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EVIL AND THE PROPER BASICITY OF BELIEF IN GOD

Paul Draper

Alvin Plantinga claims that certain beliefs entailing God's existence can be properly basic. He uses this claim to suggest two distinct replies to evidential arguments from evil against theism. In "Reason and Belief in God" he offers what he calls his "highroad" reply, and in a more recent article he suggests what I call his "modest" reply. First I show that Plantinga's highroad reply fails, because it relies on a faulty analysis of probability on total evidence. Then I reformulate his modest reply so that it applies specifically to David Hume's evidential argument from evil. And finally, I show that a certain "existential" problem of evil undermines Plantinga's modest reply to Hume's argument.

In several recent articles, Alvin Plantinga articulates and defends a foundationalist theory of epistemic rationality. He calls this theory "Reformed" epistemology, because he believes that the rejection of natural theology by Reformed thinkers like John Calvin and Karl Barth is implicitly based on a rejection of classical foundationalism in favor of a theory like Plantinga's. The central tenet of Reformed epistemology concerns what I will call "theistic beliefs": beliefs about the attributes or actions of God that self-evidently entail God's existence, where "God" is understood to be an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect creator of the Universe. According to Reformed epistemology, theistic beliefs can be properly basic—they can be in the foundations of a rational system of beliefs. Plantinga uses this tenet to suggest two distinct replies to evidential arguments from evil against God's existence. By criticizing these replies, I hope to show that evil can still be a serious epistemic problem for theists even if theistic beliefs can in some circumstances be properly basic.

I. *Plantinga's Highroad Reply*

In "Reason and Belief in God," Plantinga develops what he calls his "highroad" reply to evidential arguments from evil.¹ Before I evaluate this reply, a few preliminary remarks about his notion of proper basicity are in order. According to Plantinga, a belief is "basic" for a person if that person does not base it on any other beliefs, and a belief is "properly basic" for a person if it is both basic and epistemically rational for that person. Further, properly



basic beliefs are not groundless. Like nonbasic rational beliefs, they have their justification *conferred* upon them. For example, when I see a tree, I do not believe the proposition 'I see a tree' on the basis of other propositions like propositions describing my sense experience. But my sense experience, my being "appeared to treely" (together with other circumstances) "is what justifies me in holding it; this is the *ground* of my justification, and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself" (p. 79). So when Plantinga asserts that one does not need evidence for theism in order to have rational theistic beliefs, it is important to keep in mind that he takes the word 'evidence' to be equivalent in meaning to 'propositional evidence.' If we use the word 'evidence' to refer to both propositional and nonpropositional evidence, then it is Plantinga's view that a theistic belief cannot be rational unless its subject has evidence for it.

Plantinga construes evidential arguments from evil as arguments for the conclusion that theism is improbable with respect to some true statement about evil (p. 21).² (By the expression 'A is improbable with respect to B,' he means roughly that, independent of one's background evidence, A is less probable than the denial of A on the assumption that B is true.) His highroad reply challenges the significance of such an argument. He first points out that, even if such an argument were sound and recognized to be sound by some theist, it does not follow that that theist's belief in God is irrational. For a proposition can be improbable with respect to some other proposition that one knows to be true and yet probable on one's total evidence (p. 22). This point is well taken. But we are still left with the question of whether or not an evidential argument from evil could render some theist's belief in God irrational by rendering it improbable on that theist's total evidence. Plantinga answers that, if a theist's belief in God is properly basic, then it could not. For if belief in God is properly basic for some theist T, then "belief in God is a member of [the set of propositions] T_s [that constitute T's total evidence], in which case it obviously will not be improbable with respect to T_s One who offers the probabilistic argument from evil simply *assumes* that belief in God does not have that status; but perhaps he is mistaken" (p. 24).

