\textsubscript{2} claim if it is based on initial propositions about which one is overly-confident. On the other hand, one may fail to have a rational\textsubscript{2} claim if it is not
person who initially has a rational\textsubscript{2} belief does not expect that belief to be false.

\(R_3, R_4,\) and \(R_5\) differ from the first two in that a person interacting with these kinds of rationality is claimed by Swinburne to have engaged in a critical examination of the evidence (along with the inductive standards employed against the beliefs in review) and concluded in favor of the belief's legitimacy (i.e., its likely probability of being true or confirming the evidence). Swinburne contends that a person has a rational\textsubscript{3} belief if, in that person's opinion, the checking of the evidence and standards was adequate. Adequate investigation is one in which the objective is the securing of true beliefs. But a belief can fail to be rational\textsubscript{3} if there is, as Swinburne expresses it, "a culpable failure, of which the person is unaware, to collect enough true, representative, and relevant evidence of good quality."

\textsuperscript{76} but it is only irrationality (in the sense of rational\textsubscript{3}) which Swinburne

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 50. Swinburne indicates that the rationality of a belief should result from adequate investigation has real significance only in instances where a person (given a rational\textsubscript{3} belief) believes it important that he should have a correct belief on the matter. For example, my belief that the distance between Chicago and Detroit is 300 miles may be one which does not concern me in any critical way. I may determine, then, that a brief look at a map may be sufficient for my objective. On the other hand, there are some beliefs for which the matter of their truth is important to me (e.g., my belief that a device I installed in my computer is the right device for carrying out the function for which I believe it was designed).
believes is culpable irrationality, since it results from a person's neglecting investigative procedures which that person recognizes ought to be pursued.\textsuperscript{77} On the other hand, the failure to investigate the truth of a proposition may be excusable if a person strongly believes that no amount of investigation will change its probability on evidence. In such a case, it would not be irrational\textsuperscript{3} for a person not to investigate its truth. That is, if a person has good reasons (based on that person's view of its prior probability, for example) to believe that a further investigation will have no effect on showing how likely a proposition is to be true, it is rationally excusable that a person not investigate it.\textsuperscript{78}

Swinburne argues that rationality\textsubscript{3} and rationality\textsubscript{4} center on a person's own outlook with respect to whether or not a belief is supported by adequate investigation. One's rational\textsubscript{4} beliefs go further than rational\textsubscript{3} in requiring that the checking of a belief be adequate by a person's own standards for such investigation. But as Swinburne has noted, such a process is not always so easy to perform. A cognizer can easily be blind to the need for an investigation of the evidence. A person may also think that an investigation of the evidence has been sufficient by his own standards.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 54.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 53.
And as Swinburne goes on to suggest, this is why a fifth kind of rationality is required. In the final analysis, we arrive at the highest level of probability for a belief only when we subject a belief to rational$_5$ investigation. Swinburne thinks rational$_5$ beliefs are least dependent on a person's subjective beliefs about it. Rationality$_5$ is assigned to a belief only when the checking of that belief has, in fact, been adequate (i.e., if it has been verified on evidence that the belief in question is a true belief).$^{80}$ A rational$_5$ belief, then, is one which is based on the probability of the evidence for that belief and is least dependent on a person's beliefs about it. But the whole point of subjecting a belief to a rational$_5$ investigation is to provide a person with reasons which make that belief not just fairly probable, but very probable.$^{81}$ This being the case, a person holding to a belief with any kind of rationality from rationality$_1$ to rationality$_5$ is considered rational, even though rational$_5$ beliefs are said to be more likely true (for evidential reasons) than rational$_1$ beliefs.

The Rationality of Religious Beliefs

Swinburne has argued up to this point that there may be differences between (1) the kinds of evidences that people have for certain beliefs, (2) the various inductive standards


$^{81}$Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 54.
which they employ to hold their beliefs, and (3) the distinctive kinds of rationality involved in justifying their beliefs. That is, ultimately the rules and procedures that one employs for determining the probability (and rationality) of theistic belief on evidence should be no different than those he uses for other beliefs. But with respect to the rationality of religious beliefs, rationality is the only kind of rationality for which Swinburne believes a person can be held to task. For that is the only kind of rationality which he has argued is genuinely under a person's control. Where it may be true that a person cannot help having the beliefs that he has at any given moment (i.e., if the belief and the reasons why one holds it is a passive matter), he can be held to task for not doing something about his beliefs over a period of time. For a person can always investigate a belief to a more adequate extent, or gather more evidence relevant to a given belief, especially the more likely a belief is to be challenged in terms of its truth.

The remaining kinds of rational belief apparently, in Swinburne's estimation, do not appear to pose the same threat against the rationality of theistic belief as do rational beliefs. He writes:

Irrationality in senses (4) and (5) are [sic] a matter of objective discrepancy between the subject's actual investigative procedures and either those which he

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82 Swinburne, *Faith and Reason*, 55.

83 Ibid., 72.
normally recognizes or really adequate investigative procedures; but in so far as the subject does not recognize these discrepancies, no blame attaches to his conduct. Irrationality in senses (1) and (2) arises from a failure to recognize certain things at the time in question—discrepancies within the class of the subject's beliefs in the case of irrationality (1), and unjustified evidence and incorrect standards in the case of irrationality (2).\textsuperscript{84}

But as Swinburne contends, a person interacting at these levels can hardly be rationally culpable. For either a person recognizes such discrepancies at the time or he does not. And if, as Swinburne further contends, recognizing is coming to believe (and belief is initially involuntary), then a person is not rationally culpable for what he initially believes (or recognizes that he believes), but only for what he ultimately fails to investigate with respect to the belief in question.

To understand more completely Swinburne's application of rationality to theistic belief, it is helpful to recall briefly the various distinctions he made with respect to the different kinds of rationality possible. He writes:

A man's beliefs are rational\textsubscript{1} if and only if, given his evidence, they are rendered probable on his own inductive standards. A man's belief that $p$ is irrational\textsubscript{1} when he has failed to draw the conclusion, using his general inductive beliefs, that his evidence does not make $p$ probable. So when we see what a man's evidence and inductive standards are, we can conclude with respect to his religious beliefs that they do or do not follow from his evidence, in accordance with those standards.\textsuperscript{85}

Swinburne's point with respect to rationality\textsubscript{1}, then, is that we may find (after considering a person's inductive behaviour)
that such a person is using different inductive standards for evaluating the evidence for theistic propositions than he does elsewhere. Swinburne states that if this is the case, then we could conclude that either none of that person’s judgements about theism are rational, or that he has one set of inductive standards for arguing about mundane matters and another set for arguing about theistic concerns, and that there is nothing irrational in this. But it may be, argues Swinburne, that both cases are possible. It could be the latter case if a person acknowledged the use of different standards, and was consistent in the use of them, such that his arguments about religion are never infected by normal standards. If a person claimed, for example, that the only test for a theistic claim was what was written in the Bible and never attempted to justify this claim through the use of other inductive standards (e.g., never tried to argue that archaeology corroborates the truthfulness of the Bible), then it would seem that such a person is using one set of inductive standards for theistic claims and another for claims outside of theism. In such a case, argues Swinburne, it would be wrong to accuse that person of being irrational. There would be a coherence about this way of arguing, even if we do not prefer such methods ourselves. On the other hand, if a person makes no clear distinction about the application of his inductive standards, but seems to apply them inconsistently to

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86Ibid., 63.
theistic claims and mundane matters alike, then it would seem that we could not assign rationality to his beliefs about theism. Swinburne next argues that we cannot accuse a person of holding beliefs which are irrational unless we agree in advance what makes a belief probable (i.e., the prior and posterior probability of the belief on evidence, together with the procedures one uses for evaluating the evidence). Once again, rationality beliefs draw on a greater degree of the evidence available to a person at the time of his belief. Swinburne writes:

A man's belief is rational if and only if it is in fact rendered probable by his evidence, and his evidence consists of basic propositions which he is justified in holding with the degree of confidence with which he holds them.

So if a person is to be accused of irrational belief, it can only properly take place, argues Swinburne, "by extrapolating from the most particular judgements which we make and then seeing whether we are prepared to stick by any particular judgements which do not conform to the resulting standards." It may be that the inductive standards we extrapolate from our judgements in disciplines outside of theism (which we make sufficiently general to have application to theistic belief) end up yielding different judgements about theistic claims from those which we are initially inclined to

87Ibid.
88Ibid.
89Ibid., 64.
make. That being the case, we might conclude that those standards require us to see the existence of the universe as evidence for theism, even though we were inclined to think otherwise at the start. Or it could equally well be the converse. Whatever way it is, argues Swinburne, we have to reflect what seems intuitively most obvious. Those standards come from our particular judgements in the religious field, or the general standards extrapolated from other fields. The point is that we will have to modify our account of the true inductive standards accordingly.90

Swinburne acknowledges that the task of discovering the true inductive standards is a process that involves the consideration of a wide number of possible alternative sets of principles which a person must test against his own intuitions. Such is the work of confirmation theory, and it is Swinburne's contention that we will eventually be able to codify our inductive standards, since he is convinced that such standards are implicit in most of the judgements which we make and which seem to be intuitively correct to us.91

But as Swinburne further reminds us, the rationality of a person's beliefs involves more than just using correct inductive standards; it also involves evidence consisting of basic propositions which one is justified in holding to the degree of confidence with which one holds them. This, as we

90Ibid.

91Ibid., 64-5
may recall, involves the element of truth, that is, whether a person's justification of a belief is based on reasons (i.e., testimony, authority, mental states, or other evidence or arguments) that a person thinks are true and make it more likely than not that a belief is true. Such evidence consists of prior propositions and initial propositions. Swinburne remarks:

[A person] is justified in believing prior propositions if they seem to him to be true, intuitively, on grounds of reason, and if he is not too hasty in making such a judgement. . . . If a man's beliefs are based on initial beliefs that someone has told him so-and-so or that he has seen so-and-so, his sensations together with his memories of past experiences have to justify the initial beliefs. 92

Thus, with respect to a prior belief, Swinburne argues that if a person's theistic belief is grounded in an ontological argument, the premises of that argument must be ones which seem evident to that person and on which that person has given sufficient reflection (although we may disagree with respect to the amount of reflection that is necessary) to determine if there is any possible way in which they could be false. Initial beliefs, on the other hand, may seem initially reliable (e.g., that one is seeing a UFO or a man walking on water), but over the course of time a person can investigate whether the judgments he initially makes tend ultimately to be correct or turn out false. The success or failure of his

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92 Ibid., 65.
judgments can be used to determine the justifiability of his past initial propositions.93

It is Swinburne's conviction that the extent to which a person accepts those basic propositions which he believes his experience justifies him in believing (and thereby comes to hold further propositions which are warranted on the basis of his basic propositions and true inductive standards), makes his beliefs rational2. Since a person's evidence for rational2 beliefs will include his basic propositions, some claim that their evidence makes it probable that theism is true, and some claim that the evidence makes it probable that theistic belief is a false description of the world. And as Swinburne further asserts, the most controversial issue in dealing with rational2 beliefs has to do with the manner in which any individual piece of evidence or all of a person's evidence put together (along with true inductive standards) renders it probable that claims of theistic belief are true.94

The level of potential inadequacy in rational1 and rational2 beliefs for rational theistic belief forces Swinburne to turn his attention to rational3, rational4, and rational5 beliefs, which, as it might be remembered, deal with the matter of belief being backed up by adequate earlier investigation. He states:

93Ibid.

