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Achievements, Value, and God:
An Essay on the Cognitive Success of Religious Knowledge

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For Research Degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy

University of Edinburgh

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For Julie, *Sin Duda*

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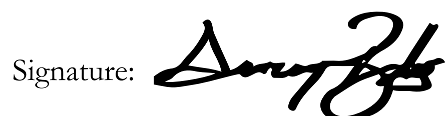
Declaration

I, Anthony David Bolos, hereby declare the following. The present thesis, submitted for examination in pursuit of a PhD by Research in Philosophy, has been entirely composed by me, and it has not been submitted in pursuit of any other academic degree, or professional qualification.

Signature: 

Date: August 2, 2013

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Last, and most importantly, there is my wife Julie. When she married me she had no idea that I would ask her to move with me to Peru, Scotland, and now Israel. In these past 7 years she has not only supported my every endeavor, but has, often times, led the way. She has been my companion and friend through all of this. More than anyone I know, she has lived out these words from St. Paul: *"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."*

Abstract

Recent literature in religious epistemology has overlooked a significant debate in mainstream epistemology. In short, theories in religious epistemology have failed to consider the value problem. This essay, then, hopes to rectify this omission by arguing that one of the most influential accounts of religious epistemology—reformed epistemology—fails to adequately account for the value of knowledge. I argue, however, that a reasonable way out for the reformed epistemologist comes by way of endorsing the achievement thesis. The achievement thesis, put simply, states that knowledge is valuable because it is a cognitive achievement—unlike, for example, mere true belief. The central question of this essay, then, is this: Is Knowledge of God a Cognitive Achievement? In order to better answer this question I highlight two different ways in which one can understand the nature of cognitive achievements. First, a cognitive achievement can be understood as success from ability that is always *primarily* creditable to the agent. Or, second, a cognitive achievement can be understood as success from ability that is *jointly* creditable to the agent. Both, I argue, are compatible with knowledge and the achievement thesis. Whether knowledge of God is primarily or jointly creditable, however, will depend on the way in which one understands the role the *agent* plays in the belief forming process. Given the nature of reformed epistemology, I argue that knowledge of God is the kind of achievement that is jointly creditable.

Further, and central to the argument, I argue that the reformed epistemologist is in a good position to meet the requirements for the *strong* achievement thesis. The strong achievement thesis argues that an achievement should be understood in terms of overcoming some obstacle whereby the agent's belief is the result of some ability that can be credited to the agent. The account I propose not only meets the requirements of the strong achievement thesis, but also retains a distinctive feature of reformed epistemology—namely, that the belief in God can be said to overcome the obstacle of cognitive malfunction that, as the reformed epistemologist argues, is brought about by sin. It's an achievement because it overcomes an excessively hostile environment (what I call the maxi-environment) that is not conducive to belief in God given the cognitive consequence of sin. In the end, it is possible to provide an account of reformed epistemology where the value of knowledge (over and above mere true belief) is adequately demonstrated.

Foreword

What motivates this current project is the idea that a religious epistemology ought to engage with relevant topics in mainstream epistemology. I discuss the reasons for this in chapter one, but highlight the fact that in doing this, the religious epistemologist provides the religious thinker (whether this be a philosopher, theologian, minister, or layperson) with a deeper understanding of the specific religious epistemology they are endorsing. Given this understanding, this project should be understood as an attempt to balance the effort of contemporary work being done on the value problem in epistemology with an influential account in religious epistemology—namely, reformed epistemology. As a result of this attempted harmony, the central question becomes this: Is Knowledge of God a Cognitive Achievement? In answering this question, the outcome is not only a better understanding of the value problem and all that it entails, but also a more holistic understanding of reformed epistemology.

Before I outline the project, a few preliminaries are at hand. First, the title of my thesis is "Achievements, Value, and God: An Essay on the Cognitive Success of Religious Knowledge." But what exactly is meant by "Cognitive Success" and "Religious Knowledge?" Knowledge is thought to be a "Cognitive Success" when the true belief in question is the result of the agent's cognitive abilities. This will be discussed at length in chapter four, but the general idea here is that there is an important connection between true belief and the agent's cognitive abilities. Thus, a cognitive success is merely the result of an appropriate relationship between the agent's true belief and his abilities. When it comes to religious knowledge, then, the key will be to demonstrate that this knowledge is the result of the agent's cognitive abilities.

But what kind of religious knowledge is this project concerned with? After all, there are many specific kinds of religious knowledge. I am primarily concerned with "foundational" religious knowledge. And there is perhaps no more a foundational religious question than the question of knowledge of God. Thus, while I take it that other types of religious knowledge might be understood as cognitive achievements, I am only concerned here with whether a specific kind of religious knowledge—namely, knowledge of God—is a cognitive achievement.

This of course leads to another question: which specific God is this project concerned with? Perhaps the best way to deal with this question is to discuss it in light of reformed epistemology and the reformed thinkers who gave shape to this religious epistemology. The Reformed epistemologist is theistic in his outlook and understanding of the person of God. They

hold that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving and, as Alvin Plantinga puts it, that "he has created the universe and constantly upholds and providentially guides it."[1] Further, reformed epistemology is uniquely Christian as well. There are many reformed doctrines that make this approach uniquely Christian, but one such indicator of the relationship arises when we consider our physical and mental condition as humans in this providentially guided universe. Our current condition is one of rebellion and turpitude. And given this, it is the belief that there is something wrong or amiss about our condition as humans. As a result of this condition, there is the belief that we need a deliverer who can redeem both the universe and those creatures who inhabit it. This project, then, reflects these classical theistic beliefs and, more specifically, those traditional Christian beliefs within the reformed tradition.

Outlining the Project

I begin the project in chapter one by asking what we should expect from a religious epistemology. One of the things we should expect, I argue, is that the adopted religious epistemology engage with issues in contemporary epistemology. It should be noted, of course, that this expectation goes beyond contemporary epistemology. It should also engage, where appropriate, with issues in *all* areas of philosophy. This in turn ought to give us a better understanding of our religious epistemology. In this project, I have chosen reformed epistemology as my starting point. The reasons for this are many, but primarily because I take reformed epistemology to offer the best explanation of both warrant and practical applicability—something I believe to be essential for a successful religious epistemology. What I mean by this is that there is a sufficient link between the reformed epistemologist's understanding of warrant and the way in which people come to belief in God. In other words, reformed epistemology's theory of warrant has strong explanatory power. Note, though, it isn't the case that everyone who believes in God does so in the manner described by the reformed epistemologist. The point here is that reformed epistemology presents, at the very least, the most plausible account of how ordinary theists (i.e., the majority of theists) who perhaps lack theological and philosophical training might be warranted in their belief. Other epistemic systems of religious belief lack this unity and provide accounts of justification that are intellectually out of reach for ordinary theists.

[1] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), vii.

With reformed epistemology as my starting point (for reasons discussed in chapter one), I then move on to an overview of reformed epistemology in chapter two. In this chapter I focus primarily on the work of Plantinga. While there are many other reformed epistemologists that I might have chosen, I focus on Plantinga because he has been the leading voice for the past 30 years in reformed epistemology. The aim of this chapter is not to offer a detailed account or critique of Plantinga's work, but merely provide the reader with some background knowledge into the key arguments and motivations behind reformed epistemology. With this understanding in place, we will be better positioned to see how exactly reformed epistemology meets the challenges and expectations of a successful religious epistemology.

Moving on from the summary offered in the second chapter, I transition, in the third chapter to a discussion about the value of knowledge. Specifically, this chapter outlines some of the issues that arise when considering what makes knowledge more valuable than, for example, mere true belief. I attempt to locate the value problem by considering four questions:

Simple Value Question

Why is knowledge generally valuable?

Sophisticated Value Questions

(1) Why is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?

(2) Why is knowledge more valuable than that which falls just short of knowledge?

(3) Why does knowledge have *distinctive* value over anything that falls short of knowledge

I argue that if we can answer the third of the sophisticated value questions, then we can answer the other value questions. The tertiary value question is this: Why does knowledge have distinctive value over anything that falls short of knowledge? This, then, is the value question that needs to be answered with regard to knowledge. Later in the chapter, I discuss the different types of value and conclude that *final* value is the kind of value we are aiming for when it comes to knowledge. Something is said to be finally valuable when its value is derived from something extrinsic to it. So, as the classic example goes, what makes princess Diana's dress valuable is something extrinsic to it—in this case, the fact that the dress was worn by Princess Diana. The reason for preferring final value over other kinds of value becomes more apparent in chapter

four, but the general idea is that knowledge is finally valuable because it is, unlike mere true belief, a cognitive achievement.

How, though, does one go about arguing for the final value of knowledge (and in turn, answer the tertiary value problem)? This is the primary concern of chapter four. One of the most plausible and eloquent accounts of the final value of knowledge is offered by the virtue epistemologist. Put simply, here is the argument:

1. Achievements are finally valuable.
2. Knowledge is a kind of achievement.

Therefore,

3. Knowledge is finally valuable.

The argument put forth by the virtue epistemologist is quite simple: knowledge is a cognitive achievement and thus finally valuable. This, then, is the distinctive nature of knowledge. Mere true belief, as I discuss in chapter four, isn't always the result of a cognitive achievement given its compatibility with luck. Knowledge, as the argument goes, is always the result of a cognitive achievement. In other words, where there is knowledge there is a cognitive achievement. The crucial part of the argument depends, of course, on how exactly we are to understand the nature of achievements. And as we will see in chapter four, this isn't nearly as straightforward as one would assume. Briefly, though, I argue that there are three kinds of achievements: achievements(pc), achievements(jc), and achievements(pcul)—where (pc) stands for "primary credit", (jc) stands for "joint credit" and (pcul) stands for "primary credit undermining luck". Most discussions in the literature have been focused on achievements(pc), at the expense of other kinds of achievements—namely, achievements(jc). Against the virtue epistemologist I argue that there are only two kinds of achievements that are compatible with knowledge: achievement(pc) and achievement(jc). Thus, when we consider knowledge of God as a cognitive achievement in chapter five, it needs to be the kind of achievement that is compatible with knowledge. In other words, it needs to be an achievement(pc) or an achievement(jc). I define achievements in the following way:

> Achievements are successes because of abilities that are *primarily* or *jointly* creditable to the agent.

Also, I point out in chapter four that there needs to be a distinction between those kinds of achievements that are "strong" and those kinds of achievements that are "weak." When we say that achievements are finally valuable, the kind of achievement we have in mind is one where the agent involved overcomes some obstacle or displays considerable skill on his way to achieving the success. This is what I am calling a strong achievement. Thus, when considering the nature of achievements in chapter five, it is a strong achievement (one that is finally valuable) that I have in mind.

In chapter five, I bring together the ideas that were discussed in the previous chapters and offer an answer to the central question of the thesis: Is Knowledge of God a Cognitive Achievement? An answer to this question will provide, I think, an appropriate response to the value question. Applying it specifically to knowledge of God, it should become clear why precisely this knowledge is more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge. My argument has two main components. First, knowledge of God comes by way of the deliverances of *sensus divinitatis* (as discussed in chapter 1). The *sensus divinitatis*, however, in its current state, is unable to function properly given our postlapsarian condition. This might be the result of several things. Perhaps the faculty itself is broken (this is the line that is taken by Plantinga and other reformed epistemologists). There is such a thing, as Plantinga notes, as cognitive malfunction. Our faculties are not immune to disease or failure. Another possibility that I discuss is that the environment we find ourselves in is hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* and is not conducive or favorable to belief in God. So it's not the *sensus divinitatis,* but the environment in which the *sensus divinitatis* is attempting to function in that is a hindering factor to belief in God. Another possibility is that there is something about *us* as individuals (given our human condition or depravity) that hinder the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* (e.g., we care too much about ourselves and have little desire to know much beyond this). I consider all three options and conclude that the model I present can adequately deal with all the various understandings of the malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis*.

The second part of the argument, then, involves a discussion on how one repairs or nurtures the *sensus divinitatis*. In order to do this, I distinguish between what I call the maxi-environment and the mini-environment. The maxi-environment is that environment that we currently find ourselves in. It is that postlapsarian environment where knowledge of God is smothered or hindered because of the cognitive consequences of sin. On the reformed model I am endorsing, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are hindered given the conditions of the

maxi-environment. Then there is the mini-environment, where the conditions are more conducive or favourable to belief in God. In other words, in these environments, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are less hindered. As agents, then, we must do what is necessary to allow the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis* by putting ourselves in those mini-environments where the nurture and repair of the *sensus divinitatis* can take place. The way to do this might involve many things, such as being open minded (e.g., you are at least open to the idea of theism), reading literature that doesn't cater to what you already believe (e.g., less Dawkins and more Plantinga!), or, to adopt a line from Pascal, spend time participating in the sacraments. As an agent, then, you have an important role to play in the process of nurturing and repair of the *sensus divinitatis*. In this way, then, the agent is involved in the process of coming to belief in God. But is it a cognitive achievement? What obstacles am I overcoming? I am overcoming the maxi-environment—that postlapsarian environment that is not conducive or favourable to belief in God because of the cognitive consequences of sin.

In the last chapter, I also consider several objections to the model I am presenting. One important objection I consider is whether my model is endorsing some form of semi-pelagianism. The pelagian controversy, which involves a disagreement concerning Divine grace and human agency, is something I certainly want to avoid. The way around it, I argue, is by noting that the pelagian controversy is one that concerns saving faith. This project, however, only concerns warranted belief in God. There is nothing directly transformational about knowledge of God. There is, however, something transformational about saving faith. It is the transformational process, I argue, that is at the center of the pelagian controversy. With this in mind, I think we can happily avoid any discussion of the relationship between Divine grace and human agency. Last, I also highlight several benefits of my model; in particular, the benefit that my model provides is that it does away with the claim that belief in God in reformed epistemology is arbitrary and akin to being "zapped" by a deity. If the agent has a role to play in the process, knowledge of God is neither the result of some arbitrary choice nor the result of mysteriously being "zapped" by God. Rather, it is a process—a process in which we have an important part to play.

§1 Introduction: What Should One Expect from a Religious Epistemology?