It is Plantinga that is mistaken here. He construes a person S's total evidence as a set K of propositions and takes the epistemic probability of any proposition P relative to S's epistemic situation to be the conditional probability of P on the conjunction of the members of K. This analysis of "probability on total evidence" entails that any proposition that is a part of S's total evidence has an epistemic probability of one for S. But this is precisely why this analysis is at best an idealization that is usually harmless. A better analysis identifies a person S's total evidence with the set of propositions for which S has nonpropositional evidence, paired with their "basic probability," that is, the probability conferred on them by the circumstances that support

them. This probability is, of course, typically less than one. On this proposal, which does not construe probability on total evidence as probability conditional on some proposition, a proposition can be a part of a person's total evidence, and yet be improbable on that evidence. For example, suppose that I seem to see Susan. This circumstance may confer a basic probability for me in excess of $1/2$ on the proposition 'I see Susan.' But if I have or obtain enough evidence against this proposition (e.g., I learn that Susan is out of town and that she has an identical twin), then, despite the fact that this proposition is a part of my total evidence, it may be less probable than not on that evidence, and hence, assuming I recognize this, my believing it would be irrational.

Although this analysis of probability on total evidence may itself have some difficulties, the crucial point is that no analysis that does not allow for the fallibility of one's evidence is at all plausible. So Plantinga fails to show that an evidential argument from evil could not render some person's properly basic theistic beliefs irrational by rendering them improbable on that person's total evidence. Further, Plantinga's analysis conflicts with his view that the ground of a properly basic belief provides only *prima facie* justification for that belief—justification that can be defeated by counterevidence or counterargument (pp. 83f).³ This view implies that evidential arguments from evil must be taken seriously even if theistic beliefs can be properly basic. For it implies that it is possible for propositional evidence against a belief to outweigh nonpropositional evidence for it, and hence for a successful evidential argument from evil to render a theist's belief in God irrational even if that theist, prior to confronting that argument, had one or more properly basic theistic beliefs.

II. A Modest Reformed Reply to Hume

I suspect that Plantinga no longer travels on the highroad. For in "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply," he suggests a much more modest reply to evidential arguments from evil.⁴ Responding to Philip L. Quinn's claim that what we know about the evil in the world highly disconfirms God's existence,⁵ Plantinga points out that, even if some argument for this claim is sound and even if theists who recognize that this argument is sound have no propositional evidence for their theistic beliefs, it still does not follow that their theistic beliefs are irrational. For even if one has strong propositional evidence against some theistic belief, one's nonpropositional evidence for it might be even stronger. Plantinga puts the point this way: "Perhaps the nonpropositional warrant enjoyed by [one's] belief in God is itself sufficient to turn back the challenge offered by the alleged defeaters."⁶ Plantinga does not try to prove that the typical theist has a very high degree of nonpropositional warrant for his theistic beliefs. His point is just that this is *possible*, and hence

that the rationality of the typical theist's belief in God *might* not be undermined by strong propositional evidence against theism.

Let's call this reply to evidential arguments from evil Plantinga's "modest" reply. I do not wish to deny that this reply could be used successfully against some evidential arguments from evil. I will argue in Section III, however, that, in the case of the evidential argument from evil offered by David Hume in Part XI of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, a successful counter-reply can be constructed. But first I must state Hume's argument and reformulate Plantinga's modest reply so that it applies directly to Hume's argument.

Hume compares theism to the following alternative hypothesis, which I will call "the Indifferent Deity Hypothesis" (or "IDH" for short):

IDH: The creator of the Universe is an omnipotent and omniscient being who is neither benevolent nor malevolent.⁷

Hume claims that

H: IDH explains the pattern of pain and pleasure we find in the world much better than theism does.

Finding a decent argument for H in the *Dialogues* is not easy. But Hume does point out that pain and pleasure resemble other parts of organic systems by systematically contributing, not to the moral goals of happiness or virtue, but rather to the biological goals of (temporary) survival and reproduction. IDH explains this fact much better than theism does in the sense that we have much more reason on theism than on IDH to be surprised by this fact. The truth of H counts against theism because IDH is much more probable than theism with respect to H. Thus, since we know that IDH entails the denial of theism, and hence the denial of theism is at least as probable with respect to H as IDH is, it follows that the denial of theism is much more probable with respect to H than theism is.⁸

I have developed a similar argument in great detail elsewhere.⁹ Here we may simply assume that H is true since, like Plantinga's highroad reply, his modest reply would challenge H's significance rather than its truth. Establishing the truth of H would be insignificant if the typical theist could rationally continue to believe that God exists after learning that H is true. Plantinga's modest reply, applied to Hume's argument, claims that this is possible. It claims that the typical theist might have properly basic theistic beliefs that would remain properly basic, even if she learned that H is true. More precisely, it claims that the following statement might be true:

R: The typical theist has religious experiences that lead him to form certain basic theistic beliefs and that (together, perhaps, with other circumstances) confer a high degree of nonpropositional warrant on those beliefs; since this nonpropositional warrant is greater than the propositional warrant that the

knowledge of H would confer on the denial of those beliefs, it follows that those beliefs would remain properly basic even if their subject learned that H is true.