94Ibid., 66.
A belief is rational, you will recall, if it is based on evidence resulting from investigation which was in the subject's view adequate and the subject has subjected his inductive standards to criticism which was in his view adequate, and checked in his view adequately that by them his belief was rendered probable by his evidence.95

Crucial to rational beliefs is Swinburne's notion that what constitutes adequate investigation depends on a person's belief at earlier times about (1) the probability of investigation affecting the probability of the conclusion, (2) one's belief about the importance of holding a true belief about the hypothesis, and (3) one's belief about the importance of the belief in general (i.e., when a person thinks it is important to have a correct belief on the matter).96 According to rational, beliefs, a person's religious beliefs are automatically rational at any point in which that person is objectively certain about the truth of those beliefs (i.e., he has good reason to think that all the appropriate evidence has been marshalled in favor of the belief). If he is objectively certain, then no further investigation is required. For to be objectively certain is to know that all the available evidence for a belief has been properly considered and evaluated. A person in this situation would have no further rational obligation to investigate their truth. On the other hand, should that person consider his religious beliefs at any time to be dubious or only fairly

95Ibid.
96Ibid.
probable, then, for his beliefs to be rational, he has a rational obligation to investigate them. There can be at least two reasons for this: first, it may be a result of a person's subjective certainty, and has to do with that person's level of conviction that a belief is either true or false, possibly despite what the evidence would seem to suggest. Second, it may have to deal with a person's knowledge that the objective case he's previously made is not as good as it might be. But, as Swinburne has earlier indicated, it is only by investigation that a person has any chance of acquiring beliefs which are very probable.  

Swinburne argues that the matter of knowing when investigation is required and how much investigation is needed for a rational religious belief is a complex issue. People will come to different conclusions in this regard. Swinburne explains:

How a man investigates an issue depends on what he already knows about the field and, in particular . . . on his beliefs about who are the authorities in the field . . . .

There are fields and cultures where a man has no idea how to set about investigating further the answer to some question. I so interpret my definition of rationality that in that case a man's belief, even though he does not believe that it has a probability close to 1 and even though he has done no investigating, is still rational. In one way the man does not believe that his investigation has been adequate-- for there is more which he believes ought to be done; but in another way he does believe that the investigation has been adequate--for he has done all that he can. Since the definition of rationality was designed to pick out the rationality which lies within a

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97Ibid., 66-7.
Swinburne's point is that one may approach the rationality of religious beliefs along similar lines. A person may believe on balance that there is a God and yet have no idea how he might pursue a further investigation of theistic claims. Initially, then, his belief would qualify as a rational belief. But it is only a matter of time before such a person would come to learn that the subject of God's existence is a disputed one, and in order to continue holding a rational belief, he would be required to make further investigation into the relevant fields of inquiry. As the evidence begins to mount (either for or against his belief), he may need to reconsider whether he is justified in believing the basic propositions which form the foundation of his religious beliefs with the degree of confidence he has in them.

Rational beliefs, according to Swinburne, allow every area of evidence to be openly investigated. A person's inductive standards, for example, represent the most critical area of further inquiry. Whatever standards a person judges

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98Ibid., 67. Swinburne states, for example, that a four-year-old boy asking his father about some matter in astronomy may be the only authority required at his level of inquiry for an adequate investigation of that issue; the ten-year-old his science teacher, the sixteen-year-old his physics teacher; but a man with a Ph.D. in the field will likely seek out a foundation to provide him with a grant to study the issue on his own (although he probably takes for granted the results published by other physicists).

99Ibid., 67-8.
to be correct must be applied honestly to all the evidence at one's disposal. The more a person seeks to have rational_3 beliefs about religion, the more likely it is that his beliefs will converge with other beliefs. Swinburne believes that such a process will result in a greater sharing of evidence and a common basis of evidence from which to make valid inferences to religious truths. For it is only through a rational_3 inquiry that a person can expect to obtain rational_4 and rational_5 beliefs.\textsuperscript{100} A rational_4 belief is one where a person has "by his own standards adequately investigated the evidence, his inductive standards, and the force by them of his evidence."\textsuperscript{101} And one has a rational_5 belief, then, only in cases where one's inductive standards are standards based on objective certainty. It may be that, even if a person follows his own standards, they may ultimately fail to be true standards, and, consequently, his beliefs may fail to count as rational_5 beliefs.

In the final analysis, Swinburne has provided various kinds of rationality that may potentially lead a person to rational_5 religious beliefs. For it is only in relation to rational_5 beliefs that the notion of truth accounts for the greatest difference (i.e., one has in fact verified one's beliefs as true on evidence). Swinburne argues that we have

\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., 69-70.

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 70.
objective factors which determine how much investigation is
needed to have rational religious beliefs. He writes:

Beliefs are rational in so far as they are based on
investigation which was, in the believer's view, adequate.
If it matters that I have a rational belief on some
issue, it matters because ensuring that I have a rational belief is all that I can do towards ensuring that I have a rational belief. Ensuring that I have a rational belief is all that I can do towards ensuring that I have a true belief.102

And as one may expect, this brings the discussion back to the
matter of probability. For the rationality of a religious
belief depends on how probable the belief is at the start. It
further depends on how probable it is that posterior evidence
results in the rational conviction that the belief has in fact
been verified as true.

We come full circle, then, in the effort to determine
the probability of a religious belief. Swinburne argues that
an adequate investigation for a rational religious belief is
a function of four things: (1) the importance of the belief in
the specific field of inquiry; (2) the prior probability of
the belief apart from any subsequent investigation; (3) the
posterior probability that an investigation of the belief will
lead to evidence confirming the belief; and (4) the degree to
which a person thinks it is important to hold a correct belief
on the matter. These functions for rational beliefs are
somewhat consistent with what Swinburne argues is necessary
for establishing the prior and posterior probability of

102 Ibid., 72.
theories. And without going into more detail in these areas, it should be sufficient to see that Swinburne has simply argued for a system of justification and rationality that intends to allow for increased levels of the likelihood of truth as a person moves from rational$_3$ beliefs to rational$_5$ beliefs.

**Assessment of Swinburne's Model of Rationality**

Before we go on to consider some of the more positive features of Swinburne's model of rationality for theistic belief, it may be helpful to look at some potential weaknesses that surface out of his arguments for the probability of theories in general. Feinberg has argued that Swinburne's use of simplicity as the key criterion to prior probability has difficulties. More than one theory can do well on the matter of simplicity, and this seems to suggest that determining prior probability will likely involve an appeal to something other than simplicity, like background knowledge. A complex theory, for example, may fit background knowledge better than a simple one.\(^\text{103}\) Furthermore, argues Feinberg, it is difficult to decide what is included in the background knowledge for all theories and what is included in the evidence for a particular theory. So depending on how a cognizer wants to shape the outcome, there can be a certain degree of assessing the criteria from a non-public

\(^{103}\)Feinberg, *Evil*, 247.
(subjective) point of view, either to include information in background knowledge in order to increase the prior probability or to include information in the evidence that will be considered later in calculating posterior probability. The point is that calculating the prior and posterior probability of a theory depends on all sides agreeing on where the information belongs. But since we can (and sometimes do) manipulate the information, it is not clear that people will agree on which pieces of information belong to either background knowledge or the evidence of posterior probability.\textsuperscript{104}

In addition, Feinberg indicates that the overall probability of a theory does not necessarily depend on trying to establish that a theory (e.g., theism) has greater prior probability than any other hypothesis. So long as it is established that the prior probability of the theory in question is not 0 nor its opponents' 1, a theory can have greater probability than its opponents' on the basis of the total evidence. As long as the posterior evidence for the theory in question makes the theory's probability exceed .5, one is within one's epistemic rights to think that the theory is more likely true than not.

So a model of rationality that is going to account for enough of the right kind and quality of evidence (i.e., our answer to the evidentialist notion of sufficient evidence in

\textsuperscript{104}\textit{Ibid.}
terms of indubitability) must be based on the total evidence relevant to the theory. If there is the potential to consider only one kind of evidence (or somehow manipulate the evidence in advance so as to assign any numerical value to represent a probability judgment), then the justification of a theory or belief (in terms of its likelihood of truth) has the potential to be more a reflection of the subjectivity of the assessor than a reflection of an objective (fair and unbiased) consideration of the appropriate evidence. Probability judgments should be persuasive in terms of the evidence and arguments that one can marshall for the truth or falsity of any theory or belief. Such evidence can be rationally convincing enough (i.e., what is meant by objective certainty on our proposed model of rationality) to show that one has good reasons to think a theory or belief is either true or false. That is, in terms of justification, one is then in the possible position to attempt to verify a theory or belief as true on evidence. Having said this, it is always possible, as Feinberg notes, that one may grant the truth of arguments and evidence but still find them unconvincing for psychological reasons. In such cases, one may deny that the arguments or evidence establish the truth of the theory or belief in question.\textsuperscript{105} Since the goal of Swinburne's system is to offer as much evidence as possible in order to argue for the probability of theistic belief, it seems necessary to drop the

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., 293.
requirement of simplicity as being the most crucial factor in determining the probability of a theory (or belief) on evidence.

Having stated the above concerns, Swinburne's approach, with few exceptions, is closest to the model of rationality I shall propose in chapter five. The features of his system attempt to account for the total available evidence when considering whether a belief is more likely true than not, even though this does not require one to in fact verify a belief as true in order to be rational. In addition, his degrees of rationality seem to account for greater attempts to verify a belief's truthfulness on evidence when possible. Furthermore, Swinburne's approach attempts to offer a moderate foundationalist structure for rational belief. In such a model of rationality, a proposition must be based on evidence in the right way.  

Pojman summarizes Swinburne's account of rational belief in the following terms:

Our basic evidence or beliefs are 'initial propositions' (sense experience, mental states, and memory reports) and 'prior propositions' (truths known a priori, such as the laws of logic or that '2+2=4'). From these we reason deductively or inductively to conclusions. A problem in deciding what constitutes rational believing is the fact that we differ on inductive standards. Although all people reason inductively, we may read the evidence quite differently (e.g., the gambler who has just become a father of a baby boy may bet on a horse called 'Sonny Boy', thinking it an omen).

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106 See Louis P. Pojman, What Can We Know? 90-1.

As indicated above, Swinburne is optimistic that we can come to some agreement on what should count as generally relevant inductive standards. This means, for Swinburne, that a belief (including theistic belief) is rational at the point in which a person applies her inductive standards to the available evidence. One is rational (in the sense of rational beliefs) in holding a belief that is thought to be true based on one's past investigation in light of true inductive standards.