> Those who give the matter their careful attention and spend time meditating with me will clearly see that there is within us an idea of supremely powerful and perfect being, and also that the objective reality of this idea cannot be found in us, either formally or eminently. (Descartes, *Second Replies*).[2]

> I do not doubt that everyone has within himself an implicit idea of God, that is to say, an aptitude to perceive it explicitly; but I am not surprised that not everyone is aware that he has it or notices what he has it. Some people will perhaps not notice it after reading my *Meditations* a thousand times. (Descartes, *Hyperaspistes August 1641*).[3]

The question concerning the rational justification for belief in the existence of God is, of course, an important one. And attempts to answer this question have a long and important history within the study of philosophy. As a result, many, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, have taken up this task. Some out of desire to show that their (and perhaps others) belief in God is justified and rational; while others—perhaps in an attempt to persuade those who believe in God to abandon their belief—hoped to show that believing in God is akin to believing that a magical teapot orbits the sun.[4]

The aim of this project, however, is different. I am interested in a different kind of question—a question that arises when we consider what we ought to expect from an account that provides religious believers with justification. The question, rarely asked or discussed by those who work in religious epistemology, is this: What should one expect from a successful religious epistemology? There are of course many different responses that the religious epistemologists could give to this question. I have identified two, however, that I believe are fundamental to the question:

1) We ought to expect an account that is consistent with the way in which religious believers actually come to their beliefs.
2) We ought to expect an account that considers issues from contemporary epistemology.

Before I begin discussing the motivations behind (1) and (2), it's important to note that I am specifically concerned with those religious accounts that provide us with an account of the nature of religious knowledge. In other words, (1) and (2) are conditional on the fact that the particular religious epistemology has provided an account of the nature of religious knowledge. Thus, *if* we

[2] *Second Replies* AT 7: 135-136.
[3] "To Hyperaspistes, August 1641," AT 3:430.
[4] See Bertrand Russell, "Is There a God," unpublished. The main point of this particular article is to demonstrate that the burden of proof, with regard to belief in God, lies with the theist.

have an account of the nature of religious knowledge, then (1) and (2) seem to be consistent with what we should expect from a successfully holistic religious epistemology.[5]

But why think this? Why think that a religious epistemology that has provided an account of the nature knowledge ought to be at all concerned with the expectations of (1) and (2)? Beginning with (1), Suppose a particular religious epistemology endorses something like this:

A) The justification of the practice of religion depends upon the justification of religious beliefs.
B) The justification of religious beliefs depends upon the justification of theism.
C) The justification of theism depends upon the success of arguments the premises of which must be accessible to any ordinary intelligent person. No special experience can be assumed, and no reliance on authority can be made.[6]

What the above argument claims is that belief in God must, necessarily, entail that the belief be the result of successful arguments in order to be justified. Suppose then that it follows from this that the vast majority of those who believe in God lack warrant given that their belief in God is not the result of what is being claimed in (C). This, as I understand it, would be an unsuccessful religious epistemology. But what do I mean by "unsuccessful" and why should we be concerned with a so called "successful" account? To begin, it's important to note that there are two types of successes that I am concerned with: *epistemic* success and *practical* success. In order to give an account of a successful religious epistemology, that account, if *epistemically* successful, will provide the means for which the particular belief can have warrant.[7] We have this in (A-C). Concerning practical success, however, it might be said that if an account of the nature of religious knowledge is to be practically successful, it ought to be a reflection of the way in which believers come to this belief. We don't have this in (A-C). Thus, we have the epistemic component but not the practical one. And as I understand it here, (A-C) represents an unsuccessful religious

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[5] Note here that I am using the term "successful" as a way to mark or distinguish those models that provide an account of the nature of religious knowledge and meet the expectations set forth in (1) and (2) from those accounts that neglect the expectations of (1) and (2).

[6] Linda Zagzebski argues that this argument has often been the motivator of skepticism. Here is what (4) would like as a result of 1-3: "There is no sound argument for theism that begins with premises accessible to any ordinary intelligent person without reference to special experience or to authority." See "Religious Knowledge" in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* ed. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Routledge, 2011), 395-396.

[7] There is a distinction, I think, between a belief being epistemically successful and the epistemic account being successful. I am only concerned here about the latter, which, as described above, merely concerns the extent in which any particular epistemic model provides the means for which the belief might have warrant. The former concerns the extent in which any particular belief meets conditions that are set forth in acquiring knowledge.

epistemology (where the religious epistemology is concerned with the nature of religious knowledge).

So why be concerned with finding a "successful" religious epistemology (successful being that religious epistemology which provides an account of the nature of knowledge and also reflects the expectations of (2))? The reason is that a successful religious epistemology has great explanatory power. In other words, a successful religious epistemology would not only give the agent warrant for their specific religious belief, but also in turn explain why the individual holds that specific belief. Intuitively, I think, we ought to always prefer this model when available. The issue, however, is that there is very little discussion (traditionally anyway) concerning the connection between the nature of religious knowledge and (1) in contemporary religious epistemology. The reason for this is that many accounts of religious warrant only understand epistemic issues from the viewpoint of the model they are endorsing. It matters very little, from an epistemic standpoint, whether the model they are endorsing has lasting consequences on any specific group of people. For example, (A-C) represents the way in which many, traditionally anyway, might have understood justification. Therefore, if someone who believes in God does not meet the criteria in (A-C) the problem is with their belief and not the model. This of course entails that the vast majority of theists (excluding of course the philosopher theist is lucky enough to understand complex arguments concerning the existence of God) would lack justification.

Thus, a more successful model (and the one we ought to endorse) will approach things differently. Instead, a more successful model will consider the way in which people come, for example, to believe in God and determine whether it is an epistemically successful model. If there is such a model, then, it would meet the criteria of a successful religious epistemology.

One worry here is that one might think that we ought to first establish the norms of religious epistemology before considering whether these norms fit the current model of belief. In other words, the worry might be that (1) is seeking to understand the criteria of religious knowledge based on whatever model is most popular with religious believers. This, I think, is an important worry. After all, if a group of people come to believe in God (and this belief happens to be true) based on some method that is clearly the result of dumb luck, endorsing such a method wouldn't be something any religious epistemologist would approve of. So in a sense, the way in which religious believers come to believe in God is irrelevant to the question of how they *ought* to come to belief in God. In turn, the focus, one might argue, ought to be on the reliable or trusted method and not merely based on the particular modes of belief within a particular

religious community. But this worry doesn't fully capture the motivation of (1).[8] What (1) implies is merely that whatever particular method is endorsed by a religious epistemologist, *if epistemically successful*, it ought to be the one that most closely aligns with the way in which religious believers actually come to their beliefs. There is no call here to endorse any method of religious belief that is epistemically suspect. The argument here is simple: a successful account of the nature of religious is one that has explanatory power. Given this, we ought to endorse those accounts in religious epistemology that are epistemically and practically successful.

The key, then, is to find an account of religious epistemology which understands the importance of the connection between warrant and actual belief. As Stephen Wykstra puts it, any adequate account of religious epistemology ought to "illuminate our actual religious life".[9] Put another way, a successful religious epistemology will not only tell us something important about the way in which the religious believer might have warrant, but will in turn provide the religious believer with an important understanding of how that belief came about.

While (1) is central for a successful religious epistemology, (2) is the main concern of this project. The reason for this is twofold: First, there is already a successful account that adequately deals with the concerns addressed above. This account, I believe, is reformed epistemology. Reformed epistemology not only provides an account of the nature of religious knowledge, but it also provides an account that is firmly committed to providing the religious believer with a model that is consistent with the conditions set forth in (1). The account not only describes the way in which belief in God might have warrant, but it also provides a plausible account that is consistent with the way in which religious believers come to believe in God. Given the harmony of warrant and actual belief that is found in reformed epistemology, it will be very difficult (and perhaps unnecessary), I think, to provide an alternative or improved account in this regard.

Further, a second reason to focus on (2) is that very little work has been done in exploring the relationship between accounts in a successful religious epistemology and issues in contemporary epistemology. It should be noted, of course, that Plantinga and other reformed epistemologists have done similar work to what I am proposing in (2). They provided an entirely

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[8] This concern, I think, is related to the problem of the criterion. Perhaps there is a worry, then, that (1) is endorsing what Chisholm calls the "particularist" position. Thus, the concern would be from the perspective of the "methodist". While this is an interesting question, it is one we can avoid for the purposes of this essay. For more on this see Roderick Chisholm, "The Problem of the Criterion" in *The Foundations of Knowing* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), 61-75.

[9] Stephen Wykstra, "Externalism, Proper Inferentiality and Sensible Evidentialism" in *Topoi* (1995) 14 (2): 108.

new way to think about nature of religious knowledge given the contemporary philosophical mood at the time. With the rise of externalism and reliabilist accounts of knowledge, for example, reformed epistemology provided a religious epistemology that was consistent with the evolving views on evidentialism, internalism, and the traditional understanding of justification. This in turn provided a fresh account of the way in which religious believers might have warrant. What I am proposing is that even when the expectations of (1) has been adequately dealt with, as I believe it has been, the question of whether the account remains relevant is only adequately dealt with when one considers issues from contemporary philosophy. This question, I think, is rarely, if ever, explored.

But why think that we should even care about (2)? There are at least two reasons that we should care about the extent in which accounts in religious epistemology consider issues from contemporary philosophy. First, a successful religious epistemology ought to consider issues in contemporary philosophy for the sake of relevance. Suppose a particular religious epistemology develops a theory of warrant for religious believers that depends heavily on specific accounts in the epistemology of perception. Suppose further that this account while initially plausible given the research in the respective areas, fails, at a later time, to consider more recent research in the area which *seemingly* calls into question (or stronger, invalidates) the accepted account in religious epistemology. This account, it would seem, becomes irrelevant. Not because the religious epistemic account is necessarily wrong, but because the account itself is no longer a live option for those who take the contemporary research (in this case, the epistemology of perception) seriously. In other words, the account becomes static—the result perhaps of an inability or unwillingness to adapt (specifically by those who endorsed the account in question) to the changing philosophical moods.[10] The way to safeguard against such irrelevance, then, is to ensure that the accepted account of religious epistemology always be a part of the conversation by considering issues from contemporary philosophy.[11]

[10] Note here that I am not endorsing a contextualized religious epistemology. Thus, just because there might be a shift in philosophical thinking concerning a particular position that is important to my understanding of religious warrant, doesn't mean that I ought to abandon the position. What is being argued for is that the religious account ought to consider the contemporary philosophical mood in an attempt to remain relevant and part of the overall philosophical conversation.

[11] Of course it's not always possible to consider and incorporate contemporary issues into a specific religious epistemology. It might be the given the implications of the philosophical positions it might be best to abandon the accepted position in religious epistemology. I take it that this is what happened with the introduction of reformed epistemology. It was necessary to not merely adapt in the way that (2) demands, but to change the understanding of the nature of religious knowledge.

Second, and equally important, considering issues in contemporary philosophy will illuminate and give one a deeper understanding of the particular account of religious epistemology they are endorsing. In considering and attempting to harmonize issues in contemporary epistemology, we will likely come to a better understanding of certain issues within that religious epistemology. An issue in reformed epistemology, for example, that is not often discussed or understood is what the agent's role in the belief forming process actually amounts to. Does the agent exhibit any particular cognitive abilities worthy of note? Or does the agent only believe in God because God "zapped" him into believing? In considering these questions we are inevitably faced with questions and issues relevant to the value question in epistemology. Thus, in considering the value question we are coming to a better understanding of the particular issues within reformed epistemology. In other words, in considering whether knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement, we come to a better understanding of the role of the agent in the belief forming process. And as will become evident later in this essay, a deeper and more robust understanding of reformed epistemology is precisely what this project is attempting to achieve.

In summary, then, the aim of this project is to consider an issue in contemporary epistemology and attempt to incorporate, where possible, some those ideas into reformed epistemology. The reason for choosing reformed epistemology is that reformed epistemology, I believe, best incorporates the necessary harmonization of the nature of knowledge and the way people actually come to believe in God. While it is successful in accomplishing the goals and expectations of (1), it has, until now anyway, been unsuccessful with regard to (2). This project, then, hopes to rectify this by providing a more robust reformed model that will incorporate issues from contemporary epistemology and deepen the understanding of key claims within reformed epistemology. While there are several possible projects that are both interesting and beneficial, the topic I will explore in this project will be the value of knowledge. The main question I will ask is this: Is Knowledge of God a Cognitive Achievement? In answering this question we will have a better understanding of why knowledge of God is more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge. Further, we will be able to answer some of the key issues in reformed epistemology, such as the agent's role in the belief forming process and the role of *sensus divinitatis* with regard to belief in God. This in turn will give us a deeper understanding of reformed epistemology.

§2 Reformed Epistemology: An Overview

> Why don't you just scrap this God business, says one of my bitter suffering friends. It's a rotten world and you and I have been shafted, and that's that.
> I'm pinned down. When I survey this gigantic intricate world, I cannot believe that it just came about. I do not mean that I have some good arguments for its being made and that I believe in the arguments. I mean that this conviction wells up irresistibly within me when I contemplate the world.
>
> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*[12]

2.1 Introduction

Is knowledge of God a cognitive achievement?[13] Before we can answer this question, we need an account of the nature of religious knowledge. Further, we want an account of the nature of religious knowledge that is consistent with the way in which religious believers seemingly come to this knowledge.[14] Reformed epistemology, I believe offers us this option. To begin, reformed epistemology is a thesis about the nature of religious knowledge. More specifically, though, reformed epistemology is a thesis about knowledge of God and how the theist might hold a warranted belief about God. And within reformed epistemology, Alvin Plantinga's account has become one of the most discussed within the philosophical literature.[15] Plantinga's account revolves around a parity argument whereby the agent's belief in God might be basic just in case the belief in question was brought about in the same way as other beliefs we take to be basic. Perceptual beliefs, for example, are thought to be basic in that the acceptance of the perceptual experience is immediate and non-inferential. In other words, the perceptual belief is immediate and isn't accepted on the basis of any other beliefs. Thus, Plantinga asks, if perceptual beliefs (as well as memory and a priori beliefs) are basic, why can't belief in God be basic?