Notice that the first half of R appeals to religious experiences. Plantinga makes no explicit appeal to religious experiences in "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply." However, he is committed to such an appeal by what he says in "Reason and Belief in God." As I pointed out earlier, Plantinga believes that properly basic beliefs have their justification or warrant conferred upon them by certain circumstances.¹⁰ In the case of properly basic common sense beliefs (i.e., perceptual and memory beliefs, beliefs in self-evident truths, and beliefs ascribing mental states to other persons), these circumstances include the sorts of experiences that typically cause human beings to form such beliefs. For example, Plantinga includes among the justifying circumstances of the properly basic belief that I had breakfast this morning "a certain past-tinged experience that is familiar to all but hard to describe" (p. 79). Plantinga gives a parallel account of how theistic beliefs are formed and justified. He says, for example, that "there is in us a disposition to believe propositions of the sort *this flower was created by God* or *this vast and intricate universe was created by God* when we contemplate the flower or behold the starry heavens or think about the vast reaches of the universe" (p. 80). Plantinga believes that the experiences of contemplating a flower, beholding the starry heavens, and thinking about the vast reaches of the universe can lead human beings to form beliefs about God and can directly confer justification on those beliefs. Plantinga also mentions a number of other experiences that he thinks call forth beliefs about God's attributes and actions, such as guilt and sensing that God speaks. He holds that such experiences confer nonpropositional warrant on propositions like 'God disapproves of what I have done' and 'God is speaking to me' (pp. 80-81).

The second half of R explains why, according to Plantinga, a properly basic theistic belief might remain properly basic, even if its subject learned that H is true. Once again, Plantinga's treatment of theistic beliefs parallels his treatment of common sense beliefs:

Consider an example. I am applying to the National Endowment for the Humanities for a fellowship; I write a letter to a colleague, trying to bribe him to write the Endowment a glowing letter on my behalf; he indignantly refuses and sends the letter to my chairman. The letter disappears from the chairman's office under mysterious circumstances. I have a motive for stealing it; I have the opportunity to do so; and I have been known to do such things in the past. Furthermore an extremely reliable member of the department claims to have seen me furtively entering the chairman's office at about the time when the letter must have been stolen. The [propositional] evidence against me is very strong; my colleagues reproach me for such underhanded behavior and treat me with evident distaste. The facts of the matter, however, are that I didn't steal the letter and in fact spent the entire afternoon in

question on a solitary walk in the woods; furthermore I clearly remember spending that afternoon walking in the woods. Hence I believe in the basic way

(13) I was alone in the woods all that afternoon, and I did not steal the letter.

But I do have strong [propositional] evidence for the denial of (13)....

In this situation it is obvious, I take it, that I am perfectly rational in continuing to believe (13) in the basic way. The reason is that in this situation the positive epistemic status or warrant that (13) has for me (by virtue of my memory) is greater than that conferred upon its potential defeater [i.e., the denial of (13)] by the evidence I share with my colleagues.¹¹

Plantinga's modest reply claims that what is true about my belief in (13) in these circumstances might also be true of a theist's beliefs about God: "It could be that your belief [in God], even though accepted as basic, has more warrant than the proposed defeater."¹² In other words, theistic beliefs might remain properly basic even in the face of strong propositional evidence against them because the nonpropositional warrant they enjoy might be greater than the propositional warrant that this evidence would confer on their denials.

R entails that Hume's argument is insignificant in the sense that, even if it is sound, it is no threat to the rationality of the typical theist's belief in God. Plantinga's modest reply contends that, since R might be true, Hume's argument might be insignificant in this sense. This constitutes a *reply* to Hume's argument in the sense that it places the burden of proof on the defender of Hume's argument to provide a good reason for believing that R is false. Without such a reason, we have no good reason to believe that Hume's argument is significant.