There is every indication, then, that Swinburne's program for rational religious belief represents a fallibilist position. By fallibilism I mean essentially the epistemic position that our properly basic beliefs need not be infallible, incorrigible, self-evident, or evident to the senses. What is self-evident or properly basic is more relative to the individual's perspective than is thought to be the case in the stronger forms of foundationalism. The thesis of fallibilism asserts that, while we may require an epistemic structure in which basic beliefs are offered in support of non-basic beliefs (where theistic beliefs are considered non-basic beliefs), our basic beliefs could turn out to be false, although we do not expect them to be false.\textsuperscript{108}

On Swinburne's model of rationality, justification is a reason-based conception in which a cognizer may appeal to evidence in the form of other basic (or prior) beliefs, one's

other mental states accepted on the basis of one's experience, or one's inductive standards. Alston, however, describes this as a form of psychological foundationalism, since it seems to include the possibility that a cognizer can infer other non-basic beliefs from basic beliefs that are held for psychological rather than for evidential reasons. Basic (or prior beliefs) are beliefs that a cognizer tends to hold for non-evidential reasons. Part of the reason for this is found in Swinburne's notion that such beliefs are acquired involuntarily. Such involuntary acquisition of beliefs comes through hunches, intuitions, and other mental states of which the cognizer is both aware and unaware. This seems to raise a potential weakness in Swinburne's model, since it would suggest that one can hold and infer other non-basic beliefs on the basis of basic beliefs that most people would consider irrational (e.g., various superstitious and prejudiced beliefs).

Swinburne appears to anticipate these difficulties by stating that a basic proposition will be believed (and consequently included within the category of one's basic beliefs) unless one's other basic beliefs render it improbable. There may be evidential reasons (in the form of one's other basic beliefs) in which one is not justified in holding a given belief as basic. So while it is not typically the case that basic beliefs are described in terms of $p$'s

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being rendered more probable than not (or than any of its alternatives) by one's evidence, it is not entirely ruled out in advance. Swinburne argues that a cognizer is likely to initially hold a basic belief simply because he is inclined to believe that it is forced upon him by his experience of the world. But as indicated above, he is open to the possibility that one's basic belief is not indubitable and may require further justification on evidence. In one sense, Swinburne is simply admitting that people will not always acquire their basic beliefs for the right reasons (i.e., the best available evidence and with attempts to verify as true if possible). But in another sense, one always has the rational opportunity to determine whether a belief is more likely true than not on the basis of one's total evidence, including one's other basic beliefs. So if propositional evidence (in terms of one's basic beliefs) helps to determine the overall probability of one's non-basic beliefs, why cannot the same be said for basic beliefs as well? It seems that it would involve little effort to make this adjustment in Swinburne's system, without violating the essential structure of justification for which he has argued. We will argue for the criteria to do just this in our proposed model of rationality in chapter five.

But even if we grant this concession, it could be argued that Swinburne's program for rationality is even too involved and complex to stand as a general account of

110Ibid., 24-5.
non-basic belief. Alston has suggested, for example, that at the most basic and rudimentary level of cognitive thought, people have beliefs about things they encounter in their everyday experiences, and it is unlikely that they have any beliefs at all about the extent to which various propositions are rendered more or less probable by evidence. Alston notes, for example, that he may form the non-basic belief that a certain building is not finished, based on the (possibly basic) belief that no windows have yet been installed on one of its sides:

Did I form the belief that the proposition that the building is not yet finished is rendered more probable than some alternative—such as its negation—by my set of basic propositions? If so, I regularly carry out such doxastic operations in a way ideally calculated to escape my notice.

Alston's illustration is in response to Swinburne's idea that, even though a person does not make very explicit calculations when forming beliefs about comparative probabilities, an individual does seem to have the conceptual resources for making probability judgements, or one regularly makes use of them whenever one comes to accept a non-basic belief. But Alston suggests, instead, that it seems entirely possible that a person can have a belief that $p$ without having any belief at all about the probability of $p$. So if we eventually come to

\[^{111}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{112}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{113}\text{Alston, 26.}\]
the point where one's belief that $p$ is just to believe that $p$, why not do this at the outset, rather than (as Swinburne thinks) believing only in comparative probabilities?\textsuperscript{114}

But this need not detract from Swinburne's essential point on the rationality of beliefs. The probability of a belief, on Swinburne's account, is more a matter of evaluating the evidence in terms of the likelihood of truth. Swinburne's account of degrees of rationality is designed to show that the closer one comes to rationality, the closer one is to being rationally convinced of the probability of a belief as true on evidence. To think that a belief is more likely true than not is to determine that the total evidence available at the time makes it more rationally convincing to accept the belief as true than it is to continue doubting it. This is a matter of reflecting on the evidence available for a belief, and as Swinburne indicates, it is typically a process that takes place over a period of time, especially when it is difficult to determine what evidence is available relative to a given non-basic belief. So while there may be greater degrees of comparative probability as one moves closer to rational beliefs, the lower degrees of rationality (i.e., beliefs for which one has good reasons to think are true, but has not attempted to verify as true) can account for the acceptance of non-basic beliefs without one appearing to have probable beliefs about them.

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 29.
As indicated above, Swinburne's account of rationality attempts to be as close to scientific theorizing as possible. But, as we have also noted, Swinburne's account of the rationality of a belief based on posterior probability is restricted to non-basic beliefs, the only category of belief in which Swinburne argues that a person can legitimately inquire into the probability of belief on evidence. Basic beliefs, among which are included one's initial propositions (sense experience, mental states, memory reports, and other factors), are either justified or not.\footnote{115} Alston writes:

> But, on his account, what renders a basic belief justified—that it is held not solely on the basis of evidence and that it is not rendered improbable by other basic beliefs—certainly has to do with the likelihood of the belief's being true. So why restrict the account of rationality to non-basic beliefs?\footnote{116}

But as we have indicated above, Swinburne's rationality model can be slightly modified and improved by considering posterior evidence in determining the rationality of basic beliefs as well.\footnote{117} The point is that, if what Swinburne means by the epistemic probability of a proposition is a consideration of the evidence in light of one's inductive standards (i.e., the way in which one goes about evaluating prior and posterior

\footnote{115}{Alston, "Swinburne of Faith and Belief," 31.}
\footnote{116}{Alston, 31.}
\footnote{117}{Ibid. Cf., Swinburne, Faith and Reason, 45.}
evidence), then there is no good reason why such a process should not work equally well with both basic and non-basic beliefs alike.

Further, Swinburne's account of rationality is always restricted to what evidence a cognizer has at the time he is considering the probability of a belief. Swinburne seems to indicate that a cognizer's available evidence may not always be the same thing as having all the available evidence for that belief (with the possible exception of rational beliefs, since such beliefs are said to be rationally convincing). This is another reason for distinguishing between different degrees of rationality. Swinburne seems to think that one can be rational and justified in holding non-basic beliefs for which the evidence (in terms of the appropriate kind and quality for the belief in question) has not been established as true, although being rational is always about reasons one thinks are true.

It seems, then, that the primary caution against Swinburne's model of rationality has to do with the epistemic weight he gives to one's basic beliefs, as well as one's inductive standards. This is critical, since he argues for an essentially foundational structure in which one's non-basic beliefs are justified in part on the basis of both features. Swinburne's program needs to give some account for people's differing inductive standards if it is to be consistent. Similar to our concern about Swinburne's criteria for the
prior probability of theories, if there are no agreed upon
criteria for why one should or should not accept certain basic
beliefs (or inductive standards), then one's justification for
belief is likely to be influenced by factors (e.g.,
psychological) other than what the evidence suggests. And
this would seem to go against Swinburne's attempts at a model
of rationality which accounts for the total available
evidence, including procedures for how one goes about
inductive reasoning.

Swinburne argued that one's evidence (including one's
inductive standards) consists of the set of one's basic
beliefs (i.e., the beliefs one holds on the basis of prior
probability or the degree of initial confidence one has in
them), a process which Swinburne suggests we normally do not
associate with investigation of the evidence (especially with
respect to one's inductive standards). One's perceptual
beliefs, memory beliefs, or beliefs of experience, as well as
one's beliefs in self-evident propositions are basic beliefs
and are either accepted or not accepted. In other words, they
are not investigated in the normal sense of the term; they are
either justified or not, independently of the merits of the
investigative procedures.¹¹⁸ But it seems that Swinburne's
notion of R₃, R₄, and R₅ beliefs (as resulting from the
evidence and with attempts to verify as true if possible) can
be modified to follow a model of rationality in which all of

¹¹⁸Alston, "Swinburne on Faith and Belief," 32.
one's beliefs, not just those that are basic for a person, are justified on the basis of sufficient evidence. The extent to which it is possible to do so is the focus of our next chapter.
Chapter Five
Toward a Resolution for Rationality
A Middle Ground Synthesis

If we are to suggest a credible model of rationality for theistic belief, we must first define what it means to be rational and then perhaps go on to suggest an epistemic system which, in a rather broad sense, offers the features that are best thought to satisfy the necessary criteria for rationality. The issue of rationality, then, together with the various features that are essential to it, is our fundamental concern in this chapter. Furthermore, with this immediate task in mind, it is anticipated that the essential features of the proposed model of rationality will open the way to an epistemic system for theistic belief which, broadly speaking, provides the necessary criteria to either directly challenge or else reinforce certain features in the rational systems of Murphy, Plantinga, and Swinburne.

On this basis, then, we may suggest the following model of rationality as having more favorable criteria for discerning whether one is more likely to be rational about one's beliefs: There is one sense in which to be rational in holding a belief, one must hold it on the basis of sufficient evidence (i.e., good reasons, evidence or arguments).
Sufficient evidence is evidence offered to show that one does have good reasons (i.e., a reason-based conception of justification) for one's beliefs, and that those reasons are not arbitrary. Furthermore, this sense of rationality maintains that it is not rational to hold a belief in the absence of sufficient evidence or on the basis of blind faith.