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[12] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 76.

[13] An answer to this question will of course tell us a number of other important things. For example, it will tell us whether knowledge of God is more valuable than mere true belief. And, as we will see later, it will tell us whether knowledge of God is more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge.

[14] As noted in the previous chapter, this point needn't be understood in the strong sense. I am not claiming, for example, that the account put forth by the reformed epistemologist is in fact the only way in which religious knowledge is acquired. It does, however, seem to be more of a live possibility (as we will discuss below) than, for example, those accounts that depend heavily on evidentialism.

[15] For accounts of reformed epistemology (and those similar) other than Plantinga's, see *Faith and Rationality* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). See especially the chapters by Wolterstorff and Alston. For another good summary of Wolterstorff's and Alston's position see Deane-Peter Baker, *Tayloring Reformed Epistemology* (London: SCM Press, 2007). Baker dedicates the first two chapters of the book to Alston and Wolterstorff in an effort to better understand their sometimes overlooked understanding of reformed epistemology.

Thus, according to Plantinga, belief in God might be basic if the belief comes about in the same way that other basic beliefs arise. Given this, there needs to be some faculty similar to your perceptual faculty that gives rise to this immediate and non-inferential belief. The faculty that is similar to the perceptual faculty, it is claimed, is the *sensus divinitatis*. This faculty, then, gives rise to belief in God when occasioned by some event or experience. Plantinga notes that the working of this faculty is triggered by any number of circumstances (e.g., beauty, grandeur, guilt, etc.) and that in the same way that you seem to "find yourself" with the certain perceptual beliefs, theists, given the right circumstances, also seem to "find themselves" with belief in God. [16] Thus, belief in God should enjoy the same epistemic status that perceptual beliefs enjoy.

If the above account is correct, then Plantinga's description of theism as properly basic provides the theist with an account of how their belief in God can be warranted without that particular belief being inferred from any evidence or argument. But reformed epistemology isn't *only* an account of warranted belief; it is also a claim about knowledge. If the theist holds a warranted belief, then this will constitute knowledge *if true*. In short, Plantinga argues that the theist can be said to have knowledge of God if the belief is produced by a properly functioning faculty that is working in an appropriate environment according to its design plan.[17] And this faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, gives rise to belief in God in an immediate and non-inferential fashion when occasioned by some event or experience. If these conditions hold, then the theist can be said to not only have warrant for their belief in God, but also have knowledge.

In what follows, then, I will outline and discuss some of the key features of Plantinga's reformed epistemology. Section 1.2 highlights the *de jure* objections to religious belief and notes that while many objections to theism take an ontological form, what Plantinga is primarily concerned with answering is the *de jure* evidentialist objection. Section 1.3 locates the roots of the evidentialist objection in classical foundationalism (CF) and discusses some the key claims made by the (CF). Section 1.4 discusses Plantinga's critique of (CF) and lays the foundation for his proposed Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model. Section 1.5 argues that while classical foundationalism is a key motivating factor for religious skepticism, internalism plays an important role as well. Section 1.6 considers externalism and Plantinga's theory of warrant. Section 2.6 lays the

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[16] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 174. Note that Plantinga calls his model (where belief in God is said to enjoy positive epistemic status) the Aquinas/Calvin (A/C) model. As we will note later, there is also the extended A/C model where the concern is specifically the positive epistemic status of specific Christian doctrines (e.g., resurrection, incarnation, trinity, etc.).

[17] Ibid., 178.

foundation for 2.7 which discusses Plantinga's main argument—namely, that belief in God should enjoy the same epistemic status that other basic, non-inferential beliefs enjoy. And last, section 2.8 considers the often overlooked extended A/C model which provides warrant for belief in Christian doctrine.[18]

2.2 Religious Skepticism *De Jure*

Let's call the religious skeptic someone who has serious doubts or questions concerning the central tenets of a particular religion.[19] And these doubts or questions typically arise from some objection that undermines the religious belief in question. However, it is not merely this questioning alone that makes one a religious skeptic. The religious skeptic is one who takes these particular objections as a *reason* not to believe in particular religious claims. For some religious skeptics, the reason for rejecting belief in God might be a lack of experience. They reason that much of what they find themselves believing in is the result of some perceptual experience; and if they were to believe in God they would want some perceptual experience as well.[20] For others, perhaps, their skepticism is an intellectual struggle. Why would this God simply not reveal himself when called upon? Why, in times of distress and anguish, would this God remain hidden? This skeptical argument, as it's often understood, is often expressed in terms of non-belief. If there is a God, he is perfectly loving. A perfectly loving God would not allow reasonable non-belief. Reasonable non-belief occurs, therefore a perfectly loving God does not exist. Thus, the skeptic argues, there is no God.[21]

Yet, while the religious skeptic may have many different objections to religious claims, these can be identified, as Plantinga argues, as two distinct types of objections—namely, the *de facto* and *de jure* objections.[22] The *de facto* objection, historically anyway, is the form many religious objections take (at least in terms of the initial skeptical questions). As Duncan Pritchard puts it,

[18] As noted in the forward, the purpose of this chapter is not to assess reformed epistemology critically (though I do occasionally), but to merely provide a foundation for the project. In doing so, we will have a better understanding of how to answer the main question that concerns this project: Is knowledge of God a cognitive achievement?

[19] Note here that I am referring to religious skepticism in its broadest form.

[20] Of course some do argue that belief in God might be the result of a kind of perceptual experience (understood of course as "mystical experiences"). See William Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[21] This is often called the argument from Divine Hiddenness. See J.L. Schellenberg, *Divine Hiddenness and Human Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[22] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, viii-x.

religious skepticism often has an "ontological rather than an epistemological form."[23] That is, religious skeptics often question the reality or truth of the religious conviction before directly considering epistemological questions. *De facto* objections take many forms, with perhaps the problem of evil being the most well-known and discussed in philosophical literature. For example, God[24] cannot possibly exist given the amount of unnecessary or gratuitous evil; thus, religions that argue for the existence of God while at the same time acknowledging the existence of evil are patently false. In other words, belief in God and existence of evil are logically incompatible.[25]

The epistemological question—or as Plantinga calls it, the *de jure* objection—ignores the ontological status of God's existence and instead focuses on the justification of belief in God. The *de jure* objector asks whether belief in God is irrational, unjustifiable, or epistemically irresponsible. This objection comes in various forms as well. For some, belief in God was "invented by mad, diluted people" who base their belief on insufficient justification or argument.[26] In a similar vein, belief in God, as Daniel Dennett argues, is akin to belief in Santa Claus and not the kind of belief a "sane, undiluted adult could literally believe in."[27] Or perhaps, in a slightly softer tone, the issue is that those who believe in God, as Locke puts it, are simply religious "enthusiasts" whose belief is not based on reason, but on (blind) faith?[28]

No matter which line the *de jure* objector takes, what seems to unite these objectors is the idea that belief in God lacks the kind of epistemic justification necessary for rational belief. And for many *de jure* objectors there is the assumption, as Plantinga notes, that having a justified belief in God requires (propositional) evidence in order to have adequate epistemic support.[29] Call this

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[23] Duncan Pritchard, "Reforming Reformed Epistemology," in *Basic Belief and Basic Knowledge,* ed. Sabine Roeser, Ron Rood, and Rene van Woudenberg, 177-209. (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2005), 178.

[24] When using the term God, I will be referring to the monotheistic God, namely the one found in Christianity. Further, I will assume the orthodox notion of God found in Christianity. For an overview of the Christian understanding of God see Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[25] For a similar argument see J.L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 150-176. For a response to the logical problem of evil presented by Mackie see Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 164-196.

[26] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 38, 308.

[27] Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Ideas* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 18.

[28] This is not to say of course that Locke thought belief in God lacked justification. He held that belief in God possessed the necessary evidence for justification. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Locke's Philosophy of Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke,* ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 172-198.

[29] See Plantinga, *Warranted,* viii-x, 67-70. I take it that Plantinga's point here is a historical one. Namely, the form of many *de jure* objections are evidentialist in nature. For example, belief in God isn't justified because it is *inferred* from insufficient evidence. Note that the kind of evidence here is propositional

the evidentialist *de jure* objection.[30] Evidentialism comes in various forms, but Brand Blanshard articulates the evidentialist position clearly when he states that

> everywhere and always belief has an ethical aspect. There is such a thing as a general ethics of the intellect. The main principle of that ethic I hold to be the same inside and outside religion. The principle is simple and sweeping: Equate your assent to the evidence.[31]

Earl Conee and Richard Feldman echo Blanchard and state that the "epistemic justification of a belief is determined by the quality of the believer's evidence for the belief."[32] The idea being expressed by the evidentialist, then, is that one ought to believe only when one has the appropriate evidence. Thus if theism is indeed similar to belief in Santa Claus (for which there is no good evidence) as Dennett argues, then it seems that belief in God is indeed dubious and the force of the evidentialist *de jure* objection becomes a bit clearer. Epistemic justification depends on evidence and theism lacks the appropriate evidence. Here is how the evidentialist objection might be stated more formally:

1) Beliefs about God are rational only if they are based on good reasons that serve for their evidence.
2) But there are no good reasons for believing that God exists. Beliefs about God are not based on good evidence.

Therefore,

3) Beliefs about God are not rational.[33]

Many projects in religious epistemology have tried to reject (2). Thus, as a result, they have attempted to provide good reasons and arguments as to why it is rational to infer belief in God from those arguments. The reformed epistemologist, though, rejects (1). After all, not all beliefs are subject to the standard that is required in (1).[34] That being the case, why is belief in God subject to the conditions of (1)? There are two ways that Plantinga has answered the evidentialist objection and sought to undermine (1). In his earlier work, Plantinga assumes that

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evidence and evidence for belief in God would be inferred from other propositions you believe. In other words, it's a non-basic belief.

[30] I will use evidentialist objector and evidentialist *de jure* objector synonymously.

[31] Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Belief* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975), 401.

[32] Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "Evidentialism" in *Evidentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 83.

[33] John Greco, "Reformed Epistemology" in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion* eds. Chad Meister and Paul Copan (London: Routledge, 2007), 690.

[34] The demand for "good evidence" must stop somewhere. If all beliefs were subject to the standard set forth in (1) it would lead to an infinite regress.

(2) is correct but argues that there is a double standard with regard to (1).[35] So while the evidence and arguments for belief in God are far from conclusive, they are in fact on par with other beliefs that we take to be rational. For example, as the argument goes, we take the belief that other minds exist to be rational despite the fact that philosophical arguments in its favor suffer many of the same problems that the plague traditional theistic arguments. Thus, concludes Plantinga, "if my belief in other minds is rational, so is my belief in God. But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter."[36] This is the first of Plantinga's so called parity arguments.[37]

In more recent literature, however, Plantinga abandons this earlier parity argument as a way to deal with the evidentialist objector.[38] This is due in part to the fact that in *God and Other Minds* Plantinga assumed, like the evidentialist objector, that the way to go about discussing the rationality of religious belief was to first consider the evidence. This much is evident given the amount of time Plantinga devotes to the traditional theistic arguments in his earlier work. Here is Plantinga discussing this assumption:

> I was somehow both accepting but also questioning what was then axiomatic: that belief in God, if it is to be rationally acceptable, must be such that there is *good evidence* for it. This evidence would be *propositional* evidence: evidence from other propositions you believe, and it would have to come in the form of arguments. This claim wasn't itself argued for: it was simply asserted, or better, just assumed as self-evident or at least utterly obvious. What was taken for granted has now come to be called '*evidentialism*' (a better title would be 'evidentialism with respect to belief in God', but that's a bit unwieldy).[39]

Plantinga, then, initially attempted to confront the evidentialist objection by merely pointing out its inconsistent nature. This of course changed shortly after and Plantinga adopted a new, bolder approach in response to the evidentialist objection. He directly confronted the evidentialist by showing that it is motivated by a failed theory of justification—namely, classical

[35] This, as I understand it, is the main goal of Plantinga's book, *God and Other Minds,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967). The argument isn't that (1) is necessarily false, but that there appears to be a double standard with the way in which (1) is implemented.

[36] Ibid, 271.

[37] I will discuss Plantinga's other more recent parity argument below.

[38] Note that by abandoning this parity argument Plantinga has not rejected it. If one were still a committed evidentialist then perhaps this parity argument would still be attractive. See the preface to the 1990 paperback edition of *God and Other Minds.* See also the discussion in *Warranted Christian Belief*, 68-71.

[39] *Warranted Christian Belief*, 70.

foundationalism.[40] Crucial to the argument, then, is the belief that the evidentialist objection arises from the influence of classical foundationalism.[41]

2.3 Classical Foundationalism

In order to see the connection between evidentialism and classical foundationalism more clearly, we'll need to spell out the details of classical foundationalism. In short, though, the idea is that what motivates the religious skeptic's evidentialist *de jure* objection is the assumption that belief in God requires good evidence in order to be rationally justified. How, though, are we to understand the idea that "good evidence" is a condition for rational belief in God? According to Plantinga, this means at least two things. First, the evidentialist takes "good evidence" to be evidence that is propositional. And second, the belief in question needs to be inferred from other beliefs that one already knows.[42] Thus, as the evidentialist would argue, if belief in God is accepted by any person who lacks good evidence, then this belief would be irrational.

The issue for Plantinga and the reformed epistemologist, then, is the idea that belief in God can *only* be justified if inferred from other propositions that are already known. But what does this evidential objection have to do with classical foundationalism? The connection concerns the limits that classical foundationalism might place on what counts as a justified belief. Further, it's the idea that there are two kinds of belief—basic and non-basic. Belief in God, traditionally, falls into the latter category. This is because what counts as a basic non-inferential belief is restricted to a few select beliefs that meet certain criteria. And theism, traditionally, doesn't fit the criteria of a basic belief within classical foundationalism. Plantinga's point, then, is a historical one. Because of the dominance of classical foundationalism, belief in God, as it fails to meet the criteria for a basic belief, is a non-basic inferential belief that is open to evidentialist objections. Why exactly belief in God *isn't* a basic belief is the question that motivates Plantinga's critique of classical foundationalism.[43]

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[40] Ibid., see especially chapter 3. For a brief summary of this see Rene van Woudenberg, "Reformed Epistemology" in *Philosophy of Religion* ed. Paul Copan and Chad Meister (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 38-40.