III. A Reformed Problem of Evil

Our question, then, is whether or not we can find any good reasons for rejecting R. Let's begin with a challenge to R that I believe Plantinga can answer. Like theism, IDH entails the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient creator of the Universe. Thus, R is true only if the typical theist's religious experiences confer a high degree of warrant on her belief that the creator is *benevolent*. Yet none of the experiences that I have mentioned so far seem very promising in this regard. For example, in the absence of a prior belief in the benevolence of the creator, an experience of the vastness of the universe is very unlikely to produce any inclination at all to believe that the creator is benevolent, and hence is very unlikely to confer a high degree of nonpropositional warrant on that belief. But one sort of experience I have not yet mentioned might help the Reformed cause here. Plantinga describes it as follows: "When life is sweet and satisfying, a spontaneous sense of gratitude may well up within the soul; someone in this condition may thank and praise

the Lord for his goodness, and will of course have the accompanying belief that indeed the Lord is to be thanked and praised" (p. 80). I will call such experiences "gratitude experiences." Unlike the other sorts of experiences Plantinga mentions, gratitude experiences frequently produce strong inclinations to believe that the creator is benevolent.

Let's call the common religious experiences to which Plantinga appeals "Reformed experiences." I am willing to grant for the sake of argument that the typical theist has Reformed experiences, including gratitude experiences. I am also willing to grant for the sake of argument that, *other things being equal*, a theist who has these experiences could rationally believe that God exists, even if he learned that H is true. But even granting all this, we can still find a good reason to reject R because other things are not typically equal. Many theists have had another sort of religious experience that conflicts with their gratitude experiences. When confronted with poignant evil (like the intense suffering of a child), theists often become angry at their creator and of course feel inclined to form the accompanying belief that the creator should not have permitted that evil. Alternatively, they may feel abandoned by their creator, feeling inclined to believe that he is indifferent to the well-being of his creatures. I will call these experiences "alienation experiences."

Plantinga admits in both *God, Freedom and Evil*¹³ and in a more recent unpublished paper¹⁴ that such experiences create a problem for some theists. (This problem is sometimes referred to as the "existential" problem of evil.) But he claims that this problem is not epistemic—it is not relevant to the question of whether or not believing that God exists is rational. He concludes that it calls for pastoral rather than philosophical attention.

I submit that this "pastoral" or "existential" problem has an important epistemic twist: it undermines Plantinga's modest reply to Hume.¹⁵ For alienation experiences are very common. Thus, it is simply not true that the *typical* theist has had gratitude and other Reformed experiences but has never had alienation experiences. Furthermore, we have good reason to accept the following claim:

P: Other things being equal, a theist who has both Reformed experiences (including gratitude experiences) and alienation experiences could not rationally believe (in the basic way) that the creator is benevolent if she learned that H is true.

To see that P is true, consider once again Plantinga's memory example. To make it relevant to P, it must be modified as follows. Suppose that I have all of the propositional evidence against (13) that Plantinga mentions in the original example and that I seem to remember spending the entire afternoon in question walking in the woods. Suppose further that I also seem to remember stealing the letter that afternoon and that neither memory experience is

clearer than the other. Because the propositional evidence I have against (13) corroborates my apparent memory of stealing the letter, it would be irrational for me to trust my memory of spending the entire afternoon in the woods. Thus, in these circumstances, I could not rationally believe (13) in the basic way. Similarly, gratitude and alienation experiences involve inclinations to believe propositions that are logically inconsistent, and for a theist who learns that H is true, H would be strong propositional evidence favoring his alienation experiences over his gratitude experiences. Thus, other things being equal, it would be irrational for such a theist to believe in the basic way that the creator is benevolent and hence irrational for such a theist to believe that God exists.