But there is another sense in which to be rational about one's beliefs involves the process of verification, that is, attempts to marshall enough of the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence so as to be so rationally convinced of the truth or certainty of a given belief that one can no longer maintain a reasonable doubt. In this sense of the term, to be rational about one's beliefs, one is at least attempting to be right, and that, while one can be rational without verifying (in the sense of marshalling the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence) or attempting to verify one's beliefs as true (e.g., one can be rational simply by offering a reason-based conception of justification for one's beliefs), one may be in a position to verify one's beliefs as true on the basis of good arguments and evidence. In other words, there is a sense in which rationality involves a reason-based conception of justification which may coincide with attempts to establish the truth or certainty of a proposition, but it need not. It is not necessary that justification presuppose the truth or certainty of a given belief (a matter of verification).
This approach to rationality recognizes that it is too high a standard to maintain that one is rational in holding a belief only when the cognizer has in fact verified (i.e., marshalled the appropriate evidence) that belief as true or certain. One may be rational in holding a belief arising out of a reason-based conception of justification in which sufficient evidence can rest on other beliefs (basic or non-basic), or it can rest on mental or perceptual states for which the cognizer believes he has good reasons to think are true (even if a cognizer makes no attempt to verify his beliefs as true, or even if those beliefs, mental states, or perceptual states turn out to be false). So long as a cognizer holds those beliefs for reasons he thinks are likely true (otherwise it is difficult to see how one would count them as reasons), he is rational in holding them. In addition, it is suggested that a necessary corollary of this model of rationality is that a cognizer should attempt to employ adequate methods for collecting and evaluating data (evidence or arguments) for one's beliefs in such a way as to be fair or unbiased with the data. That is, one can be objective (in the sense of being fair and unbiased with the data) when considering the evidence for one's beliefs. This model of rationality further suggests that the more likely it is that others will challenge the truthfulness of a belief (due to insufficient or underdetermined evidence), the more one is expected to provide evidence for that belief if one is
to be rational in holding it (although that evidence need not be indubitable or involve conclusive arguments). It also suggests that, given insufficient or underdetermined data, a cognizer is more likely to be rational in holding such a belief more tentatively. So while our model of rationality allows room for the possibility that some of a cognizer's beliefs may be provisional on evidence, it does not expect this possibility to be a governing criterion for the rationality of one's beliefs.

Given this model of rationality, we can agree, for example, that Murphy's system offers valuable insights for improving and revising various problems and difficulties in current models of rationality based on classical foundationalist approaches to epistemology and correspondence theories of truth. But such insights need not imply her alternative model of rationality which argues that our beliefs and theories (scientific, theistic or otherwise) can at best have a tentative status.¹

¹See, for example, Jesse Hobbs, Religious Explanation and Scientific Ideology (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1993) xviii. Hobbs states that Murphy is commendable in her attempts to take seriously Kuhnian insights on the incommensurability of conceptual frameworks and the tentativeness of Lakatosian research programs, but he rightly questions her position that the criteria for rationality can be found in certain core beliefs which are thought to: (a) allow one's research program to make adequate theoretical and empirical progress; and (b) provide a plan for extending the program and defending it against competitors. These criteria are insufficient in that satisfying such conditions does not necessarily direct itself toward truth and realism in the correspondence sense.
Plantinga argues that one can have rational belief (theistic or otherwise) if that belief is held on the basis of variously qualified experiences (religious or otherwise) and the proper functioning of one's noetic faculties in environments suitably designed for them. One of the difficulties with this view is that, in the absence of defeaters, one is at best only within one's epistemic rights to believe that God exists (i.e., one has only prima facie justification or warrant for theistic belief). At some point, and particularly in the face of potential defeaters, if one hopes to go beyond what is simply rational to believe (in the sense of initial epistemic permissibility), it seems that the requirement for sufficient evidence becomes more rigorous and requires marshalling the kind of evidence or arguments that Plantinga argues are not necessary for being warranted (and rational) in holding that belief at the prima facie level. An arguable belief (e.g., a child's belief in the tooth fairy) that is only prima facie justified has little rational endurance when assailed by the seas of conflicting cognitive claims. It seems unavoidable, therefore, that one must ultimately be able to suggest adequate reasons (i.e., evidence or arguments) for why one's belief does in fact satisfy real conditions and referents in the world (i.e., that one's belief is true in some correspondence sense of the term). While Plantinga's notion of rationality seems promising, especially in the manner in which it no longer confines rational belief
to the rigors of evidentialism in the classical foundationalist sense, it appears that his system needs supplementation from a model of rationality that offers possible solutions for bridging the epistemic gap between what a person is within his epistemic rights to believe (i.e., rational in a properly basic sense) and what is rational (and true in a robust sense of the term) because it does in fact satisfy real conditions and referents in the world.  

And finally, while the model of rationality in Swinburne's epistemic system appears to be the most promising out of the three systems we have considered, it is anticipated that certain modifications can be made to add strength to his arguments of probability and the inductive standards one uses to determine the probability of a theory (or belief) on evidence. Most importantly, we will see that Swinburne's approach can follow a broadly foundationalist structure, while refraining from the stronger forms of foundationalism which require that all non-basic beliefs must be inferred from a privileged set of self-justifying beliefs (i.e., basic beliefs).  

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³Kelly Clark, for example, indicates that most of the theistic evidentialists mentioned in his book, *Return to Reason*, are classical foundationalists (including
Rationality and Truth

One of the most critical features of rationality has to do with the nature of truth. The notion that truth is a relationship of some sort (on an ontological level) between language and the world has been a long-standing position in traditional forms of rationality (e.g., modern notions of evidentialism and scientific or philosophical realism). This notion of truth is typically referred to as the correspondence theory of truth. The correspondence theory of truth asserts

probabilistic arguers like Swinburne who do not demand deductive connections between the various levels of beliefs but do demand probabilistic connections). Clark thinks that any epistemic system (such as that suggested in Swinburne's The Existence of God) which views one's proofs as starting from premises that are, in some sense, self-presenting, is troublesome in that such premises are said to have a claim on all reasonably attentive people.

Since, in Clark's estimation, Swinburne seems to be a contemporary Lockean about knowledge (more so than Descartes, Locke demanded reason for all of one's beliefs), his system is in need of some revision. More specifically, Clark states that: (a) if one's system of rationality accords roughly self-presenting status to a certain class of beliefs (i.e., basic beliefs) and (b) one believes that there is a single deductive or probabilistic conclusion (i.e., that God exists) that follows from those basic beliefs, then one is committed to some form of classical foundationalism. Clark argues that Swinburne's program for rationality seems committed to both (a) and (b). That is, Swinburne's system argues for self-presenting basic beliefs which coerce (rationally or probabilistically) non-basic beliefs. Thus, while one can be a coherentist or a reliabilist and still embrace the Enlightenment view of rationality, it is, in Clark's view, more typically connected with classical foundationalism.

[Correspondence with Kelly Clark, e-mail, tprovenz@harper.cc.il.us., December 3, 1997.]

4See, for example, Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "Correspondence Theory of Truth, by A. N. Prior, 2" as cited in John S. Feinberg, "Truth: Relationship of Theories of Truth to Hermeneutics," in Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, & the Bible, ed.
that a proposition is true if and only if what it asserts about a given state of affairs is the case. For example, "The present king of France is bald" is true if and only if France does in fact have a current king who is bald. If what is asserted by the content of the proposition does not in fact describe the state of affairs as it really is, then the proposition is false. Thus, it is only in the case of propositions or statements that we can inquire into the matter of truth or falsity. Furthermore, since truth is a quality or property of propositions, only propositions can be logically considered either true or false.  

A proper notion of truth distinguishes between its ontological and epistemological qualities. John Feinberg offers helpful insights on this distinction. Feinberg states that *what it means to say* of any statement that it is true is

Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1984), 7 and 43, n. 17. Prior's essay, as Feinberg notes, provides a summary of the major adherents of the correspondence view (e.g. Aristotle, Bertrand Russell, and the early Wittgenstein of the Tractatus), along with arguments for and against their position (including Wittgenstein's later qualifications against strict correspondence in his *Investigations*).

an ontological question. Questions of whether any specific statement is true or false is an epistemological matter. Our purpose at this point is simply to consider what features of language make a proposition true (an ontological matter) and then consider whether we are in a position to objectively evaluate propositions to determine their truth or falsity (an epistemological exercise). That is, with respect to rationality, once we determine what sort of thing truth is, it is expected that we can demonstrate with reasonable sufficiency that, as knowing subjects, we have as part of our cognitive equipment (and as part of our perceptual processes) the ability to discern what is true. Thus, while a theory of truth may not supply us with the specific conditions or procedures for verification (the epistemological concern), it does suggest that one will probably have some idea of how to verify or falsify a statement. When this notion is applied to the correspondence view, for example, we are simply considering whether a given proposition meets the condition of corresponding in some sense to the world, while the verification of such a correspondence would involve some kind of perceptual or rational interaction with the world.

In addition, the correspondence theory of truth is consistent with certain other metaphysical assumptions about

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the external world, such as the notion of realism. Realism is the belief that "material objects exist externally to us and independently of our sense of experience."\(^7\) Or to put it more precisely, realism is the view "that among the conditions individually necessary and jointly sufficient for the truth of a belief (proposition, sentence, or whatever) is a condition to the effect that a certain [mind-independent] state of affairs must obtain."\(^8\) While realism itself is not a competing theory of truth, there are theories of truth that are realist theories (e.g., some form of correspondence).

Kirkham writes:

> Exactly which state of affairs must obtain for a given belief or statement to be true? It is the state of affairs that the statement asserts or the state of affairs believed. Thus on a realist theory of truth, the belief that snow is white is true only if snow is white in the extramental world (not if and only if snow is white, for a Realist theory may hold that there are other conditions necessary to the belief's being true).\(^9\)

The point is that realist theories suggest that such external realities do exist. So, while realist theories do not ensure that we will get beyond our own psychological and personal predilections for how we determine the data of our beliefs (or that we really know what is in the objective world), they do offer an idea of what kind of conditions a statement (or

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\(^8\)Richard L. Kirkham, Theories of Truth (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992), 73.

\(^9\)Ibid., 75-76.
belief) must attempt to satisfy in order for one to be considered rational in holding it. While other theories of truth (e.g., the coherence and pragmatic theories) do not necessarily exclude the condition of correspondence to the world in order for a proposition to qualify as true, such correspondence is not a necessary condition for truth.

The correspondence theory offers one of the best possibilities for avoiding a confusion between epistemic and ontological factors when considering the rationality for one's beliefs. This is critical to our model of rationality. The cognizer is aware that the ontological conditions for what makes a statement true are different from the epistemological procedures one uses to determine whether a given statement is in fact true. One's approach to epistemic justification (i.e., the reasons a cognizer gives for holding a belief, together with the relation among those reasons), while it bears some relation to one's theory of truth, does not require a specific theory of truth (i.e., the ontological conditions that a statement must satisfy in order to be true). In other words, one's theory of truth is not about what gives a cognizer a right to his belief. It's about what makes an assertion true in terms of the conditions a claim must satisfy. The point is that an assertion may be true, even though no one believes it to be true (or even if no cognizer has verified it or been in a position to verify it as true). This means, in addition, that it is the matter of epistemic
justification (i.e., the warrant, evidence, or grounds that one gives for holding a belief) that makes a cognizer rational in either holding a belief or rejecting it as false. And while being rational about one's beliefs can involve attempts to verify one's beliefs as true (if possible) with arguments and evidence, it does not require that all of our beliefs be verified as true in order to be rational in holding them. Being rational does not necessarily mean that one is always right, but as we will also see, it does not mean that one can be rational in holding a belief for reasons that are arbitrary or without any basis in reason at some level. The justification of a belief and the truthfulness of a belief may be determined on the basis of different criteria.