[41] To be clear, the *de facto* objection could also be a result of the evidentialist objection. For example, one could claim that God does not exist given the lack of evidence.

[42] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* 70.

[43] Note that by historical here I simply mean that the dominance of classical foundationalism means that belief in God as properly basic is never even considered. It is assumed by most that belief in God is the kind of belief that is inferential. But, as Plantinga often puts it, why think a thing like this?

Classical foundationalism states that certain beliefs are properly basic iff the beliefs are *not* inferred from or justified by any other propositions. While attitudes are varied as to what might count as a properly basic belief, the classical view, according to Plantinga, is that only propositions that are

a) evident to the senses,
b) incorrigible,

or

c) self-evident

should count as properly basic. Plantinga notes that in order for a belief to be properly basic within classical foundationalism, these conditions must be met.[44] And so any belief that is not within the foundational framework (e.g., evident to the senses, incorrigible, or self- evident), must be the kind of belief that is inferred through evidence in order to be justified. Every belief, if not basic, must be inferred from the foundational beliefs that are considered basic. The connection may not always be immediate, but it must ultimately point to an evidential path that finds its way back to the foundations. Put more directly,

> a person *S* is justified in accepting a belief *p* if and only if *either* (1) *p* is properly basic for *S,* that is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses for *S,* or (2) *S* believes *p* on the evidential basis of propositions that are properly basic and that evidentially support *p.*

J.L. Mackie, arguing from an atheist perspective, takes this claim as palpable:

> If it is agreed that the central assertions of theism are literally meaningful, it must also be admitted that they are not directly verifiable. It follows then that any rational consideration of whether they are true or not will involve arguments… it [whether God exists] must be examined by either deductive or inductive reasoning or, if that yields no decision, by arguments to the best explanation; for in such a context nothing else can have any coherent bearing on the issue.[45]

Mackie is not alone is his demands. Locke, as noted above, placed similar demands on religious belief by boldly claiming that those who do assent to (religious) belief without evidence "transgress against their own light" and disregard the very purpose of those faculties which are designed to evaluate the evidence necessary for belief.[46] So for the theist and atheist alike, belief

[44] Plantinga, *Reason and belief in God,* 62. It's important to note here that the classical view does include the Ancient/Medieval (eg., Aquinas) and Modern views (e.g., Descartes and Locke) on proper basicality.
[45] Mackie, *The Miracls,* 4-6.
[46] John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* IV, xvii, 24, pp. 414.

in God is non-basic and should therefore be inferred evidentially; meaning, of course, that belief in God fails to meet the classical foundationalist criteria for basicality.[47]

It should be clear, then, the problem that is mounting for the theist. Either belief in God is basic (non-inferential) or it is non-basic (inferential).[48] In order for belief in God to be rationally justified, propositional evidence must be presented. But is there such evidence available? If not, why would the theist agree to such standards? In the case of Locke (and perhaps other theistic evidentialists), the evidence pointed him towards belief in God and he believed the evidence to be more than sufficient for belief. Locke was clearly no evidentialist objector, as in the case of Mackie, Hume, and others. Yet today, few who believe in God would claim that natural theology and other forms of religious apologetics make any compelling case for God that might lead to belief; at least not with the high probability that Locke seems to have required. In fact, as odd as this might seem, some of the most important arguments attacking and critiquing the project of natural theology have come from those who already believe in God.[49]

So the theist, arguably, has only herself to blame for this dilemma. She has agreed to a strict standard of justification that she herself cannot live up to—the standard being evidentialism motivated or dictated by classical foundationalism. Not only does classical foundationalism drive the skeptical argument, according to Plantinga, it places the theist in the unlikely position of constantly having to reevaluate the evidence to ensure that her belief is justified. As Plantinga puts it, classical foundationalism ensures that the theist will constantly be checking the latest publications to see "whether, say, Anthony Flew has finally come up with a good objection to my favorite argument."[50]

It is these standards, coupled of course with the desire to answer the evidentialist *de jure* objection, that motivate Plantinga to offer some relevant alternative to evidentialism. Of course, his solution to the evidentialist objector must first involve some detailed rejection of classical foundational on which evidentialism rests. Thus, by defeating classical foundationalism Plantinga attempts to remove any notion that propositional evidence is a *necessary* component for theism.

[47] It's important to reiterate that the kind of evidence I am referring to is propositional evidence (unless stated otherwise). You might think that basic beliefs are based on evidence (perceptual beliefs for example), but the belief is thought to be basic if it is not inferred from other beliefs.

[48] It is important to note, again, that this is a historical point. The dominance of classical foundationalism leads to this kind of inferential evidentialism that Plantinga is after. Your basic belief, for example, might be based on evidence (e.g., perceptual beliefs), but the idea is that basic beliefs are non-inferential.

[49] See Plantinga, *God and Other Minds*.

[50] Plantinga, *Reason,* 67.

And given that evidentialism, historically anyway, is the motivation behind the *de jure* objection, a rejection of classical foundationalism should present a reasonable rebuttal to the skeptical challenge.

2.4 Plantinga's Solution and the Externalist Motif

Plantinga begins his anti-evidentialist argument by demonstrating how classical foundationalism fails to live up to its own standards. This analysis and initial rejection is important since classical foundationalism would never place belief in God at the foundation of one's epistemology as Plantinga would like, but would assume that belief in God could, at best, only be inferred from the foundation. Thus, if classical foundationalism fails, which Plantinga believes it does, then the notion that belief in God can only be legitimately inferred from the foundation, as opposed to being part of the foundation, is called into question.[51] In the end, it's important to note, however, that Plantinga does not completely reject foundationalism. After all, Plantinga's project rests on the idea that belief in God is properly basic.

Plantinga's solution, then, is to reject classical foundationalism in hopes of answering the evidentialist objector. He presents two arguments against classical foundationalism. First, he claims that classical foundationalism is self-referentially incoherent. If the central claim that foundationalism makes—namely that

> (CF) A person *S* is justified in accepting a belief *p* if and only if *either* (1) *p* is properly basic for *S,* that is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses for *S,* or (2) *S* believes *p* on the evidential basis of propositions that are properly basic and that evidentially support *p* deductively, inductively, or abductively[52]

— is to be taken as foundational, it would need to be the case that (CF) be properly basic and meet at least one of the criteria named in (1). This, however, does not seem to be the case. There is no reason, according to Plantinga, why one should accept (CF) given the criteria in (1).[53] Concerning (2), then, there would have to be some inferred bases for accepting (CF). Yet (CF) seems to fall short in that regard as well. After all, what evidential support can (CF) present? Of course, notes Plantinga, no such support exists. In the end, then, classical foundationalism

[51] While there is an obvious connection between foundationalism and evidentialism, some seem to think that Plantinga has the "picture upside down." For a good discussion on this see Norman Kretzmann "Evidence and Religious Belief " in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide and Anthology* ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford, 2000).

[52] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* 93-4.

[53] Ibid., 94-95.

appears to be self-referentially incoherent in that it attempts to define a properly basic belief through foundational propositions that are themselves not properly basic.[54]

Yet there is another problem facing those who are committed to classical foundationalism. As Nicholas Wolterstorff points out, any commitment to such a strict standard of knowledge means that we hold a substantial amount of unjustified beliefs given that the majority of our beliefs do not conform to classical foundationalism.[55] In agreement, Plantinga argues that committing to classical foundationalism means that most of the beliefs that we take as basic have the unfortunate consequence of being unjustified and therefore epistemically suspect.

> One crucial lesson to be learned from the development of modern philosophy—Descartes through Hume, roughly—is just this: relative to propositions that are self-evident and incorrigible, most of our beliefs that form the stock in trade of ordinary life are not probable—at any rate there is no reason to think they are probable. Consider all those propositions that entail, say, that there are enduring physical objects, or that there are persons distinct from myself, or that the world has existed for more than five minutes: none of these propositions, I think, is more probable than not with respect to what is self-evident or incorrigible for me; at any rate, no one has given good reason to think any of them is.[56]

The point Plantinga is making, then, is that beliefs about the past and other persons are deemed irrational on (CF). Consider, for example, the belief that *I had tacos for lunch today*. This belief seems to be properly basic for me. It's not the kind of belief that I typically believe on the basis of other propositions. Yet, it doesn't meet the criteria for a properly basic belief according to classical foundationalism. It doesn't appear to be self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. Thus, according to (CF), my belief isn't properly basic.[57] For Plantinga, this is highly problematic precisely because this is the kind of belief that is *basic* (e.g., it's not believed on the basis of other propositions). There is something mistaken, then, with the criteria for proper basicality according to (CF).

In the end, there are two important problems with classical foundationalism. First, (CF) falls short in that it fails to recognize the possibility that many of the beliefs that we hold qualify as properly basic despite the standards imposed by the classical foundationalist. Second, and perhaps more devastating, (CF) is self referentially incoherent.

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[54] For a more detailed commentary on this see Plantinga, *Ibid,* 94-97. Also, for a brief overview of Plantinga's position on (CF) see Graham Oppy, "Natural Theology" in *Alvin Plantinga* ed. Deane-Peter Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24-25.

[55] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187-192.

[56] Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God*, 59-60.

[57] See van Woudenberg, *Reformed Epistemology*, 40-41

Without going into a detailed response, the problems presented against classical foundationalism do appear to be detrimental to the classical foundationalist proposal.[58] Yet given Plantinga's true intentions, to silence the evidentialist objectors, it seems rather misplaced to assume that in defeating classical foundationalism one silences the evidentialist objectors. Of course Plantinga concedes this and emphasizes that the "evidentialist objector need not be a classical foundationalist; indeed, he may not be a foundationalist *at all*. He could accept a coherence theory of rationality."[59] What this does do, however, is open the door for other possible versions of foundationalism that can accommodate belief in God as properly basic. For if (CF) fails in the way described by Plantinga, then the criteria used to determine properly basic beliefs needs to be reevaluated.

Before moving on to a discussion of how exactly belief in God can be seen to be properly basic, more needs to be said about the evidentialist challenge. As noted above, Plantinga himself concedes that the evidentialist objector need not be a classical foundationalist or a foundationalist at all. This is echoed by others, including Pritchard who notes that "one could state the evidentialist challenge without making any mention of classical foundationalism."[60] Thus, it's clear that one can still be an evidentialist without holding to any form of classical foundationalism. I could, for example, be a coherentist with regard to epistemic justification and reject the idea that all justified beliefs should rest on some non-inferential basic beliefs. In this manner, then, I can still commit to evidentialism regardless of one's (successful) attempt to reject classical foundationalism. And while the two are clearly connected, evidentialism still stands even in the defeat of classical foundationalism.

2.5 Internalism and the Evidentialist Challenge

While classical foundationalism is still a motivating factor for the evidentialist objectors, there seems to be another motivating factor behind the skeptical argument—namely, internalism. While Plantinga clearly makes classical foundationalism the key motivating factor behind the evidentialist objection, he is well aware of the role that internalism plays and considers it part of

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[58] I avoid a detailed discussion on this as the discussion is beyond the scope and intention of this chapter. My main goal here is to provide summary of Plantinga's reformed epistemology. For a response, though, see Timothy McGrew, "A Defense of Classical Foundationalism" in *The Theory of Knowledge,* ed. Loius Pojman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 194-206.

[59] Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God*, 63.

[60] Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology*, 181.

the classical package.[61] As Pritchard notes, "what ultimately underlies…evidentialism…is not classical foundationalism at all but rather epistemological internalism."[62] In other words, the skeptical challenge is *ultimately* motivated by internalist commitments rather than classical foundationalism.[63] The reason for this is that in defining evidentialism one inevitably appeals to some aspect of an internalist epistemology. Before showing the connection, however, a brief overview of internalism is at hand.

Epistemological internalism makes the general claim that in order for a belief to be justified sufficiently for knowledge, the agent must be aware or have access to the reasons that support the belief that is being held.[64] Or, as others have put it, the agent must have internal *reflective* access to those reasons for justification. As Matthais Steup aptly puts it, "epistemic justification is nearly always recognizable upon reflection."[65] These justifiers, then, might come in different forms. For some internalists, a belief is epistemically justified "only where the person has cognitive access to *evidence* that supports the truth of the belief. Justifying evidence must be internally available."[66] So on this account, the internalist uses evidence as a justifier for belief. This is an attractive position for the religious evidentialist—who might state that belief in God should be based on good evidence—given that the internalist might claim that a belief is justified only when the evidence is internally accessible. Moreover, it is easy to see how the evidentialist objector might also rely on epistemological internalism to make the case that evidence is needed for justification. One's justified belief in God, for both the skeptic and religious internalist evidentialist, is dependent upon the accessibility one has to the evidence.[67] For example, let's assume that there is some good evidence for belief in God. But I'm not aware of this good evidence and my belief in God is not based on any good evidence. My lack of awareness of this good evidence, according to the internalist evidentialist, means that I lack justification.

The demand for reflective access made by the internalist, then, clearly makes it one of the key motivating factors behind the skeptical challenge and the evidentialist demands. I think it's

[61] See Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate,* especially chapter 1.

[62] Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology*, 183.

[63] As noted above, I take Plantinga's emphasis with regard to classical foundationalism to be a historical point. When Plantinga's initial paper on reformed epistemology was published in *Faith and Rationality* (1983), the internalism/externalism debate was still not as clearly defined and relatively new to the philosophical scene.

[64] See Michael Bergmann, *Justification Without Awareness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9-12.

[65] See "A Defense of Internalism" in *The Theory of Knowledge,* 2nd ed., 310.

[66] Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies* 48, no. 1 (1985): 15.

[67] See Louis Pojman, *What Can We Know?* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2001), 136-37.

important to note that this is a historical point. It's not that internalism entails an evidentialist position. However, similar to our discussion of classical foundationalism above, the dominance of internalism has shaped the discussion with regard to theism. It's not enough that there be evidence for belief in God, but the evidentialist challenge is often presented as a personal question of justification (e.g., Where is *your* evidence that God exists?).