One might object that I have not yet provided a good reason to accept P because it is possible that, while gratitude experiences ordinarily confer a very high degree of warrant on the belief that the creator is benevolent, alienation experiences confer little or no warrant on the denial of this belief. We can distinguish two versions of this objection, an internalist version and an externalist version. The internalist version would proceed as follows. When two of my experiences conflict, it is sometimes rational for me to trust one rather than the other—even if I have strong propositional evidence favoring the other—because one is much more vivid or forceful than the other and for that reason confers more warrant on the proposition it inclines me to believe. For example, if I clearly remember spending the entire afternoon in the woods, while I only vaguely seem to remember stealing the letter that afternoon, then perhaps I could rationally believe (13) despite having strong propositional evidence against it. Similarly, if gratitude experiences are typically much clearer than alienation experiences, then the typical theist who has had both sorts of experiences could rationally believe that God exists, even if she learned that H is true. This objection fails because there are no such epistemically relevant phenomenological differences between gratitude and alienation experiences (or at least none that favor gratitude experiences). Alienation experiences are not generally any less “clear,” “vivid,” or “forceful” than gratitude experiences. Indeed, they often involve very strong inclinations to believe propositions entailing that God does not exist. This is why they create such a serious religious or pastoral problem, regardless of their epistemic status. So the internalist version of the objection fails.

According to externalist theories of epistemic warrant, how much warrant a belief enjoys depends at least in part on facts about the subject of the belief to which the subject has no direct epistemic access. For example, in “Justification and Theism,” Plantinga claims that one has warrant (or “positive epistemic status”) for a belief only if one’s cognitive faculties are functioning properly in producing and sustaining that belief.¹⁶ On this theory, even if there are no epistemically relevant phenomenological differences between

two experiences, one experience might confer a very high degree of warrant on some belief while the other confers no warrant at all. This theory can be used to construct an externalist version of the objection mentioned above. If Plantinga's theory of warrant is true and if gratitude experiences result from faculties that are functioning properly (in a suitable environment) while alienation experiences result from improperly functioning faculties, then gratitude experiences confer warrant on the proposition that the creator is benevolent while alienation experiences confer no warrant on the denial of this proposition. Thus, P might be false after all.

To see that this version of the objection also fails, consider once again a modification of Plantinga's memory example. Suppose that I have considerable propositional evidence against (13), that I sometimes seem to remember spending the entire afternoon in the woods, that at other times I seem to remember stealing the letter from my chairman's office that afternoon, and that neither memory experience is clearer than the other. Suppose further that I really did spend the entire afternoon in the woods and that my memory of this is produced by faculties that are functioning properly. Finally, suppose that my apparent memory of stealing the letter is delusive, a result of improperly functioning cognitive faculties. Clearly I would be irrational in these circumstances to believe (13) in the basic way. I do not know which of the two memory experiences results from faculties that are functioning improperly, but I do have considerable propositional evidence against (13) and hence against the claim that my memory of spending the entire afternoon in the woods results from properly functioning faculties. So I would be foolish to blindly trust that memory. To do so would be to irrationally ignore my conflicting (equally clear) memory experience and the effect this experience has on the probability of (13). Similarly, other things being equal, a theist who has both gratitude and alienation experiences and who knows that H is true cannot rationally trust his gratitude experiences, even if (unbeknownst to him) his gratitude experiences result from properly functioning faculties while his alienation experiences do not.

Notice that I am not asserting that alienation experiences can confer warrant on the denial of theism even if they result from improperly functioning faculties. In other words, I am not denying that proper functioning is a necessary condition of warrant. Nor am I denying that gratitude experiences can, in the right circumstances, confer a very high degree of warrant on the belief that the creator is benevolent. For there might very well be cases in which one experience reduces or blocks the warrant that another experience confers on a belief without itself conferring any warrant on the denial of that belief. This is possible because a belief and its denial can both have little or no warrant for a person at a given time, and hence a person's warrant for a belief can be reduced without any corresponding increase in that person's warrant

for the denial of that belief. Thus, perhaps alienation experiences, when accompanied by the knowledge that H is true, reduce or block the warrant that would otherwise be conferred by gratitude experiences on the belief that the creator is benevolent, even though they themselves confer no warrant on the denial of this belief.

So far, I have attacked R by pointing out that many theists have alienation experiences and by showing that P is true: that, other things being equal, a theist who has both Reformed experiences (including gratitude experiences) and alienation experiences and who learns that H is true could not rationally believe that the creator is benevolent, and hence could not rationally believe that God exists. Of course, P has a *ceteris paribus* clause, so I have only provided a *prima facie* good reason for rejecting R. Thus, one might try to salvage Plantinga's modest reply by challenging the *ceteris paribus* clause in P. For example, if theists know of a good argument for the benevolence of the creator, then this might offset the evidence favoring alienation experiences provided by H.