It should be clear at this point that the correspondence view of truth stands in contrast to the pragmatic and relativistic theory of truth in Murphy's system. Since her meaning for truth is one of unsurpassability (i.e., a true statement is one which will never be shown to be inadequate in its central contentions), there is no correspondence criteria or conditions for truth.10 But as

we saw in chapter two, Murphy appears to confuse the ontological question of the meaning of truth with the epistemological matter of determining whether a given theory, tradition, or statement is true. And as we indicated, one cannot automatically rule out a correspondence notion of truth simply because it is difficult to determine epistemologically whether or not certain conditions have in fact been satisfied in determining whether a given sentence is true or false.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Rationality and Reasoning}

To suggest that there is something like a core rationality common to every human culture is at the same time to suggest that there are at least some criteria that are not theory-laden, context-dependent, or relative to some preconceived theoretical ideas. Such criteria, at least in principle, can be used to appraise various competing theories and claims to truth.\textsuperscript{12} They in fact betray certain rules of inference or kinds of reasoning (e.g., deductive and inductive) and argue that certain assumptions, ideas, and propositions seem common to every culture (e.g., that there are other minds, that there is time, that things move, that perceptions are generally to be trusted).

\textsuperscript{11}Feinberg, "Truth," 4-5.

But how do we know our intellectual equipment works accurately? It seems that the best response we can give to this question is that, as Wittgenstein has noted, there is no other way our intellectual equipment works that makes sense to us, and to raise doubts in this matter is to call into question the whole framework of rational thought and interaction with the world.\textsuperscript{13} We have no way of knowing what any proposition means apart from how it is understood relative to our most fundamental ways of thinking and interacting. To doubt that our intellectual equipment works accurately goes beyond challenging our content presuppositions (although that is at issue) and calls into question our methodological presuppositions, namely, the very assumptions we make about what intellectual equipment we have and how it functions as we interact with the world and learn anything about it. Furthermore, to call our rational framework into question would require replacing it with still another framework constructed out of the very rules of our existing ways of thinking.\textsuperscript{14} But this would be self-referentially incoherent. One, for example, would have to invoke the law of non-contradiction (i.e., that no statement is both true and


\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., sec. 337-339, 43e.
false at the same time and in the same way) in order to suggest that the law of non-contradiction does not apply. And any attempt to make an argument against the law of non-contradiction would prove that very argument wrong, since to make an argument against the law of non-contradiction, one would have to presuppose the law in the very attempt to dismiss it. In uttering the sentence that one would have to utter to deny the law of non-contradiction, one would be uttering a sentence which both asserts and denies the same thing at the same time. So one ends up incorporating the very rule he is attempting to avoid. One could utter the nonsense statement, "Round squares exist in a triangular universe," but it is difficult to imagine what kind of rules would make sense out of such a statement if our existing laws of logic do not apply.

The basic principles of classical logic (i.e., the principles of identity, noncontradiction, and excluded middle), are rules for demonstrating the way in which the equipment of human reasoning works. For example, when applied to statements, the principle of identity asserts that if any statement is true, then it is true. The principle of non-contradiction affirms that no statement can be both true and false at the same time and in the same way. The principle of excluded middle holds that any statement is either true or

Reflection on these principles shows us that they are not mere social preferences, nor are they simply cultural or linguistic frameworks. Such principles can be shown to transcend our social, linguistic, and cultural frameworks in that they satisfy objective standards (i.e., fair and unbiased procedures) for correctness and rational discourse. As Harold Netland puts it:

The three principles are important in that they provide necessary conditions for meaningful and intelligible thinking and discourse on any subject whatsoever. They are not merely assumptions that have been adopted because they prove useful; they are among the necessary conditions for making any assumption in the first place. Nor are they simply descriptive of the way people reason. They are normative or prescriptive in being among the rules which dictate the conditions under which one can have meaningful and intelligible thinking and discourse."^{17}

Basic logical principles, in other words, are crucial to the rationality of beliefs in that they appeal to criteria of reasoning which are public and repeatable. And furthermore, such criteria are independent of a cognizer's psychological states, such as one's predilections, one's sense perceptions (or even one's theory of perception), or even the degree of verification or confidence with which one holds a proposition.

A further way in which we see reasoning demonstrating a core rationality is in the area of arguments. Arguments provide the reasons for a claim or assertion. In an argument,


^{17}Netland, Dissonant Voices, 183.
a finite series of statements (premises) is offered in support of another statement (conclusion).\textsuperscript{18} It is common, for example, to distinguish between deductive and inductive reasoning (or arguments). A deductive argument, for example, is one in which the reasoning is conclusive in a certain respect. At the very least, when reasoning deductively, we want our arguments to be deductively valid (i.e., when the structure is such). This is usually stated in two ways: deductively valid arguments are such that if the premises are true the conclusion must be true. Or as it is often put, it is logically impossible for the premises of a deductively valid argument to be true and the conclusion to be false. The reason for this is because the information contained in the conclusion of a valid deductive argument does not go beyond the information contained in the premises.\textsuperscript{19}

This is consistent with our model of rationality in that the rules for deductive validity, once again, do not surface as a result of a cognizer's predilections. Knowing subjects reason from premises which logically entail their conclusions, and they do so because such argument forms are not private matters which merely reflect a person's


\textsuperscript{19}Moser et al., The Theory of Knowledge, 129. See also, Nancey Murphy, Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International), 33.
preferences. That our cognitive equipment regularly works this way is evidence that it cannot function differently than it does and still make sense to us.

In deductive arguments, the claim or conclusion is already contained (implicitly) in the premises. So, for example, to make the claim that all men are mortal is to include in that claim the knowledge that the man Socrates is mortal. Deductive arguments (especially in the form of modern logic) can make us aware of something new, psychologically speaking, but they typically do not increase or expand our knowledge in appreciable ways (i.e., deductive arguments can confirm that something is the case).²⁰

Inductive arguments, on the other hand, can provide genuinely new knowledge. Good inductive arguments are essential for expanding our knowledge, but they do so in such a way that the truth of the premise (or premises) does not guarantee the truth of the conclusion. This is because inductive reasoning is essentially an argument form in which the claims or conclusions enlarge upon, or go beyond the evidence. The premises do not entail the truth of the conclusion, but they do purport to offer good reasons for accepting the conclusion. If, for example, all our observations of foxes are that they are red, then we may form the generalization that the next fox we see will also be red.

²⁰See, for example, Nancey Murphy, Reason & Rhetoric in Religion (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 35.
But we can never be sure that the next fox will not be grey. So good inductive arguments (i.e., arguments that rightly expand our knowledge) do so at the expense of the certitude of deductive reasoning.\textsuperscript{21}

The point is that our conceptual framework is such that we recognize that there is always some measure of probability with inductive arguments. We can make rational inferences from observed phenomena to future possibilities, but we recognize that this is not a guarantee that our conclusions will be true. Sometimes our perceptual and cognitive apparatus do not get things right, but the fact that we are aware of this is what is important for rationality. We can, in most instances, check our perceptions and recollections through some publicly accessible means. In addition, both deductive and inductive arguments involve inferential reasoning, that is, some type of connection (whether entailed or implied) from the premises to the conclusion. This is not always done correctly. But, once again, the point is that our conceptual frameworks can make us aware of this, and since this is the case, we are typically in positions to take

\textsuperscript{21}This most typical kind of inductive argument is mentioned to make a general point about how inductive arguments work. Inductive arguments are divided into several kinds, all of which are forms of non-demonstrative reasoning, in which, as Max Black notes, "the truth of the premises, while not entailing the truth of the conclusion, purports to be a good reason for belief in it." \textit{Encyclopaedia of Philosophy}, 1967 ed., s. v. "Induction," by Max Black. See also, Howard Kahane, Logic and Philosophy: A Modern Introduction, 6th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990), 336-60.
adequate steps to correct the potential problem that a
cognizer may understand the premises and yet deny that there
is some logical connection between the premises and the
cclusion.

Rationality and Objectivity

One of the central questions concerning the nature of
rationality has to do with its relation to objectivity and
truth. That is, to what extent does holding a given belief
(or theory) satisfy the criterion of objectivity? Such an
enquiry is designed to determine the extent to which
theorizing in a given discipline is a conceptual enterprise
that employs a conscious awareness of objective and subjective
distinctions within conceptual endeavors. John Feinberg has
suggested an approach which offers an adequate response to
these issues based on various insights on the nature of
rationality and objectivity.22 Feinberg states that when
one is inquiring into the objectivity of a given conceptual
enterprise, one is asking the question whether or not one can
approach the study in such a way so as to avoid skewing the
results by one's conceptual framework or one's
predispositions. The issue of objectivity has to do with the
human attempt to employ a model of rationality in which we are
able to arrive at the truth without simply working out the

22John S. Feinberg, "Rationality, Objectivity, and
Doing Theology: Review and Critique of Wentzel Van Huyssteen's
Theology and the Justification of Faith," Trinity Journal 10
implications of our presuppositions. If the best that one can expect to attain in conceptual theorizing is simply working out the implications of one's own subjective preferences, then, as Feinberg contends, it is impossible (on an epistemic level) to come to ultimate decisions about what is right and wrong with respect to one's theories or beliefs. 23

There are two different senses of subjectivity being employed at this point. There is subjectivity₁ in the sense of a cognizer using his own intellectual equipment in the acquisition of knowledge. This kind of subjectivity is a necessary part of the relation between a knowing subject and the object of knowledge. One cannot acquire knowledge without the use of one's own intellectual equipment. But there is also subjectivity₂ in the sense of being biased and unfair with the data. Subjectivity in this sense is not necessary to the acquisition of knowledge and is possible to avoid to an adequate extent.

We are also saying that there are two different senses in which we understand what it means to be objective. In the first sense, to be objective₁ means that the object of knowledge is something that is ontologically apart from the knowing subject. But in another sense, objectivity₂ is the sense we have in mind when it is suggested that one can (and does) approach knowledge of a thing in a manner that is fair and unbiased with the evidence and reasons. Part of our

23Ibid.
concept of rationality argues that we cannot have objectivity$_1$ when it comes to a cognizer's knowledge of something, but this does not force us to operate with the second kind of subjectivity$_2$, so that we have no choice but to be unfair and biased with the evidence and reasons given in support of a belief.

Belief that we can be objective$_2$ relies on a model of rationality that does not view all data as theory-dependent. Although we do possess conceptual frameworks that influence the way we think, it is possible to have knowledge about the way the world really is on the notion that there are such things as theory-neutral facts. In other words, there is an external world, an accessible reality that is external to our minds. The knowing subject can have knowledge of such an external world (i.e., the object) when one leaves behind one's presuppositions and observes facts apart from how a person's theories might skew his perception of those facts. All theorizing is to some extent provisional and open to further clarifications and revisions in light of additional evidence and the undisputed conclusions of other disciplines. As a consequence, if there is to be an objective$_2$ understanding of the data between conceptual enterprises, it must be done on the basis of certain shared standards of rationality.