This is not to say of course that classical foundationalism plays no role in the skeptical challenge. Both classical foundationalism and internalism seem to be guilty of this honor; but by presenting classical foundationalism as the main culprit or the only motivating factor one might miss the governing role that internalism plays.[68] Thus, given the importance of epistemological internalism and its role in evidentialism, perhaps it is best to understand Plantinga's response to the evidentialist objector in terms of externalism; as opposed to, say, simply a denial or rejection of classical foundationalism.[69]

2.6 Externalism and Warrant

Thus far, Plantinga's response to the evidentialist objector has been to reject classical foundationalism and its evidentialist assumptions. It was noted, however, that while classical foundationalism is historically linked to evidentialist assumptions, another important force behind the evidentialist assumption is internalism.[70] Central, then, to Plantinga's solution for the evidentialist objector would be a defense of externalism. Given that internalism does seem to motivate the skeptical challenge and evidentialist assumptions, an embrace of externalism seems the obvious next step. And while not explicit in some of his earlier works (e.g., *God and Other Minds, Faith and Rationality*), his support of an externalist position becomes more obvious in his more recent work.

[68] Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology,* 182-184.

[69] I think it's important to retain the idea that Plantinga is responding *directly* to the evidentialist, however, since his motto ""it is entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all" is essentially an anti-evidentialist claim. Nonetheless, as noted above, the thinking behind this evidentialist claim is motivated by a historical commitment to internalism. So when Plantinga is responding to evidentialism, he is in turn responding to the internalist as well. I think one of the issues at play here is that at the time of the publication of "Reason and Belief in God" foundationalism was much more a part of the conversation within the epistemological literature. The discussion of internalism was still in the early stages. As noted above, Plantinga is well aware though that internalism plays an important role in skeptical arguments. This much is clear in *Warrant: The Current Debate* where internalism is art of the classical package that include deontology and evidentialism.

[70] See Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 4-7. Plantinga makes note of the role that internalism plays in justification, duty, and evidentialism; all features that are present in classical foundationalism as well.

Externalism, simply put, is the rejection of internalism. In other words, justification is not dependent upon one having any reflective access or awareness of the particular justifiers. Instead, justification can be conferred by factors external to (and thus not reflectively accessible to) the cognizer. This, of course, is in distinct contrast with internalism which demands reflective access to one's reason in order for the belief to be justified. Within externalism, there are several important and distinct views, but for the purpose of this chapter I will focus on reliabilism and its relation to Plantinga's work.[71]

Reliabilism, roughly, is concerned with whether or not the belief in question is acquired by a reliable process. A common component amongst reliabilist theories of knowledge is their agreement that a reliable belief-forming faculty is a *sufficient* condition for knowledge. Reliabilists, such as Goldman and Greco, discuss knowledge in terms of a reliable belief-forming process[72] or agent.[73] In general, though, the claim is that so long as one's belief forming mechanisms are operating correctly (i.e., sensory faculties, through introspection, etc.) then one is justified in the beliefs one forms. So, for example, if I note by way of introspection that I am feeling sick then, according to reliabilism, I not only believe that I am sick, but I can have knowledge of my sickness (so long as the target belief is true). After all, introspection usually provides a reliable portrayal of the way I am feeling.

Alvin Goldman notes that just as there are reliable processes that aid in obtaining knowledge, there are also unreliable processes that produce error in judgment. Unreliable processes might include "confused reasoning, wishful thinking, reliance on emotional attachment, mere hunch or guesswork, and hasty generalizations."[74] So if one sees a red car driving by at a high rate of speed and assumes from this that all red cars are similarly fast, one could not say this person has knowledge given that his belief forming process was unreliable (since such a belief might fall under the "hasty generalization" process that was noted by Goldman).

Plantinga's reformed epistemology falls in line with the aforementioned reliabilist account (although, as we will see, he is a faculty reliabilist as opposed to Goldman's process reliabilism). Plantinga does, however, initially reject Goldman's process reliabilism given its failure to

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[71] For a nice collection of various papers on the topic see Hilary Kornblith, *Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). See especially the paper by Ernest Sosa, "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue", 147-162.

[72] Alvin Goldman, "Reliabilism: What is Justified Belief?," in *The Theory of Knowledge* ed. Louis Pojman, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2003), 265.

[73] See John Greco, "Agent Reliabilism," *Nous* 33 (1999).

[74] Alvin Goldman "Reliabilism: What is Justified Belief?," in *The Theory of Knowledge* ed. Louis Pojman, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2003), 265.

adequately answer the generality problem.[75] The generality problem, as it relates to reliabilism, poses a question about the relevant process types and how one might determine which process type is most reliable in acquiring knowledge. So in effect, "if we define the process too narrowly, it turns out that every true belief is the product of a reliable process. If we define it too broadly, we get too many clearly unjustified belief acquisitions."[76] Moreover, as Richard Feldman notes, numerous visual beliefs can be "formed in the same observation conditions and some of these beliefs may be better justified than others."[77] An example of this, and one that is similar to Feldman's, might be to consider when one sees off in the distance a black four legged animal, which happens to be a dog, walking towards him. Initially, one might simultaneously assume through his cognitive faculties that this image is an animal and a dog. Yet, until it can be better verified you are more justified in believing that the image is indeed an animal as opposed to both an animal and a dog; it might after all be some other type of four-legged animal off in the distance.

Thus, until it can be determined which natural belief forming mechanisms are most reliable and relevant in every situation, the generality problem is insurmountable for Plantinga and leads him to initially reject it in favor of a modified reliabilist account—namely, faculty reliabilism. For example, Plantinga argues that in order for our beliefs to be justified (or have warrant as he calls it), our cognitive faculties must function according to the design plan and in the correct environment for which they were created.[78]

But what exactly does it mean for cognitive faculties to function properly according to design in the correct environment? Plantinga's example deals with human organs and the manner

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[75] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate,* 197-199.

[76] Pojman, *What Can We Know?*, 149.

[77] Richard Feldman, "Reliability and Justification," *The Monist* 68 (1985): 164.

[78] One might worry here that Plantinga also faces the same generality problem with regard to his "faculty" reliabilism. As Plantinga notes in *Warrant and Proper Function*, this issue was raised by Goldman at an APA workshop on warrant (see fn. 6, p. 29). Plantinga's response here is noteworthy: "Now Goldman suggests that my account suffers from the same problem; he adds that 'a little reflection should make it clear that cognitive faculty individuation is no trivial matter.' Indeed it isn't, how does that create a problem for my view? The fact that it is not easy to individuate faculties is not, by itself, much cause for alarm. It is also hard to individuate mountains and sentences; everything depends on what you propose to *say* about them. I don't, of course, say that the degree of warrant of a belief is determined by the degree of reliability of the faculty or faculties that produce it; the analogue of *that* claim for processes is what creates the problem for Goldman; so at any rate I am not afflicted with the very *same* problem." For more on this see pages 29-31 of *Warrant and Proper Function*. I will note, however, that Plantinga's response here seems correct. While Plantinga's account might be incomplete (Plantinga doesn't tell us, for example, what cognitive faculties there are and which ones *must* be functioning properly for a warranted belief), this is not equivalent to the generality problem that faces Goldman's account.

in which they *should* function. The heart, on average, beats about 72 times per minute and has a similar weight in most humans. It is responsible, through moderate contractions, for pumping blood through our three types of blood vessels. There is a way in which the heart is supposed to work. If the heart is not pumping blood through to the blood vessels it is not functioning properly according to its original design. It's tempting to assume that by design Plantinga has introduced some theistic dependence into his understanding of proper function and design. While Plantinga does ultimately believe this, his understanding of warrant need not entail that God be the designer; simply put, there is a way in which most things (human organs, cognitive faculties, etc…) are supposed to work. So in the same way the heart might malfunction (because it is not functioning in a way that was originally intended), our cognitive faculties are also subject to malfunction and disorder.

Not only do our faculties have a purpose and function, they are designed to operate in a certain environment that is essential to its proper function. The heart cannot function properly if it is deprived of oxygen in the same way that a person cannot breathe while standing on the moon. The same can be said for our cognitive faculties. Thus, a belief has warrant when it is acquired through the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties in the cognitive environment for which they were designed. The conditions for warrant, according to Plantinga, might be summed up as follows:

> S knows *p* if (1) the belief that *p* is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly (working as they ought to work, suffering from no dysfunction), (2) the cognitive environment in which *p* is produced is appropriate for those faculties, (3) the purpose of the module of epistemic faculties producing the belief in question is to produce true beliefs (alternatively, the module of the design plan governing the production of *p* is aimed at the production of true beliefs), and (4) the objective probability of a belief's being true, given that it is produced in those conditions, is high.[79]

With this in mind we might see how Plantinga's account is just another modification of reliabilism—namely, faculty reliabilism. His account depends on our cognitive faculties for knowledge and rejects internal access to evidence as a necessary condition for justification.

While this short account cannot do justice to Plantinga's complete system of warrant and proper function, it does offer some insight into Plantinga's case for parity (section 2.7) and the idea that certain religious beliefs (such as "God exists") require no inferential evidence in order to be warranted; for if our everyday beliefs (such as our perceptual sensations or introspectively

[79] Alvin Plantinga "A Defense of Religious Exclusivism," in *Philosophy of Religion,* 3rd ed., ed. Louis Pojman (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1998), 529.

based beliefs) are justified based on the reliability of our cognitive faculties, then other beliefs, such as "God exists," can also be justified so long as they are formed through a similar process.

In summary, then, Plantinga's solution to the evidentialist objector can be seen in his rejection of classical foundationalism and internalism. His rejection of the latter depends on his approval of externalism and how this relates to one's justification of a particular belief. As we will see in the next section, Plantinga relies heavily on an externalist view of warrant to defend his case for parity and argues that belief in God is warranted apart from evidential considerations.

2.7 The Case for Parity

The beginnings of Plantinga's parity argument can be seen in his early writings as far back as *God and Other Minds*. There, Plantinga argues that belief in other minds and belief in God are in the same epistemological dilemma; all their arguments for justification seem to fail. Yet, as Plantinga states, "if belief in other minds is rational, so is my belief in God. But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter."[80] As Plantinga's thinking has developed, so has his argument for parity among religious belief. The key difference in his thinking, as he notes in *Warranted Christian Belief,* is that he no longer takes *proofs* as the only way to justify belief in God.[81] This major shift in Plantinga's thinking opens the door for a more daring parity argument, namely that in the same way that perceptual experiences are justified, belief in God—through the divine sense—is also justified and should thus enjoy the same epistemic status as ordinary perceptual experiences.

In order for Plantinga's parity argument to succeed, then, he needs to find similar belief patterns that are justified without being inferred from evidence. Further, it must be the sort of belief where if held hostage to the evidential demands it would have devastating epistemological results; perceptual beliefs are of that sort.[82] Consider, for example, the belief that I see a clock hanging on the wall. It would be difficult to present any non-circular or non-question begging evidence to justify my belief.[83] Yet, this is what the evidentialist demands. So if we can disregard the demands of the evidentialist in the case of perceptual beliefs, then perhaps the demands the

[80] Ibid., 271.

[81] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* 69.

[82] I say this because finding beliefs of this sort will prove Plantinga's point that evidentialism places to high of a demand on what might count as a justified belief.

[83] Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology,* 184-85.

evidentialist places on religious belief should be reconsidered as well; neither can produce the required (non-question begging) evidence, but surely in the case of perceptual beliefs it can't be said to be unjustified or an epistemically irresponsible belief. This, of course, raises further questions about evidential demands. Pritchard notes that this is the first parallel that Plantinga and other reformed epistemologist's make.[84] The second parallel, notes Pritchard, deals with the similarities between perceptual and religious experiences.

A perceptual belief arises from some perceptual experience; the belief arises suddenly with the cognizer having no control over the initial belief. The perceptual belief that arises, then, from the experience is *prima facie* justified. Plantinga and other reformed epistemologists take their views concerning perception from Thomas Reid who argued that what we perceive is not "only irresistible, but it is immediate; that is, it is not by train of reasoning and argumentation that we come to be convinced of the existence of what we perceive."[85] What Reid wants to argue is that perceptual beliefs are not inferred, but immediately known by the perceiver given the nature of the experience. It is this sort of experience that Plantinga wants to compare. If the belief of some perceptual experience, say, seeing a tree, is *prima facie* justified, then if the belief of some religious experiences arises in the same manner, the religious belief is also *prima facie* justified.

One can begin to see Plantinga's externalist epistemology at play here given that justification of the perceptual belief would only be merited if the belief were gained through some reliable cognitive faulty. And in order for the belief that "God exists" to be justified, in the same sense that "I see a tree" is justified due to the reliability of most visual experiences, there needs to be some cognitive faculty that is similar in that it can produce true beliefs concerning propositions about God. As with perceptual experiences, then, belief in God needs some faculty or cognitive mechanism to ground itself in. Plantinga uses a concept that is well known to most in the reformed tradition called the *sensus divinitatis.* Calvin, an early proponent of this cognitive faculty, claimed that one can *accept* and *know* that God exists without any argument or evidence.[86] Given the *sensus divinitatis*; then, belief in God is properly basic and is not inferred from any other proposition. Plantinga defends this view and notes that

> Calvin's claim, then, is that God has created us in such a way that we have a strong tendency or inclination toward belief in him. This tendency has been in part overlaid or suppressed by sin. Were it not for the

[84] Ibid., 186.

[85] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man,* II, v.

[86] In chapter 5 I discuss in more detail the role of the *sensus divinitatis* as it relates to belief in God. And in more detail, I also discuss Calvin's understanding of this faculty.