But suppose (as seems likely) that theists have no propositional evidence strongly favoring gratitude experiences over alienation experiences. A Reformed epistemologist might challenge the *ceteris paribus* clause in P in a different way. He might claim that, although H provides strong propositional evidence favoring alienation experiences over gratitude experiences, perhaps the typical theist who has such experiences has even stronger *nonpropositional* evidence favoring her gratitude experiences over her alienation experiences. Specifically, many theists who have alienation experiences feel guilty about these experiences or feel reassured that God loves them. As a result of these further experiences, such theists typically feel strongly inclined to believe that their alienation experiences are delusory. Let us call these further experiences "reconciliation experiences." A Reformed epistemologist might claim that it is possible that reconciliation experiences typically provide nonpropositional evidence favoring gratitude experiences that is stronger than the propositional evidence favoring alienation experiences provided by H. Thus, he might grant that P is true, but argue that R might still be true because it is possible both that theists who have alienation experiences typically have reconciliation experiences as well and that, other things being equal, a theist who has had gratitude, alienation, and reconciliation experiences could rationally believe that the creator is benevolent, even if he learned that H is true.

This strategy fails because, even if reconciliation experiences confer *prima facie* justification on the belief that alienation experiences are delusory, this justification is itself defeated. To see why, consider the following case. Suppose that I see a tree and form the belief that I see a tree. In this situation, my sense experience confers *prima facie* justification on my belief that I see

a tree. But suppose I know that I suffer from a “dendrological disorder” whose victims are almost always appeared to treely when no tree is present. Then the justification conferred on my belief that I see a tree by my present (veridical) sense experience is defeated because the antecedent probability of my having this experience is almost as great on the assumption that no tree is present as it is on the assumption that a tree is present. Similarly, given the beliefs, desires, and training of theists, the antecedent probability of theists feeling guilty about their alienation experiences or feeling reassured that God loves them is almost as great on the assumption that alienation experiences are not delusory as it is on the assumption that alienation experiences are delusory.¹⁷ So the justification reconciliation experiences confer on the belief that alienation experiences are delusory is defeated, and the nonpropositional evidence they provide favoring gratitude experiences is very weak, easily outweighed by the propositional evidence favoring alienation experiences provided by H.

Assuming, then, that I have not overlooked any evidence strongly favoring gratitude experiences over alienation experiences, it follows that Plantinga’s modest reply to Hume cannot be salvaged. Of course, a Reformed epistemologist could respond that a *mature* theist would not experience anger or feelings of abandonment in response to poignant evil, so that nothing I have said proves that Reformed epistemology cannot be used successfully to defend mature theistic faith against Hume’s evidential argument from evil. But given how common alienation experiences are, such a defense would be an extremely limited one. One would wonder just how small this class of mature theists is. And one might also feel uneasy about who would be excluded from this class. For one would be reminded of Christ’s experience of poignant evil on the cross, which led him to cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15: 34).¹⁸

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NOTES

1. In *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 16-93. Further references to this article will cite page numbers parenthetically in the text.

2. By doing this, Plantinga mistakenly assumes that all evidential arguments from evil are arguments for the conclusion that theism is *improbable with respect to* some proposition about evil. There are other important negative evidential relations that theism might bear to the evil in the world. For example, perhaps what we know about the evil in the world is antecedently less likely on theism than it is on the denial of theism. If so, then

our knowledge about evil lowers the probability of theism, whether or not theism is improbable with respect to this knowledge.

3. In light of this conflict, it might be suggested that the analysis of probability on total evidence that I attribute to Plantinga is not Plantinga's at all, but rather an analysis he ungenerously attributes to all proponents of probabilistic arguments from evil. If this suggestion is correct, then the problem with the highroad reply is that it commits the straw man fallacy.

4. *Faith and Philosophy*, 3 (1986), 298-313. Plantinga discusses evidential arguments from evil in Section IV. The article is a reply to Philip L. Quinn, "In Search of the Foundations of Theism," *Faith and Philosophy*, 2 (1985), 469-486.