It would seem, then, that the question of rationality and objectivity in theorizing (theistic or otherwise) begins with the methodology one uses when evaluating and
investigating the potential evidence for a given belief or theory. Feinberg writes in this regard:

... it must be admitted that often one's prior training and beliefs do influence his theorizing. ... Hence, more often than one might like, subjectivity colors theorizing and removes objectivity (objectivity in the sense of unbiased investigation and decision making) from it. On the other hand, I do not think this means subjectivity (bias, predilection for one view over another) must always be involved in theorizing so that it is impossible to discover objectively (i.e., in an unbiased way, not predetermined by one's prior commitments) what is true or to convince others of one's views.24

This is so whether we are talking about cultural, perceptual, linguistic, historical, or theoretical conditioning. By this line of thinking, we are not forced to conclude with Kuhn and others that our sociocultural history so conditions the way we look at reality that we cannot escape our subjective notions and interpret data (whether empirical or rational) in an unbiased manner.25

While it is true that our conceptual frameworks play a crucial role in forming our concepts, such concepts can be held independently of any particular objects in the world, and as such can be applied to any number of theories about the world. But as Israel Scheffler has stated, such objective and subjective distinctions are not always easy to identify. An adequate model of rationality must give some account of how one can make observations independent of one's conceptual


schemes, while not denying that one's conceptual framework is operative. 26 This places the knowing subject in the precarious position of having to consider at any point whether or not one's theorizing and investigation of the evidence (including one's standards of rationality) are in fact predetermined by views one already holds. 27

Scheffler argues that we do in fact have objective standards (in the sense of unbiased investigation) for determining whether we have forced our previous views on the conceptualization process. In so doing, he distinguishes two notions of determination. In the first sense, a person deals with a category system (system of concepts) which, according to Scheffler, "[imposes] order in general and in advance on whatever experience in that context may bring." 28 That is, a category system tells us in advance what things are individuated as belonging to that category. Before one can identify a scarecrow as a scarecrow, one must have the concept of a scarecrow. It is by having the concept of a thing (e.g., a tree, scarecrow, snowman, bicycle, etc.) that one can limit (or determine) the kinds of thing that can rightfully belong to that concept.

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In the second sense, determination refers to the assignment of specific items or objects into their respective place in the category scheme. We mean by this the specific designation of an item as an example of a given concept. It is that sense of determination in which one's perceptual experience and conceptual awareness leads one to identify an actual scarecrow as a scarecrow and a snowman as a snowman. But what is critical to the issue of objectivity is that, as Scheffler argues, merely having a category scheme does not determine how it will be applied in specific cases. Having the concept of a snowman, for example, allows us to determine that it does not belong to the category of scarecrows. He writes:

Categorization does not, in other words, decide the forms of distribution which items will in fact display, nor does it, in itself, determine the categorical assignments of any particular item or class of items yet to be encountered. . . . It means that we can understand a hypothesis which conflicts with our favored hypothesis of the moment, in terms of the very category system to which the latter appeals. 29

So while one's conceptual framework determines (in the first sense) what one perceives, it does not at the same time force one to identify an item (determination in the second sense) as belonging into one's preferred category. This is because the set of concepts of which one is aware is held independently of any particular objects in the world. The implication of all this is that our concepts can be used in any number of

29Scheffler, 38-9.
theories that we formulate on evidence, even if those theories ultimately conflict.30

In light of this, we are not forced to conclude, for example, as does Van Huyssteen, that our linguistic frameworks so influence our theorizing that no attempt at theorizing can be prelinguistic or pretheoretical.31 If our language so conditions our view of the data that reality is nothing more than our cultural and linguistic constructs, and if, as Van Huyssteen asserts, while there is a referential component to our language, all we really have access to are our theories which are no better or worse than other theories at solving problems, then we can never actually get to the referential object (in the correspondence sense) to which our language refers.32 We could, if Van Huyssteen's estimations are correct, have no independent access to real conditions and referents in the world. If, as Van Huyssteen argues, religious language is in large part metaphorical and redescribes reality in a relational context (rather than a referential context), then the best we have is language that Van Huyssteen argues only approximates the truth and gives us incomplete access to the external world. The best that we can expect is access to the best available theory (i.e., best in

30Feinberg, "Rationality," 183.


32Ibid., 128 and 137-8.
the sense that it is thought to provide better solutions to specific problems in specific situations. It ultimately agrees with a pragmatic theory of truth and denies that there is any corresponding sense of our language to the world. But the insights of Scheffler's two senses of determination mean that our identifications need not be biased in the direction of our previously held concepts. One may have the concept of a scarecrow and prefer scarecrows over snowmen, but this does not force one to identify a snowman as a scarecrow. Having a preference for certain notions or concepts does not rule out properly identifying concepts that differ from what we expect or prefer.  

33 See Harold I. Brown, Observation and Objectivity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 143-49. Brown argues, for example, that we often become aware of items in the external world that are significantly different from what our previously formed theories would lead us to expect. This is particularly clear in the area of scientific observation. It is precisely because we are not forced to interpret preceptual data according to some preconceived conceptual scheme that we can formulate alternate theories to explain the data in a manner different from our previous notions. He further indicates that our sensory apparatus can make distinctions between an effect and its cause by recognizing that (a) an effect need not resemble a cause (e.g., the music that flows out of my compact disk player does not resemble the compact disk itself, or the laser eye that reads the disk); and (b) an effect may at the same time be both the result of causes upon which it is ontologically dependent and causes from which it is ontologically independent (e.g., a person's physical welfare is in part ontologically dependent on food, water, and air, but is ontologically independent of the environment from which it is supplied). See also, Harold I. Brown, Perception, Theory, and Commitment: The New Philosophy of Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Larry Laudan, Progress and Its Problems (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and Jarrett Leplin, ed. Scientific Realism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
Thus, while we are strongly affected by our conceptual schemes, unbiased methods for obtaining and judging evidence relative to a given belief or theory are possible between conceptual frameworks. This goes beyond simply communicating between systems; rather, such an approach to rationality and objectivity places the knowing subject in a position to know what is more likely true in the correspondence sense described above. Our manner of evaluating evidence, while strongly affected by our conceptual frameworks, does not preclude communication across worldviews so that we can get at what is true in the correspondence sense. Jesse Hobbs, for example, offers the following valuable insight on objectivity and incommensurability:

It has been commonplace since the work of Thomas Kuhn to allege that there can be neither evidence nor perception except within the framework of some worldview or other. . . . Lines of incommensurability are those across which discussants are failing to communicate, or are talking past one another, not where communication is impossible. Even if everything can be seen only from the standpoint of one worldview or another, that does not preclude worldviews from being flexible enough to permit suspension of judgment on particular disputed issues. 34

In other words, one may recognize the depth of influence a conceptual framework has on the theorizing process and still maintain that objectivity between frameworks is possible. One is not forced to simply work out the implications of one's

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presuppositions in theory formulation or with respect to the acquisition of one's beliefs.

The upshot of our treatment of objectivity, then, is that we do not have to be so controlled by our own conceptual categories that we cannot gain some understanding of another's conceptual scheme. We can critically reflect and see the weaknesses of our own conceptual systems. We can then seek for a more adequate explanation. It is possible for reason and perception to play a significant role in the examination, revision, and rejection of one's current beliefs and the acquisition of new beliefs.

For example, where it may be legitimately argued that people are clearly influenced by their linguistic and conceptual frameworks, such conditions do not force us to entirely subjective investigations and biased conclusions. And although a certain degree of cultural bias does pervade our assessment of the world, such cultural biases need not be constraining and can be adequately overcome. The argument here is that we can (and often do) overcome our subjective biases and do theorizing appropriately, especially when one considers that our conceptual and linguistic frameworks (together with our perceptual capacities) are instruments employed largely for the distinct purpose of assessing individual truth claims and overarching theories. In light of
this, such frameworks can be entirely adequate for accessing mind-independent reality.35

Rationality and Certainty

Crucial to our model of rationality is the notion that a statement's truth is not the same thing as its certainty. Feinberg remarks, for example, that "the truth or falsity of any statement has nothing to do with whether or not it can be verified as such or with the degree of certainty to which it can be proved or disproved."36 Of course, to talk about certainty is to say something about the criteria or conditions for what makes a statement certain. In our model of rationality, we have been arguing that the Enlightenment idea of Cartesian certainty (i.e., one in which the evidence for a belief leads to the infallibility or indubitability of that belief) is far too rigorous a criterion to be workable. This would seem to suggest that a more workable model should lessen the requirement for what counts as sufficient evidence for


justification and rationality. Part of suggesting such a model has to do with the distinction between objective certainty and subjective certainty.

Stated briefly, objective certainty relates to the matter of truth and certainty (i.e., whether a cognizer has a right to say something is verified). Objective certainty has to do with the amount, kind, and quality of evidence that is marshalled for the truth of a proposition. Subjective certainty, on the other hand, has to do with the degree of persuasion or conviction a person has (i.e., one's degree of certitude toward the truthfulness of a given proposition). Subjective certainty deals with the psychological factors a cognizer brings to the matter of a proposition's truth. Of course, in our model of rationality, the goal is to have one's subjective certainty stem from objective certainty, that is, the degree to which a statement can be verified on evidence. But the problem is that, as we will see, subjective certainty can come about from factors not related to the verification of a proposition. One may choose to be subjectively certain for all kinds of reasons not related to the quality and quantity of the evidence. One may, for example, go against what the evidence seems to suggest, or choose to be subjectively certain even when there is insufficient evidence for the belief in question.

When considering the matter of certainty and the rationality of one's belief, we are primarily concerned with
the amount and kind of evidence available for the truth of a given proposition. This is what is meant by objective certainty. But to have an idea of what that evidence might be, one must distinguish between different kinds of statements and the manner in which the available evidence argues for or against them. It is here that we can draw upon certain notions from the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein argued, as Feinberg notes, "that certain statements (e.g., 'I have a mind') are beyond any question of doubt, because they are so foundational to all we are and do that they could not reasonably be brought into question."\(^{37}\) This is what is said of analytic statements (e.g., statements of math and logic). Analytic statements (i.e., statements which assert that some relation among ideas exists, that, for example, \(2+2=4\)) are true by definition. Such statements have 100% objective certainty. In other words, we are saying that there is no other kind of evidence that could be marshalled in favor of their certainty. This is the point that was made earlier relative to the basic laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction.

Other statements, however, can be doubted on a meaningful basis, but one may be in a position to marshall enough of the appropriate kind of evidence to be rationally

convinced that it no longer makes sense to doubt them. This is the case with synthetic statements (e.g., assertions of empirical matters of fact). The difference here is that one can, at most, marshal 99% objective certainty for synthetic statements. For it is always possible that some future evidence could count against one's belief, even though a cognizer does not expect that to be the case. So when one is considering whether it is rational to hold a given synthetic statement, one is concerned with the extent to which one can marshal sufficient evidence (i.e., objective certainty) to conclude that a proposition of this sort has a 99% probability (or as close to it as possible) of being true.