> existence of sin in the world, human beings would believe in God to the same degree and with the same natural spontaneity that we believe in the existence of other persons, an external world, or the past. This is the natural human condition; it is because of our presently unnatural sinful condition that many find belief in God difficult or absurd. The fact is, Calvin thinks, one who does not believe in God is in an epistemically substandard position—rather like a man who does not believe that his wife exists, or thinks she is likely a cleverly constructed robot and has no thoughts, feelings, or consciousness. Although this belief in God is partially suppressed, it is nonetheless universally present.[87]

From this, Plantinga concludes that "there is a kind of faculty or cognitive mechanism, what Calvin calls *sensus divinitatis* or a sense of divinity, which in a wide variety of circumstances produces in us beliefs about God."[88] So in the same way that perceptual experiences such as 'I see a table" are non-inferential and properly basic, belief in God, when occasioned by the appropriate circumstances (e.g., such as one feeling a sense of guilt, dependence, beauty, etc.), can also be properly basic because of the cognitive working of the *sensus divinitatis*.[89]

In comparison then, it is noted above that there are certain experiences which one might classify as properly basic given that they do not depend on any other propositions for their justification. Perhaps now we might add "God exists" to this list of properly basic beliefs and have something like this:

1) I see a tree (known perceptually),
2) I am in pain (known introspectively),
3) I had breakfast this morning (known through memory),

and

4) God exists (known through the *sensus divinitatis*).

All these propositions, then, on Plantinga's account and understanding of faculty reliabilism should be taken as properly basic if the agent's belief has sufficient warrant (i.e. a belief that is produced by one whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly in the correct environments according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth).[90]

There is another important question to be asked however. Does it follow from this that belief in God is groundless? If I come to believe in God on Plantinga's model, can it be said that my belief is groundless? Plantinga argues that in the same way that "I see a tree" is properly basic but not groundless, belief in God, if acquired according to Plantinga's model of faculty reliabilism,

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[87] Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God,* 66.
[88] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* 172.
[89] Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God,* 78-81.
[90] Ibid, 156.

is not groundless. Understanding what Plantinga means by "groundless" is important in realizing the distinction between evidence and grounds for belief. Perceptual experiences, such as those caused by visual experiences, are not considered to be groundless because of their reliance upon the senses. Likewise, Plantinga claims that belief in God is not groundless, because it is rooted in the experience of the *sensus divinitatis*. Neither experience, however, means that belief in question is inferential. Thus, the cognitive faculties that give rise to these experiences do not count as evidence in the traditional sense (i.e., traditional proofs for God's existence).[91] On Plantinga's model, there is no reflective conclusion when one comes to believe in God; rather, the belief is occasioned by the circumstance (e.g., the circumstance of beholding some majestic mountains or desert sunset). The circumstance does not count as evidence for my belief in God, I simply believe given the circumstance that is involved. In other words, the believer simply finds himself with a belief in God.

This has further implications for the nature of defeaters against belief in God, which Plantinga clarifies in some detail in *Warranted Christian Belief*.[92] He argues that not only is belief in God not groundless, but it is also open to defeat. Suppose that someone offers a defeater for the proposition that God exists; then, claims Plantinga, that particular belief would have to be abandoned. It is possible however for there to be a defeater-defeater, which would obviously entail the proposition being justifiably maintained. Again, this can be compared to some perceptual experience where one's cognitive faculties are not functioning properly. Say you were given a pill that would induce sensations of a dog every time you saw a cat. This would count as a defeater for the person who would normally believe that what he perceives is accurate. This is an important point in that we can now see that a properly basic belief, for Plantinga, is not some incorrigible or indubitable belief that one can always believe despite defeating evidence. It is, in other words, a belief that is open to defeat.[93]

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[91] As we will note later on, this the main difference between the reformed and evidentialist camp. For the evidentialist, some proof or axiom might lead one to believe in God. So naturally, this proof will be prior to the belief and will depend on the proof in order to be held logically. For the reformed epistemologist, belief in God depends on nothing but should lead to (not from) some demonstration that belief is not groundless.

[92] See chapter 11.

[93] Plantinga, *Reason and Belief in God,* 82-87. For an important discussion on epistemic defeaters see Bergmann, *Justification Without Awareness,* 153-177.

2.8 Christian Doctrines and the Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model

Thus far, we have only examined Plantinga's arguments for warrant for belief in God. While this is often the most discussed and disputed aspect of his reformed epistemology, there is an often-overlooked aspect of his religious epistemology that is just as noteworthy.[94] Plantinga calls it the extended A/C model.[95] Similar to Plantinga's claims about belief God (the A/C model), the extended A/C model is an attempt to determine the positive epistemic status of religious belief. However, unlike the A/C model, the extended A/C model is concerned with the positive epistemic status of specific Christian doctrines. The differences might be summed up as follows: The A/C model concerns warranted *theistic* belief while the extended A/C model concerns warranted *Christian* belief. Plantinga sums up the aim of extended A/C nicely in stating that

> full blooded Christian belief in all its particularity is justified, rational, and warranted. Further, Christian belief can be justified, rational, and warranted not just for ignorant fundamentalists or benighted medievals but for informed and educated twenty-first-century Christians who are entirely aware of all the artillery that has been rolled up against Christian belief since the Enlightenment. I shall argue that if Christian belief is true, then it is rational and warranted for those who accept it.[96]

It is important to note, of course, that in the same way that the A/C model is concerned with the epistemological rather than ontological status of belief in God, the extended A/C model is also primarily concerned with warrant.[97] Given this, how exactly does Plantinga claim that Christian doctrines can have warrant? First, according to Plantinga, Christian doctrines can be warranted in the same way that belief in God has warrant—namely through the deliverances of some belief producing faculty like the *sensus divinitatis*. However, Plantinga make it clear that unlike the *sensus divinitatis*, this faculty isn't part of our original cognitive equipment. Rather, this faculty is the result of a supernatural gift from God. It might be helpful here to think of this belief-producing

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[94] Perhaps the reason this is often overlooked in philosophical circles is that the extended A/C model might seem more theological than philosophical. At any rate, there is very little discussion, in either circles, on the extended A/C model. For an excellent critical analysis, however, see James Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), ch. 6.

[95] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* ch.8. Also, see footnote 2 in this chapter.

[96] Ibid., 242.

[97] James Beilby puts it nicely: "Plantinga's A/C model and Extended A/C Models are statements of *possible* states of affairs that describe how beliefs can have warrant." *Epistemology as Theology* (Burlington, VA: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 180.

faculty as a postlapsarian (post fall) faculty that is unaffected by the noetic effects of sin. In which case, this process cannot fail to function properly.[98]

So what is this belief producing faulty that provides warrant for Christian doctrine? As Plantinga clearly states, "these beliefs do not come to the Christian just by way of memory, perception, reason, testimony, the *sensus divinitatis,* or any other cognitive faculties with which we human beings were originally created; they come instead by way of the work of the Holy Spirit, who gets us to accept, causes us to believe, these great truths of the gospel."[99] It is the Holy Spirit, or better, the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit that gives rise to the beliefs that Christians take to be central to the gospel. Plantinga is clear that his theory of warrant and proper function also applies to the extended A/C model in that these deliverances are warranted because they are produced by a belief producing faculty that is properly functioning in the appropriate cognitive environment according to the design plan.[100]

There is much more to say about the extended A/C model, but a more detailed analysis would take us beyond the scope of this chapter. What we are primarily concerned about in this chapter is Plantinga's claim that belief in God can be held in a basic way. It is important to highlight this extended model, nonetheless, because it is one aspect of Plantinga's reformed epistemology that is often overlooked (see footnote 71) despite its theological and philosophical depth.[101]

2.9 Conclusion and Summary

Attempting to summarize Plantinga's position in one chapter is no easy task (Plantinga did, after all, take 3 volumes to explain it!). There are numerous responses to Plantinga's theory

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[98] See Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief,* 245-246. Also see footnote 10. The reason this faculty cannot fail to function properly is precisely because it is not part of our prelapsarian cognitive equipment. In other words, it is something that appears after the noetic effects of sin have been calculated.

[99] Ibid., 245.

[100] Ibid., 246.

[101] Plantinga ends *Warranted Christian Belief* by asking whether what he claims is true: "This is the really important question" he claims, but "here we pass beyond the competence of philosophy, whose main competence, in this area, is to clear away certain objections, impedances, and obstacles to Christian belief." Plantinga of course takes his beliefs on this matter to be true and claims that "speaking for myself and of course not in the name of philosophy, I can only say that it does, indeed, seem to me to be true, and to be the maximally important truth". What Plantinga is doing here is reminding the reader that the main objective in all of this is not to demonstrate the truth of Christianity (that can be left to the natural theologians after all!), but show that there are no objections that demonstrate that theism is somehow intellectually subpar or lacking in warrant. Thus paving the way for a model that might show how Christian belief can have warrant.

of warrant (both critical and complimentary),[102] and many challenges to his fundamental claim that belief in God is basic.[103] And while there is of course much more to say about Plantinga's model, we have highlighted, I think, some of the most important parts that will lay the foundation for the remainder of the thesis and give the reader a good grasp of the primary claims of reformed epistemology.[104]

To summarize, then, it would appear that Plantinga has argued for several things. First, he has found the *de jure* evidentialist objection to belief in God to be rooted in classical foundationalism. Thus, central to Plantinga's argument is his critique of classical foundationalism and its overly narrow qualification of what qualifies as a properly basic belief. An example of this, according to Plantinga, can be seen in that many people hold beliefs that seem to be basic without meeting the defined criteria of classical foundationalism. Plantinga further rejects classical foundationalism as self referentially incoherent. Once the root of evidentialist objection is found to be incoherent, Plantinga then goes on to adopt a form of foundationalism that can account for the notion that belief in God is basic. He further adopts a form of reliabilism (faculty reliabilism) in order to defend the notion that belief in God, if produced in the right environment and through the appropriate functioning faculties, requires no inferential propositional evidence in order to be justified. It is, in other words, properly basic. This foundational claim is supported by Plantinga's parity argument, which claims that in the same way that perceptual experiences are justified, belief in God—through the divine sense—is also justified and should thus enjoy the same epistemic status as ordinary perceptual experiences.

In chapters 3 and 4 we will set aside the discussion of reformed epistemology temporarily and discuss issues relating to the value of knowledge. In chapter 5, we will return to reformed epistemology and discuss whether the reformed epistemologist can account for the value of knowledge. More specifically, we will discuss whether knowledge God, on reformed accounts, is a cognitive achievement.

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[102] For an extensive evaluation of Plantinga's theory of warrant see *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology* ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996).

[103] I have in mind here the Great Pumpkin and the Son of the Great Pumpkin objections. For a good summary of these arguments see James Beilby, *Epistemology as Theology,* 53, 130-135. The Son of the Great Pumpkin (or return of the Great Pumpkin), is often thought of as the "Achilles heel" of his religious epistemology. See Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Objection* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), ch. 10.

[104] For recent and detailed treatment of Plantinga's critique (and more generally, the reformed critique) of natural theology see Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (London: Ashgate, 2009).

§3 The Value of Knowledge

3.1 Introduction

As we saw in the previous chapter, reformed epistemology is a thesis about the nature of religious knowledge. A comprehensive epistemology, however, ought to include both an answer to the nature question and the value question. With reformed epistemology, so far anyway, we have an answer to the nature question, but not the value question. Thus, in order to present a more comprehensive account of religious knowledge, the reformed epistemologist ought to consider whether its model can account for the value of knowledge. The goal, then, is to see whether reformed epistemology is compatible with the intuition that knowledge is valuable and whether it can be integrated into other reliabilist accounts that attempt to account for the value of knowledge.[105]

Before discussing the reformed response to the value question, however, one might ask whether it's obvious that we need an answer to the value question just because the nature question has been answered. The reason why we need an account of both questions, I think, is that the two are closely related.[106] If a successful answer to the nature question tells us how we are to obtain knowledge, a successful answer to the value question ought to tell us, among other things, why obtaining that *knowledge* is something we ought to value. Without the latter, the former becomes irrelevant. After all, if arriving at true belief is just as epistemically praiseworthy or valuable as arriving at knowledge then the nature question, while possibly interesting, becomes less relevant. Further, if the nature question were unrelated to the value question then the goals and aims of epistemology would have looked much different in history of philosophy. So even if the value of knowledge is not explicitly discussed, it is at least assumed in most theories on the nature of knowledge. If this weren't the case, then the primary focus in epistemology wouldn't be so concerned with providing an analysis of the nature of knowledge. It is this emphasis, then, which points to the distinctive value we take knowledge to have.

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[105] I am interpreting reliabilism broadly here to include some virtue accounts. Specifically, as we will see in the next chapter, I am concerned with demonstrating the compatibility of reformed epistemology with John Greco's account of the value of knowledge.

[106] For more on this see John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 91. See also Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Value of Understanding and the Pursuit of Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ix-xvii and Duncan Pritchard, "Recent Work on Epistemic Value", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44: 85-110. Kvanvig claims that an adequate account of knowledge will answer two questions: "What knowledge is?" and Why knowledge is valuable?" Pritchard's claim is simply that we need to explain the master intuition that knowledge is valuable.

But is knowledge valuable? Or put more directly, is knowledge *distinctively* valuable? It is of course one thing to have the intuition that knowledge is distinctively valuable and quite another for it to actually be distinctively valuable. In this chapter, we will discuss the belief that knowledge is valuable and look into the different ways of understanding this value. In the next chapter, however, we will discuss an account where the value of knowledge is demonstrated. In section 3.2, I highlight the initial value problem and discuss the simple value question (whether knowledge is generally valuable) and the more sophisticated value questions (e.g., whether knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief). In the end, I conclude that the question we really need to answer is why knowledge is taken to be distinctively valuable. There are different ways to think about something being *distinctively valuable*, but as I understand it here, in claiming that knowledge is distinctively valuable I am claiming that its value is distinct in both degree and kind. Thus the real question, I argue, is whether knowledge has distinctive value over and above that which falls short of knowledge. Section 3.3 highlights the relationship between knowledge and value in more detail and argues that the kind of value knowledge has is final value. I claim that the intuition that knowledge is of distinctive value has merit and examine the differences that need to be made with regard to final value and instrumental value. I further discuss the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic value. In section 3.4, I consider the swamping problem, which is thought by some to be detrimental to any reliabilist account of knowledge that hopes to account for the value of knowledge over and above true belief. Section 2.5, then, goes into a more detailed look at the central claims of the swamping problem. Following Pritchard, I claim that what is really at stake in the swamping problem is epistemic value and not general value. Thus, if one concedes that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good (as I do), then this poses little problem for the belief that knowledge is of greater *general* value than true belief. In the end, I conclude that the swamping problem alone does not challenge the idea that knowledge can be finally (and thus distinctively) valuable.