5. Quinn, p. 481.

6. Plantinga, "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply," p. 312.

7. Actually, Hume is careful not to build omnipotence and omniscience into IDH, because he is attacking both traditional theism, according to which God is omnipotent and omniscient, and the hypothesis that the universe was created by a "finitely perfect" being, a being who, in addition to being benevolent, is much wiser and much more powerful than humans but is not omnipotent and omniscient. I attribute omnipotence and omniscience to Hume's indifferent deity in order to simplify my critique of Plantinga's modest reply, which is a defense of traditional theism.

8. It is worth noting that this argument is not vulnerable to what Plantinga calls in "Reason and Belief in God" his "lowroad" reply to probabilistic arguments from evil. (Plantinga has his lowroad reply in mind when he asks in "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply" if there are any "extrinsic" defeaters for the probabilistic argument from evil. See pp. 308-9, including footnote 10, and pp. 311-12.) Plantinga develops this reply in "The Probabilistic Argument From Evil," *Philosophical Studies*, 35 (1979), 1-53. He argues there that (i) probabilistic arguments from evil contend that theism is improbable with respect to a proposition reporting the amount or kinds of evil in the world and (ii) this contention is implausible. Although (ii) is probably correct, this reply fails because (i) is false. Probabilistic arguments from evil need not contend that theism is improbable with respect to a proposition that simply reports the kinds or amount of evil in the world. Hume's argument, for example, makes the much more plausible contention that theism is improbable with respect to H—with respect to the proposition that IDH explains the pattern of pain and pleasure we find in the world much better than theism does. Of course, this is not to say that, if H is known to be true, then theism is improbable *all things considered*. For by the expression 'A is improbable with respect to B,' I mean that, *independent of one's background evidence*, A is less probable than the denial of A on the assumption that B is true. Thus, H provides only a *prima facie* good epistemic reason to reject theism—a reason that is sufficient for rejecting theism unless overridden by reasons for not rejecting theism.

9. "Pain and Pleasure: An Evidential Problem for Theists," *Nous*, 23 (June, 1989). My argument in this article was inspired by Hume's discussion of the problem of evil. Although H is not its conclusion, it could easily be modified to show that H is true.

10. Notice that in "Reason and Belief in God" Plantinga defines 'proper basicity' in terms of "justification," while in "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply" he defines it in

terms of "warrant." Since Plantinga now distinguishes justification from warrant (only the latter can turn true belief into knowledge), this appears to be a substantial revision of his views. But this change may very well be more terminological than theoretical. For by 'justification' Plantinga now means what he meant by 'weak justification' when he wrote "Reason and Belief in God." And by 'warrant' he now means what he meant by 'strong justification' in "Reason and Belief in God" (pp. 85-87).

11. Plantinga, "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply," pp. 310-11.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

13. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 63-64. First published by Harper & Row, 1974.

14. "Epistemic Probability and Evil," unpublished draft dated April, 1986, p. 1.

15. Notice that gratitude and alienation experiences seem to be two sides of the same coin: one involves a feeling of happiness accompanied by an inclination to believe that our creator wants us to be happy, and the other involves an experience of (one's own or someone else's) suffering accompanied by an inclination to believe that our creator is indifferent to our well-being. Thus, it is rather surprising that Plantinga offers no defense of his view that philosophers should be interested in gratitude experiences but not in alienation experiences.

16. *Faith and Philosophy*, 4 (1987), 403-26.

17. It is important to recognize that, when assessing the antecedent probability of having reconciliation experiences, we do not abstract from our knowledge that theists have gratitude experiences. Thus, to assume that alienation experiences are not delusory is to assume that theists have gratitude experiences despite the fact that they are delusory. This is one reason why the antecedent probability of having reconciliation experiences on the assumption that alienation experiences are not delusory is so high.

18. This paper is a drastically revised version of a colloquium paper (called "Hume and Plantinga on the Evidential Problem of Evil") delivered at the 1986 American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Meeting. I am grateful to William P. Alston, Keith Cooper, Frederick Crosson, Alvin Plantinga, and an anonymous *Faith and Philosophy* referee for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.