Wittgenstein's notions on objective and subjective certainty are designed to show that doubting and proving are matters of objective certainty, while the conviction that something is true is a matter of subjective certainty. He argues that the kind of certainty is the kind of language-game (i.e., objective certainty). The emphasis here is on the distinction between the kind of certainty and the degree of certainty. The point of this distinction is to show that one can achieve subjective certainty (i.e., the conviction that a

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38 Ibid. See, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, On Certainty, sec. 559, 73e; sec. 370, 48e; sec. 257, 34e; and sec. 519, 68e.

statement is true) to the same degree in the language-game of religion, history, or science as in the language-game of mathematics and logic, but the kind of objective certainty upon which it is based will differ. In other words, the methods a cognizer uses to verify the statements of math and logic (along with one's awareness of the kind of evidence appropriate to such statements) are different from those used in science or history, because the language-games are different.\textsuperscript{40} So when a cognizer claims to have subjective certainty about a given synthetic statement (whether in math, science, philosophy, or theism), that claim is rational to the extent to which he is aware of the appropriate evidence for that belief, together with the extent to which his conviction that the belief is true is based on the kind and quality of evidence marshalled for that belief (i.e., its objective certainty).

It's important to note that if a cognizer has 99% objective certainty of a synthetic statement, there is no sense in which he can be more objectively certain about it. So he is rational in being as subjectively certain about that belief as he is about some analytic statement. But a further question for rationality has to do with cases in which we have less than 99% objective certainty relative to empirical matters of fact. What degree of subjective certainty is allowed in these cases if a cognizer is to remain rational in

\textsuperscript{40}Feinberg, "Truth," 21.
holding such beliefs? This is a more difficult matter to ascertain. If the way one goes about obtaining objective certainty in the language-games of religion, science, or history is different than the way one's goes about getting objective certainty in math or logic, as Wittgenstein suggests, then the matter of how one knows whether there is appropriate evidence upon which to establish a statement's truth will differ according to the language-game in question.

Feinberg indicates that there are appropriate kinds of evidence and appropriate amounts of evidence when considering the matter of objective certainty relative to synthetic statements. The appropriate kind of evidence is evidence relevant to the issue under discussion, evidence that is true, and evidence that is used properly when structuring one's argument (i.e., the argument contains no errors in reasoning). As to the appropriate amount of evidence, Feinberg suggests that "one has enough evidence when the evidence of the kind mentioned is so rationally convincing that one cannot reasonably maintain a doubt."41 Of course, with synthetic statements, we will not always have enough evidence to make them rationally convincing. But for those instances in which enough objective certainty has been marshalled for the truth of a statement, it makes no sense to continue doubting until one thinks some "final explanation" has been reached. The reason for this is because a cognizer may already have that

explanation and simply not realize it, or he may have no idea of what that explanation might look like should it be offered. In the final analysis, argues Feinberg, when it comes to how one knows whether there is an appropriate amount of evidence to establish a statement's truth, "there is no set number of arguments or pieces of evidence that must be reached to remove doubt."\(^{42}\)

On our model of rationality, then, it seems reasonable to suggest that a cognizer is rational in holding one's beliefs when one retains the degree of rational conviction that is warranted by the objective certainty (i.e., the appropriate kinds, quality, and amounts of evidence). This will have much to do with the quality of the evidence or arguments. This is easier to accomplish in the language-games of math and logic, since the kinds of procedures one's uses to determine an analytic statement's truth involve rational proofs and the possibility of uncovering contradictions in arguments. So one may be in a better position to offer evidence for the objective certainty of analytic statements (and consequently have a right to a greater degree of subjective certainty about them) than for the synthetic propositions of theism, but this does not rule out the possibility of one being equally subjectively certain about the statements of theism (or at least having a degree of subjective certainty that is consistent with the evidence).

\(^{42}\)Ibid.
Furthermore, while our model of rationality can accept certain aspects about the distinctions between objective and subjective certainty, we are not forced to conclude with Wittgenstein that the language-game of theism does not deal with factual claims that are open to being verified or falsified on evidence. One does present evidence for the synthetic claims of theism; they are in fact synthetic and in need of inductive procedures for verification, but they are, nonetheless, assertions like those of science, history, and philosophy. Wittgenstein asserts, as Feinberg notes, that "after a certain degree of evidence is produced, it no longer makes sense to doubt the statement's truth (i.e., to question whether objective certainty warrants subjective certainty in such a case, regardless of whether the statement comes from the language-game of history, science, mathematics, or whatever)." If one canmarshall 99% objective certainty for a synthetic statement's truth, one is warranted in being absolutely subjectively certain of the statement's truth, even though it is synthetic. But we cannot be as dogmatic about such statements where the objective certainty is not as strong. Still it is important to point out that a statement's truth does not depend on either subjective or objective certainty. As we have indicated, a statement's truth is a

43Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations, 61-62.

matter of whether it satisfies certain conditions and referents in the world. We simply may not be in a position to verify a statement as true.

The above distinctions help to clarify the matter of what kind of evidence is sufficient if one is to be rational about one's beliefs. In addition, objective certainty relates to the matter of objectivity stated above, in that it attempts an approach that uses fair and unbiased procedures when reasoning from the evidence to a given conclusion. It assumes that a certain quantity and quality of evidence is publically available. So on our model of rationality, we are claiming that the public nature of the evidence makes it possible for a cognizer to investigate and determine whether the concept in question fits a given object in the world.45 For there to be objective certainty, the evidence must be publically accessible. Furthermore, sufficient evidence cannot be based entirely on private sensations and experiences, since neither the particular person considering the evidence nor any others have criteria (public or otherwise) to determine what they are. This means that a good deal of our synthetic statements will be based on less conclusive evidence, and there still may be legitimate room for doubt and explanation.46

46 Feinberg, "Rationality," 183.
Nevertheless, it still may be considered that, although the evidence is public, a given person's investigation of it may be wrong or just underdetermine the issue. While this is certainly possible, it can be held into check when we do our investigating and theorizing (whether theistic, scientific, or otherwise) in community. That is, if the public evidence is conclusive in one direction, then its probability of falsehood is not high, and doubting, proof and explanation must end at some point. 47

As we have seen, Swinburne's model comes closest to satisfying criteria for the distinctions between objective and subjective certainty. On his model of rationality, one should be subjectively certain only on the basis of the appropriate evidence for a belief. The rationality models of Murphy and Plantinga, however, are much more likely to utilize subjective certainty for reasons other than what follows from the evidence. In Murphy's case, it is because the evidence for a statement's truth (i.e., its objective certainty) is almost always tentative and provisional. It is unlikely that we will have anything close to 99% objective certainty with respect to our synthetic claims, but one can have prior commitments to certain research programs (or a presuppositions of content) that are highly suggestive of subjective certainty. Plantinga's system, on the other hand, suggests that a cognizer has an epistemic right to be subjectively certain (in

47 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 180e.)
the way that we have been defining it) of the belief that God exists simply on the basis of prima facie evidence (i.e., apart from any attempt to verify the evidence for a belief according to the criteria for objective certainty).

**Rationality and Justification**

While a person may be in a position to obtain objective certainty by way of the verification processes indicated above, and while it has been argued that a rational model of cognitive claims to knowledge (including theistic belief) involves some form of the correspondence theory of truth, it must be stated that there is more to rationality than the mere quality of having a true belief. There are, to be sure, many instances in which a person may hold a true belief while holding that belief in the absence of adequate reasons and reliable processes. If I only feel a hunch that my friend is holding four aces in his hand, my belief, while it may turn out to be true, is not based on good reasons or evidence. In contrast, my friend, because he can see the cards in his hands, has more than likely appealed to the best evidence that his cognitive equipment has to offer for saying that he is holding four aces. We would say that he has perceptual grounds for his belief. So while both beliefs are
true, only my friend has appealed to reasons consistent with objective certainty.48

This illustration raises the question of the nature of justification and its relation to verification. Epistemic justification signifies offering acceptable reason-giving answers in support of our beliefs and claims to knowledge. On our model of rationality, justification involves the reasons, evidence, or arguments (i.e., the objective certainty to which one appeals) for holding a given belief. Where it is possible, it involves attempts to verify one's beliefs as true with good arguments and appropriate evidence. But it does not necessarily require that the cognizer verify a belief as true, or even attempt to verify a belief. This raises the matter of a significant distinction in our proposed model of rationality. There are multiple senses (or two different respects) in which a person can be rational in holding a belief. In the first place, as indicated in the previous section, there is a sense in which rationality is tied to the stronger notions of truth and certainty. In this sense of rationality, one is rational in holding a belief in virtue of the fact that one has verified one's belief as true by appealing to the appropriate kind, quality, and amount of evidence for the belief in question. In such a case, it no longer makes sense to say that one's belief does not satisfy the conditions of being

rational. One can do no better than to verify one's belief as true on evidence.

But there is another sense in which rationality relates to the matter of justification, and this sense of rationality is not identical to the first. It is clear that we are not always in a position to verify a belief as true, but we are typically in a position to offer reasons for why we think our beliefs are true. In doing so, we are dealing with a sense of rationality in which one is rational for holding a belief that, while not verified as true (a matter of objective certainty), one is at least attempting to offer a reason-based conception for why he thinks his belief is true. In making this distinction, it is important to recognize that a rational (or justified) belief is not necessarily the same thing as knowledge. The reason for this is because, on our model of rationality, justification can lead to knowledge only if a cognizer has verified a belief as true by marshalling enough evidence for it. But a cognizer's theory of knowledge (i.e., epistemic justification) is a different thing from one's ability to verify a given belief. And further, one's theory of knowledge does not necessarily determine one's theory of truth. So if a person's verification of a given proposition (objective certainty) offers good reasons for believing it (e.g., given a correspondence view of truth), then such a person has adequate justification for claiming that one's belief is knowledge.
While we may agree that hunches, guesses, conjectures, and wishful thinking do not yield cases of knowledge even if they are true, there is still the matter of what reasons a person must have for a belief if she is thought to be justified (and rational) in holding that belief. Concerns such as these raise the issue of what has come to be known in philosophy as the Gettier problem.\footnote{Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" \textit{Analysis} 23, no.6 (1963): 121-123. See also, Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems," \textit{The Philosophical Quarterly} 44, no. 174 (1994): 65-73.} Prior to Gettier, it was generally thought that $S$ knows that $p$ if and only if: (1) $S$ believes that $p$; (2) $p$ is true; and (3) $S$'s belief that $p$ is justified. These three conditions had to be satisfied in order to constitute what was necessary and sufficient for knowledge, that is, all three conditions must be present for $S$ not to fail to know that $p$. Edmund Gettier challenged this "tripartite analysis" of knowledge by offering counterexamples in which a person could hold a justified, true belief entirely by accident or coincidence. It may be, for example, that a current reading of the barometer on my barn door is giving me justification for forming the belief that a storm is in the offing. It turns out that there is in fact a storm in the offing, but unbeknownst to me, the barometer is broken and is only coincidentally indicating that a storm is on the horizon. So while my belief about a storm in the offing is in fact true, my belief is based on an instrument that is not
functioning properly. Although my true belief seems quite justified (the barometer has always produced reliable readings in the past), it also seems that I cannot really know (i.e., if knowledge is justified-true-belief) that there is a storm in the offing, since my belief is based on a reading of the barometer that is only true coincidentally. Such counterexamples take the following form: (1) $S$ believes that $p$; (2) $p$ is true; (3) $S$'s belief that $p$ is justified; (4) $p$ is entailed by or probabilistically inferred from some proposition $q$; (5) $S$ is justified in believing $q$; (6) $q$ is false; and consequently (7) $S$ doesn't know that $p$.\footnote{Ibid., 72.}