3.2 The Value Problem

Knowledge is thought to be valuable. Call the attempt to explain why knowledge is generally valuable the simple value problem.[107] At first glance, it might seem like the simple value

[107] In saying that knowledge is generally valuable I am merely noting that we are not comparing or evaluating knowledge to any other acquired epistemic state. The question, so far anyway, is simply this: "What's so great about knowledge?" Further, note as well that I am not taking the simple value question to be

problem is both easy to answer and sufficient for dealing with the value problem. After all, it's not hard to see why knowledge of x is at least more *practically* valuable than not knowing x. It is better to know, for example, how to calculate simple mathematical equations than to not know. Knowing simple math will help ensure you've received the correct change from the cashier at your local grocer. Perhaps it will help you find savings as you are filling out your tax forms. It's hard to envision a scenario where knowledge isn't always immediately or potentially practically valuable. Even cases of trivial knowledge might be practically valuable at some point. You might ask, for example, if knowing how many hairs you have on your head is really the type of thing that is practically valuable. However, you can envision a scenario where this might come in handy. Say you are taken captive by a superstitious evil dictator who determines the fate of his captives based on ones knowledge of such seemingly trivial matters. In this case, then, it would be better to know seemingly trivial truths than to not know.

Perhaps, then, even trivial instances of knowledge have value because of their (future) potential usefulness.[108] Yet, in thinking about the value problem in terms of the simple value question doesn't really capture the central issues surrounding the value problem. The epistemic question concerning value is more sophisticated than simply asking "What's so great about knowledge?" or, "Why is knowledge of x better than not knowing x?" What we are really concerned about it is figuring out what exactly makes knowledge more valuable than any other epistemic state. The question we are also hoping to answer is the intuition that knowledge is somehow unique or distinctive. After all, our research and effort into knowledge seems to indicate that we do in fact value knowledge more than other epistemic state. This, I believe, follows from the intuition that there is in fact something distinctive about the way we value knowledge. Thus, there is a more sophisticated value question: Is knowledge distinctively valuable? In attempting to answer this question there are several possible questions that might account for its distinctive value. One might think, for example, that in accounting for the

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necessarily an easy question to answer. What I mean by simple is only that the kind of value in question is not distinctive or unique to knowledge (at this point anyway).

[108] The issue of whether knowledge is *always* practically valuable goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Though, it's important to note that there might be problems in thinking that knowledge is *always* practically valuable. First, even is one concedes that trivial instances of knowledge might be practically valuable because of some future possibilities, there are still cases where the practical value of knowledge is suspect. Consider cases where knowledge is forgotten. Imagine, for example, that regardless of the situation, you are only able to remember knowledge of x for a very short period of time (5 seconds say). It seems this forgotten knowledge is of little practical value. After all, it's hard to envision a scenario where its practical value can be explained in terms of immediate or future possibilities. So while the simple value question seems easily answered, there are still questions about whether knowledge is always practically valuable

distinctive value of knowledge we merely need to show why knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. Or perhaps we need something stronger and need to account for the value of knowledge by demonstrating its distinctive nature over anything that falls short of knowledge? Whatever the question amounts to, the simple value question is insufficient to account for the distinctive value of knowledge.

Below, then, is a breakdown of the questions we will answer:

Simple Value Question	**Sophisticated Value Questions**
Why is knowledge generally valuable?	(1) Why is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief? (2) Why is knowledge more valuable than that which falls just short of knowledge? (3) Why does knowledge have *distinctive* value over anything that falls short of knowledge?[109]

We have briefly discussed the simple value question above. Let's move on to the more sophisticated value questions. Starting with (1), then, the question is what makes knowledge more valuable than mere true belief. Following Pritchard here, let's call this question the primary value problem. This is the obvious place to start given that much of the contemporary literature has been concerned with this question. Further, and more importantly, this is a question that we find Plato considering in the *Meno.* In Plato's *Meno,* Socrates asks whether a true belief is just as valuable as knowledge given that both true belief and knowledge produce the same desired results.[110] The line of questioning in the text concerns a true belief about the way to Larissa versus knowledge of the way to Larissa. In the end, Socrates concedes that true belief can be as action guiding as knowledge given that both true belief and knowledge help us achieve the desired goal (e.g., reaching Larissa). Socrates concludes that so long as the guide "has the right opinion about that which the other has knowledge, he will not be a worse guide than the one

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[109] This section follows closely the work of Pritchard on this question. For a more detailed look at the summary offered above see Duncan Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge" in *The Nature and Value of Knowledge* ed. Duncan Pritchard, Alan Millar and Adrian Haddock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Also, a good summary of the value question is also offered by John Greco, 'The Value Problem" in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* eds. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Routledge, 2011), 219-231.

[110] Plato, *Meno,* 97a-98d. All quotes and references from the *Meno* will be from the G.M.A Grube translation (Cambridge: Hackett, 2002). I am taking true opinion (found in the Meno text) to be synonymous with true belief.

who knows."[111] In other words, true belief seems to be as *practically* beneficial as knowledge. This prompts Meno to ask the obvious: "it make me wonder, Socrates, why knowledge is prized more highly than right opinion, and why they are different."[112] One possible solution to the primary value question is from the *Meno* itself:

> **Socrates:** Do you know why you wonder, or shall I tell you?
>
> **Meno:** By all means tell me
>
> **Socrates:** It is because you have paid no attention to the statues of Daedalus, but perhaps there are none in Thessaly.
>
> **Meno:** What do you have in mind when you say this?
>
> **Socrates:** That they too run away and escape if one does not tie them down but remain in place if tied down.
>
> **Meno:** So what?
>
> **Socrates:** To acquire an untied work of Daedalus is not worth much, like acquiring a runaway slave, for it does not remain, but it is worth much if tied down, for his works are very beautiful. What am I thinking of when I say this? True opinions. For true opinions, as long as they remain, are a fine thing and all they do is good, but they are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man's mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down by [giving] an account of the reason why. And that, Meno, my friend, is recollection, as we previously agreed. After they are tied down, in the first place they become knowledge, and then they remain in place. That is why knowledge is prized higher than correct opinion in being tied down.[113]

There are, I think, two ways to interpret Socrates here. First, it might appear that the only point Socrates is trying to make is that knowledge and true belief are different in that true belief is more transient than knowledge. After all, the main point seems to be that knowledge is worth more given that it is tied down.[114] But this account doesn't tell the whole story. Surely Socrates was aware that knowledge is just as transient as true belief (especially if transient is taken here to be merely a case of forgetfulness). The other way to interpret this analogy (and perhaps one that involves a more complete understanding), is to see the agent in question as playing a role in the process. The first and less charitable interpretation is agent-neutral, while the second is agent-

[111] 97b.

[112] 97d.

[113] 97d- 98a.

[114] Kvanvig seems to think that at first glance this is all you might get from the story. *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding,* 13.

centered. The idea that Socrates is trying to convey, I think, is that true belief is transient because the agent might easily *abandon* true belief in the face of internal or external conflict. What I mean by this is that the agent who holds a true belief might be *more* easily swayed from the truth (than the agent who holds knowledge) if some apparent evidence to the contrary is presented. Knowledge, from the analogy, seems less transient given that it is tied down or linked to reason. [115] If this is right, transient or fleeting should not be understood in terms of forgetfulness (over which the agent has little control), but rather understood in terms of abandonment (over which the agent has *some* control).

If this interpretation is correct, then perhaps Socrates is right. We ought to value knowledge more than true belief if it ensures a less frequent abandonment of the truth. Timothy Williamson agrees with this assessment and argues that "present knowledge is less vulnerable than mere present true belief to *rational* undermining by future evidence, which is not to say that it is completely invulnerable to such undermining. If your cognitive faculties are in good order, the probability of your believing *p* tomorrow is greater conditional on your knowing *p* today than on your merely believing *p* today."[116] [117]

Assuming this analysis is right and knowledge can be shown to be both different from and more valuable than true belief, are we any closer to answering the value question (recall that we are claiming the value question must account for the *distinctive* value of knowledge)? Not really. This is because the line of questioning concerning the value of knowledge doesn't stop with an answer to the question of whether knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief. The reason for this is that even if knowledge is more valuable than mere true belief, it might not be more valuable than that which falls just short of knowledge. Consider the following from Pritchard:

> Suppose that one answered the primary value problem by, for example, pointing to a necessary condition for knowledge which in general added practical value (the justification condition, say), but suppose further that the satisfaction of this condition, in conjunction with true belief, was not sufficient for knowledge. Perhaps, for example, when one knows that *p* it is the fact that one's belief that *p* is thereby justified that ensures that knowledge has a greater practical value than mere true belief that *p* alone.[118]

The issue here is this. There are those epistemic states in between knowledge and true belief that might be more valuable than mere true belief (justified true belief, for example), but equally as

[115] I am taking reason here to be close or similar to justification.

[116] *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79.

[117] For an important response to Williamson's argument see Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 14-21

[118] See Duncan Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge" in *The Nature and Value of Knowledge* ed. Duncan Pritchard, Alan Millar and Adrian Haddock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6.

valuable as knowledge. So if I consider knowledge to be more valuable than mere true belief *because* some condition ensures this (e.g., justification), then is it the case that knowledge is any more valuable than justified true belief? Of course this wouldn't be problematic if there were no Gettier cases and justified true belief always amounted to knowledge. But given this is not the case, then we need an account of why knowledge is more valuable than Gettier cases where justified true belief falls short of knowledge.[119] Thus, even if we successfully answer the primary value problem, we are immediately faced with the second value problem (2): Is knowledge more valuable than that which falls just short of knowledge? But as Pritchard points out, even if we successfully answer (2), we are still faced with another kind of question. What is it that makes knowledge *distinctly valuable* from that which falls short of knowledge? Call this the tertiary value problem. The problem is that (1) and (2) are merely attempting to answer the value problem in terms of *degree*. What we want from a holistic account of the value question is not merely an explanation of why we think knowledge is greater in degree, but in *kind*. Thus, knowledge is distinctly valuable not only as a matter of degree, but of kind.[120] But what exactly does this mean? Pritchard puts the point nicely:

> To say that knowledge has distinctive value… appears to suggest that the difference in value between knowledge and that which falls short of knowledge is not just a matter of degree, but of kind. After all, if one regards knowledge as being more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge merely as a matter of degree rather than kind, then this has the effect of putting knowledge on a kind of continuum of value with regard to the epistemic, albeit further up the continuum than anything that falls short of knowledge. The problem with this 'continuum' account of the value of knowledge, however, is that it fails to explain why the long history of epistemological discussion has focused specifically on the stage in this continuum of value that knowledge marks rather than some other stage…Accordingly, it seems that accounting for our intuitions about the value of knowledge requires us to offer an explanation of why knowledge has not just a greater *degree* but also a different *kind* of value than whatever falls short of knowledge… Further support…comes from the fact that we often treat knowledge as being, unlike lesser epistemic standings, *precious*, in the sense that its value is not merely a function of its practical import. [121]

What needs to be demonstrated, then, is that knowledge is not only more valuable than that which falls short, but why knowledge is thought to be *distinctively* valuable over and above that which falls short of knowledge. In other words, the kind of value that knowledge is said to have is distinct, say, from the kind of value that we place on mere true belief. The question that concerns us, then, is why precisely knowledge is thought to have this *distinctive* value. In other words, what is it exactly that makes knowledge distinct in *kind* from that which falls short of

[119] Pritchard points out that this is precisely what Kaplan concluded in "It's Not What You Know That Counts" *The Journal of Philosophy* 82:1985 350-363.

[120] See Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge", 5-8

[121] Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge", 7-8.

knowledge? This is what I take to be the tertiary value problem and the question we must consider before determining whether knowledge of God is cognitive achievement. Before we can provide an answer to this question, however, we need a better idea of the kinds of value that knowledge is a candidate for.[122]

3.3 Knowledge and Its Distinctive Value

Our intuition is that knowledge has value. As mentioned above, however, it's not enough to claim that knowledge is merely more valuable in terms of degree, but that its distinctive value is the result of a unique kind of value. But what exactly does this mean? The point is this: if we take knowledge to be distinctively valuable, it seems to suggest that we ought to be looking for a different *kind* of value that is unique to knowledge, but lacking in that which falls short of knowledge. What precisely, then, is the kind of value that gives knowledge its distinctive epistemic place? We have, at minimum, four options to choose from: instrumental value, extrinsic value, intrinsic value, and final value. The three I want to briefly discuss, however, are instrumental, intrinsic, and final value. [123] In the end, I conclude that the kind of value that we are going to look for in the case of knowledge is final value.

Instrumental value was previously discussed above, but might be defined as something that is valued often because of some other desired good that comes as a result. Money is a good example of something that has instrumental value. We value money not because, as an object, it is an end in and of itself to be valued; rather, we value money because it often helps us acquire or achieve our desires—it is a *means* to an end.[124] However, as it was shown above, there is nothing particularly distinct about instrumental value. Justification, for example, is said to have instrumental value. And even if one can successfully demonstrate that knowledge has more

[122] To clarify, then, the next chapter will attempt to account for the tertiary value problem: Why does knowledge have *distinctive* value over and above anything that falls short of knowledge. When using the term "distinctive value" I am implying that the value of knowledge ought to be distinct in *degree* (it has value over anything that falls short of knowledge) and *kind* (which I discuss in the next section).

[123] I'm setting aside a discussion on extrinsic value given that the issues surround the value of knowledge have never really involved any debate on extrinsic value. The primary issues surrounding the value of knowledge have usually pitted intrinsic value vs. instrumental value against each other. In other words, the options were usually intrinsic or instrumental value. As I will discuss later, this isn't quite right.