The field of epistemic justification is replete with seemingly unsuccessful attempts to offer a fourth condition to the traditional justified-true-belief analysis of knowledge emerging out of Gettier-type counterexamples.\footnote{See, for example, Stephen Robert Jacobson, "What's Wrong with Reliability Theories of Justification," (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 24. See also, George Pappas and Marshall Swain, eds. Essays on Knowledge and Justification (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).} In addition, we have seen that the Enlightenment conceptions of evidentialism have traditionally employed models of justification that rely on classical foundationalism or coherentism in knowledge. In both cases, there is some sense in which a person's beliefs are justified in relation to other beliefs she may hold. But in foundationalist theories, as we have seen, justification is ultimately made by an appeal to a
privileged set of beliefs (i.e., basic beliefs) that are said to have indubitable status. In response to this, we have considered two current models of rationality and justification (i.e., Murphy and Plantinga) that take exception to evidentialist conceptions of rational belief. We have seen, for example, that Murphy's Lakatosian system rejects all models of rationality that rely on any foundationalist theory of knowledge as inadequate notions of the way theories and beliefs are actually formulated and justified. She ultimately replaces traditional (i.e., Enlightenment) notions of evidentialism and rationality with a postmodern version of rationality. In Murphy's system, a cognizer is rational only to the extent that she follows a theory of justification (i.e., one that is non-foundationalist) which allows for the tentative and provisional status of one's beliefs, given a theory of truth which substitutes unsurpassibility for correspondence.

Second, the concept of proper basicality offered in Plantinga's system appears to call for, at the most fundamental level, a qualified modification of classical

foundationalism's distinction between the basic and non-basic beliefs of one's noetic structure. In light of his argument that classical foundationalists' criteria of proper basicity are inadequate, Plantinga appears to offer what he thinks is a workable criterion for proper basicity, one according to which people are warranted (i.e., within their epistemic rights) to hold beliefs that are formed by our cognitive and noetic faculties functioning properly in environments specifically designed for them (i.e., they are aimed at the acquisition of true beliefs in the correspondence sense). And once again, we have seen that Plantinga's system presents us with the pressing problem that one may be rational in holding that belief in God is properly basic (i.e., one may be within his epistemic rights to hold that belief on prima facie evidence), but even if his argument holds, it applies to only one kind of belief, namely that God exists. Plantinga's argument that belief in God is properly basic cannot be applied as a model of rationality for a wide range of other religious and theological propositions that Plantinga would readily agree are made rational on the basis of evidential arguments and reasons.

On our model of rationality, then, we have been arguing that one can be rational in believing a proposition without verifying it or attempting to verify it. Of course, one can be rational in holding a belief in which one's
reason-based conception of justification coincides with attempts to verify one's belief as true or certain in light of the appropriate available evidence (e.g., in a way similar to Swinburne's different levels of rationality), but this is not necessary for justification. What this means is that one can be justified in holding a belief that he has not verified (i.e., verified in terms of offering public, unbiased rational or empirical evidence). Furthermore, it does not mean that any reason offered for a belief must be irrefutable if that belief is to be justified. It is difficult to argue against the simple thesis that a person may be justified (rational) in believing $x$ at time $t$ given a background set of beliefs $y$.\(^{53}\)

So while one's belief may be justified without verifying it as true (or even attempting to verify it), it is, nevertheless, not held arbitrarily or without some basis in reason.

So on our model of rationality, justification is a reason-based conception in which a person could hold a false belief

\(^{53}\)I am indebted here to Harold Netland's distinction between two levels or sense of rationality. On the first level, justification (or rationality) is not tied in with the notion of truth in the hard sense. On this level, it is reasonable for a person to hold belief $x$ at time $t$ given a background set of beliefs $y$. On the second level, however, justification (or rationality) takes place only in the stronger sense where truth is operative. On this level, what is reasonable to believe is related to what is in fact the case, and it is rational because it is in fact a true claim about reality. [Correspondence with Harold Netland, e-mail, tprovenz@megsinet.net, June 15, 1999]. Cf. also, James A. Montmarquet, *Epistemic Virtue and Doxastic Responsibility* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 99.
belief but be justified in doing so.\textsuperscript{54} As stated above, this does not necessarily mean that one's reasons will be right, but it does suggest that one has reasons for one's beliefs, reasons he thinks make that belief true. They can be reasons based on other beliefs a cognizer thinks are true, but they can also be based in other nondoxastic states of which a cognizer is in some way aware. But once again, a person's justification for a belief can be a different matter from a belief's truthfulness or certainty. But in the same way that a statement's truthfulness does not depend on a person's ability to verify it, so, too, a person's reasons for being justified about a given belief do not depend on its truthfulness, or even the kind of objective certainty that could verify the belief.

Can one be rational, then, in holding a belief for which one is not justified? If we mean by justification, at the very least, the reasons that one offers for a belief (i.e., reasons that are thought consistent with the kinds of reasons people typically give for their everyday putative beliefs), then one is rational in holding only a belief for which there is some level of justification for it. But as Swinburne has suggested, the reasons that a cognizer offers in support of a belief can be considered epistemically justified only to the extent that they are reasons which the cognizer

thinks are true. Such reasons may seem initially intuitive to a person. Reasons can also be based on testimony, or authority, or especially prior beliefs that one already accepts as true. Reasons are also based in perception, or memory, or some other experiential or rational state of which the cognizer is aware. But the point is that the cognizer thinks he has some non-arbitrary reasons for thinking that his belief is true, even if it turns out to be false.

Summary and Conclusion

Must the rationality and justification of a cognitive belief (theistic or otherwise), then, conform to the standards of certainty and evidentialism associated with Enlightenment epistemology? It seems that we are not rationally compelled to accept this thesis. Rather, we have seen that a person's justification for a belief may be based in various kinds of reasons, such as a child's being told something by a parent, or a student by his teacher. Justification can be doxastic (i.e., a relation among beliefs) or nondoxastic (i.e., based on factors in addition or apart from one's other beliefs), so long as a cognizer is offering reasons for his beliefs. So when a person seeks to justify a belief on some reason-based conception, those reasons may take a variety of acceptable forms (whether rational evidence, perceptual evidence, beliefs of memory, or at some level an awareness of one's mental states).
The criteria for rationality outlined above calls for a modified form of foundationalism. It argues that the features of foundationalist theories (i.e., its conceptions of truth, evidence, doxastic and nondoxastic relation among beliefs, objectivity, and rationality) from which it receives its epistemic structure are essentially correct. While certain modifications and revisions of the epistemic and rational features of foundationalist theories may prove necessary, one may argue that there is still an essentially foundationalist structure for rational belief that does not conform to the tentative and provisional status of beliefs so characteristic of Murphy's brand of postmodernity. And further still, we can agree with Plantinga's critiques of classical foundationalism (i.e., that it is difficult to arrive at agreement on the criteria for basic beliefs) and conclude that we are not necessarily forced to trace all our non-basic beliefs back to basic beliefs. This is not to say that one could not trace one's non-basic beliefs back to basic beliefs (on the assumption of some form of foundationalist structure), but rather, that there is no need to do so once enough evidence has been supplied.

In addition, as we have indicated above, our proposed notion of rationality argues for two respects or senses of rationality which are not identical: the first sense of rationality involves truth and certainty (or verification). But there is also a second sense of rationality that involves
justification, and the use of both respects or senses amounts to a modified or moderate foundationalism. The reasons for this are modest in nature. In the first place, as it has been suggested earlier, not all beliefs need to be traced back to basic beliefs for their justification. All we need do is supply sufficient reasons or explanations. This allows us to circumvent the stronger forms of evidentialism, while continuing to offer evidence, reasons, and explanations for our beliefs and theories.

Moderate foundationalism, moreover, is a fallibilist position that is not committed to the indefeasibility of foundational beliefs. That is, one is open to the possibility that further evidence could show a given belief (or theory) to be false, even though it is not expected that such will be the case. This epistemic structure argues for fallibilism in at least three ways. First, one's foundational beliefs may turn out to be unjustified or false or both; second, non-basic (or inferential) beliefs are only inductively (and consequently fallibly) justified by foundational beliefs. One's non-foundational beliefs can turn out false, even when the foundational beliefs from which they are inferred are true; and third, the possibility of discovering error, even among foundational beliefs, is left open. 55

In addition, a fallibilist position raises the further question of the manner in which evidence relates to one's

basic (or foundational) beliefs. If it is granted that there is always the possibility of discovering error among one's basic beliefs, then it seems reasonable to suggest that a cognizer may at some point legitimately reassess those beliefs in light of additional evidence. That is, if at some later point, at least for me, my basic beliefs are challenged by me, I may apply evidence against those beliefs in a manner similar to the way in which I apply evidence against my non-basic beliefs. In such a case, it is difficult to know whether my basic belief continues to remain among my foundational beliefs. But it seems reasonable to suggest that, should I be in a position to marshall enough of the appropriate kind of evidence so as satisfy my own challenge and become so rationally convinced that it no longer makes sense to reasonably maintain a doubt, then there seems to be no good reason why my belief cannot once again resume its place among the basic beliefs of my noetic structure.

Furthermore, since the coherence among one's beliefs plays a significant role in what is rational for one to believe in a fallibilist position, then incoherence among one's beliefs may defeat verification or knowledge, even of a foundational belief. For example, my justification for believing that unicorns do not exist prevents me from remaining justified in believing that there is one in front of me. Coherence may also account for an increasing number of independent mutually consistent factors a cognizer believes to
support the truth of a proposition. My justification for believing that the bag of apples is from the Clarkes, for example, increases with each new belief I acquire, all of which independently support that conclusion.\textsuperscript{56} But while fallibilism grants that incoherence can defeat the verification of foundational beliefs, it does not regard coherence as a basic source of justification. Coherence by itself is not sufficient for justification.\textsuperscript{57} This model of rationality incorporates the valid insights of Murphy, Plantinga, and Swinburne without succumbing to the problems indicated in their systems.

\textsuperscript{56}Audi, \textit{Epistemology}, 205.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 206.
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