[124] Of course it is always possible that someone might value money as an end. Hoarding it not because they desire something that comes as a result of having it. I take it that these would be special cases and that generally money is that kind if thing that is valued because it might, for example, fulfill our desires. If I desire a new Ferrari and the only legal way to about getting this is to have money, then I ought to attempt to acquire money in order to fulfill that desire. The money, however, is merely contingent on my desire for the Ferrari.

instrumental value than true belief, this kind of comparison puts the discussion back on the continuum that we are hoping to avoid. Thus, instrumental value gets us no closer to answering the question of distinctive value.

Intrinsic value, however, is a more plausible candidate. In many earlier discussions about the value of knowledge, the kind of value discussed is intrinsic value. For something to have intrinsic value, it is said to have value for its own sake. As Christine Korsgaard puts it, to say that something is intrinsically valuable is to say that it has "its goodness in itself."[125] In other words, its value is derived from properties that are internal to the object in question. This rules out, then, the possibility that something has value because of its relational or external properties. Further, the value of the object in question does not, if intrinsically valuable, derive its value from some instrumental good that comes as a result.[126]

Intrinsic value, then, is a possibility when it comes to determining what kind of value knowledge. However, this is not the kind of value (I argue anyway) that knowledge has. This is a good thing given that a discussion on the intrinsic value of knowledge would lead to a discussion on intrinsic value skepticism. By denying that knowledge has intrinsic value, we avoid a difficult debate concerning even the possibility of whether anything (let alone knowledge) has intrinsic value.[127] This leaves us, then, with one final option: final value.[128]

The kind of value that knowledge has, I argue, is final value. If something is finally valuable, it is non-instrumentally valuable and valuable as an end, and not merely a means to an end. What exactly is the difference between final value and intrinsic value? The key difference is that final value allows for its value to come from some external property. In other words, something is said to be finally valuable because of its relational properties and not merely because of its internal properties. For example, what makes the first car ever built by Henry Ford valuable is different from what make a 2012 Maserati valuable. The former has value because of

[125] Christine M. Korsgaard, "Two Distinctions in Goodness," *The Philosophical Review*, 92 (1983): 170.

[126] With Korsgaard, I agree that it is best to keep the categories of value as intrinsic vs. extrinsic and final vs. instrumental. However, if something is intrinsically valuable, it is, by most accounts, finally valuable (i.e., non-instrumental). As we will see in the next paragraph, however, something can be finally valuably without being intrinsically valuable. See Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "A Distinction in Value: Intrinsic and For Its Own Sake", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 33-51.

[127] For a discussion on this see Shelly Kagan, "Rethinking Intrinsic Value," *Journal of Ethics* 2, (1998): 277–297.

[128] Note here that I am not claiming that knowledge doesn't have intrinsic value because I agree with the intrinsic value skeptic. The only point I am making is that it's an added benefit of my account that we are not trying to account for the intrinsic value of knowledge, as this would take us into a debate about the coherence of intrinsic value. As will become apparent in the next chapter, final value really is the only option in accounting for the distinctive value of knowledge.

something external to it; or, put another way, it's valuable because of its relational properties (e.g., it's valuable because of the time and place it came from; or because of its relationship to an important piece of US history). Thus, the former might have final value without having intrinsic value (e.g., if it hadn't been the first car built in Detroit its value would be questionable).[129]

3.4 The Swamping Problem: An Initial Assessment

Now that we have located the kind of value that knowledge might have, how exactly can knowledge be shown to have final value. This will be the primary concern of the next chapter. Before discussing the source from which knowledge derives its final value, however, any discussion of the value of knowledge is immediately faced with an important problem— namely, the swamping problem. The swamping problem was initially presented as a problem for reliabilist theories and is supposed to show that true belief, whether reliably or unreliably formed, is, ultimately, what we value. And that a reliable faculty adds nothing to the *value* of true belief given that if an unreliable faculty had produced the same result (e.g., true belief), the value of the true belief would be the same. It shouldn't make any difference in terms of value whether we have a true belief as a result of a reliable faculty or a true belief as a result of an unreliable faculty. They have both given us what we want—namely, a true belief. Thus, we only value reliable faculties because of what they produce. In other words, we value reliable faculties *only* as a means to true belief.

There are several important cases where the swamping effect of true belief is supposedly demonstrated.[130] However, the clearest example, I think, is the one provided by Zagzebski.[131] Suppose I really enjoy a good cup of coffee. And presented before me are two equally great cups of coffee. Each cup possesses whatever the necessary properties are that make a good cup of coffee (e.g., freshly brewed, the beans are from the best regions, etc.). However, one cup was made from a reliable coffee-making machine and the other was made from an unreliable coffee-making machine. The reliable machine routinely produces great cups of coffee while the unreliable machine routinely produces bad cups of coffee. In this case, however, both machines

[129] I think we can ignore here what kind of value the Maserati has. You might think it is valuable, though, because of its parts, trim, top speed, etc.

[130] See Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, 47-48. See also Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57-66.

[131] Linda Zagzebski, "The Search for the Source of the Epistemic Good", *Metaphilosophy,* 34 (2003): 12-28. For a good analysis of Zagzebski and other issues relating to the swamping problem see Pritchard, The Value Problem for Knowledge*,* 8-24. Also, see Pritchard, "What is the Swamping Problem" (*forthcoming).*

have produced great cups of coffee. The problem, then, is that it seems we ought to value both cups of coffee equally given that they both contain the desired end—the desired end being a great cup of coffee. And given that the desired end is a great cup of coffee, it shouldn't matter that one of the cups comes from an unreliable coffee-making machine (in this case anyway).

What this example shows, then, is that where the coffee comes from is irrelevant to its value. In other words, what is of value is the great cup of coffee and not the process that brings about the great cup of coffee. The similarities to the discussion on the value of true belief and the value of knowledge should be obvious. The value of two equally true beliefs is the same regardless of the process that produced these true beliefs. And if this true, it won't be the case that knowledge has a distinctive value over anything that falls short of knowledge.

The force of the swamping argument comes from its discrediting of the intuition that knowledge is of more value than true belief. This is because whatever property (reliable faculties, justification, etc.) is added to true belief will fail to confer any further added value to that true belief. Thus, if one holds that knowledge is a reliable true belief, then once true belief is attained (regardless of the method) it's not immediately clear how another epistemic state (e.g., knowledge) *could* be of any more value.

It's important to note here that Zagzebski's swamping problem isn't claiming that knowledge isn't valuable. Rather, the claim is that knowledge isn't any more valuable than true belief (this observation will be important for the next section). You might think the claim is simply that *whatever* value knowledge has, true belief is at least as valuable. Thus, the main issue isn't whether knowledge has *any* value, but whether knowledge has *more* value than mere true belief. As such, we can now rule out the possibility that the swamping problem poses a difficulty for the simple value question (Why is knowledge generally valuable?). After all, even if the swamping problem is successful, knowledge might still, at the least, be instrumentally valuable.

But if the swamping problem isn't a direct challenge to the simple value problem, then which value problem is the force of the swamping problem directed at? It would seem, initially anyway, that the force of the swamping argument is directed at the first of the sophisticated value questions (Why is knowledge more valuable than true belief?).[132] It appears, then, that if the swamping problem is successful, then knowledge isn't any more valuable than true belief. After all, the supposed force of the swamping problem is that in cases where an agent has a true belief

[132] Note of course that the swamping problem isn't merely an issue of the primary value problem. The reason is that if it's an issue for the primary value question, it's also an issue for the tertiary value problem. If the swamping problem holds, then knowledge isn't any more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge.

but lacks knowledge, the true belief is no less valuable than those cases where the agent has knowledge—the desired end, a true belief, is achieved in both cases.

Why, though, is this a problem for the value is knowledge? Especially, you might ask, if we are primarily concerned with showing that knowledge is distinctively valuable (and not merely that knowledge is more valuable than true belief)? In order to see the force of swapping problem, we need to discuss in detail exactly what the problem amounts to and what the main assumptions of the swamping argument amounts to. Once this is clearly laid out, we will see that the swamping argument poses little problem to the question of the value of knowledge.

3.5 The Swamping Problem: Part II

Before attempting to offer a solution to the swamping problem, it will be important to point out exactly what the swamping problem implies and what assumptions are implicit in the argument. As noted above, it was initially thought that the swamping problem was only a problem for reliabilism. Zagzebski's version of the swamping problem illustrates this belief nicely. However, it is clear that the swamping problem is not simply a problem for reliabilism. [133] After all, you could just plug in any epistemic property or condition for knowledge and the force of the swamping argument still stands. The reason for this is that the property in question plays the same role with regard to true belief as any other property that is paired with true belief. Consider, for example, the belief that epistemic properties are only instrumentally valuable in that they bring us closer to true belief. Thus, whatever the property in questions is, it seems that this property will play the same role with regard to truth in that the property will serve as merely a means to an end (that end being a true belief). Take justification, as opposed to reliability, for example. We think justification is valuable because it is usually a good indicator of the proximity of truth. Of course justification for some proposition *p* doesn't entail the truth of *p,* it does, in many cases, put the agent on better epistemic footing than those who believe *p* without the appropriate justification. Justification, then, is instrumentally valuable. This being the case, it seems that any epistemic property (whether it be reliability, warrant, justification, etc.) will only be instrumentally valuable insofar as it helps you achieve some other epistemic good. [134] In this case, the epistemic good in question is true belief.

[133] See Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge*,* 8- 11.

[134] See Pritchard, "Veritism and Epistemic Value" (*forthcoming)*.

Thus, it seems that the swamping problem isn't merely a problem for reliabilism, but also any account where epistemic properties are understood to only have instrumental value in relation to true belief. The swamping argument does of course make this implicit claim. We have, then, what appears to be the first assumption of the swamping problem:

(1) Once the fundamental epistemic good in question is attained, no epistemic property that is merely instrumental can be added to confer additional value.

This seems right and the swamping problem is convincing in this regard. Whether we are concerned about a true belief or a great cup of coffee, once the end is attained, the instrumental property that helps us attain this end doesn't make this end any more valuable.[135] Consider, again, which equally great cup of coffee you would prefer: the one from the reliable coffee maker or the one from the unreliable coffee maker? For most, it wouldn't make any difference. Thus, I think we can easily concede (1).

However, the swamping problem makes another very important point:

(2) The fundamental epistemic good is true belief.

In (1), it was simply stated that once the fundamental epistemic good in question is attained, no epistemic property that is merely instrumental can be added to confer additional value. However, (1) doesn't state what the fundamental epistemic good is (though, it is implied in the above paragraph).[136] The swamping problem, then, assumes the truth of (2). Veritism, or epistemic value T-monism as it is sometimes referred to, is the belief that there is one fundamental epistemic good—namely, true belief.[137] In other words, what we are aiming at and hoping to

[135] I take it that one might reasonably think there is value in the process, but this is, I think, independent of the value that concerns the end in question. For example, if there are two equally great houses that have the same value (in this case, market value), how you come in possession of these houses matters little to the true value of the houses. Imagine that one of the houses was gained through a random game of chance (you won the house through an email lottery) and the other house was one that you built over many years as the result of your skill and effort. The former was gained through a process that holds little value, while the latter was gained through what many would consider a valuable process. The home you own because of your skill and effort is something you can be proud of, perhaps even brag about. All this, though, is in spite of the fact that both houses have the same market value.

[136] I think it is best to keep (1) and (2) apart. After all, I might concede (1) and not (2). I might think, for example, that the (1) is true but that the fundamental good in question is something other than true belief (e.g., knowledge).

[137] Pritchard uses the phrase epistemic value T-monism in the *Nature and Value of Knowledge.* However, is his recent essay on the swamping problem ("Veritism and Epistemic Value") he uses vertisim to represent the idea that truth is the fundamental epistemic good. See also, Michael DePaul "Value Monism in

acquire as agents is the accumulation of true beliefs. As such, we hope to avoid false beliefs. As Marian David puts it, "the sole basic epistemic value, or good, is true belief; and the sole basic epistemic disvalue, or bad, is false belief." [138]

I think there is good reason to assume that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good at which we are aiming. [139] However, I will leave these considerations aside for moment. What is most important is determining whether the swamping problem does in fact assume veritism and what this might imply for the force of the swamping problem. To begin, it is important to note that the swamping problem isn't really an argument for veritism. It's simply an argument about the value of knowledge vs. true belief, *given* the truth of the veritist position. The way the swamping problem is set up, we are told to compare some desired end (e.g., coffee) with the epistemic desired end (e.g., true belief). As (1) and (2) suggest, then, what is really going on in the example is a discussion about conferring additional value to the fundamental epistemic good that is true belief. Thus, there can be little discussion, I think, on whether the swamping problem does in fact assume the veritist position.

From this, we are now in a position to discuss the conclusion that is to taken from (1) and (2):

(3) Thus, given (1) and (2), knowledge is of no more value than true belief.

What (3) is saying is simply that if (1) and (2) are true, then (3) seems to follow. After all, how can anything be more epistemically valuable than the fundamental epistemic good? I take it that (3) is what most conclude should be taken to be the force of the swamping problem.[140] Thus, we have, taken together, the following argument:

(1) Once the fundamental epistemic good in question is attained, no epistemic property that is merely instrumental can be added to confer additional value.

Epistemology" in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[138] "Truth as the Primary Epistemic Goal: A Working Hypothesis" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology* eds. Matthais Steup and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 308.

[139] See, however, Kvanvig, "Truth is not the Primary Epistemic Good" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, 286-295.

[140] Zagzebski, in "The Search for the Source of the Epistemic Good", claims, for example, that given the swamping problem "we cannot explain what makes knowledge more valuable than true" (14). Though, it is important to note the Zagzebski sees the problem as being the result of using "machine-product model of belief" and believes her virtue-based belief model avoids the swamping problem. However, so long as you take truth to be the primary epistemic good it's hard to see, as discussed above, how this isn't a problem for any account of knowledge.

(2) The fundamental epistemic good is true belief.

(3) Thus, given (1) and (2), knowledge is of no more value than true belief.

Given the above reasoning, it seems that if we going to account for the distinctive value of knowledge we need to deny (3). One thing to keep in mind, however, is that just because (3) seems to be a conclusion about the value of knowledge over and above that of true belief (and not specifically a question about the final value of knowledge), it is still imperative that we answer this question given that our inability to provide an answer as to why knowledge is more valuable than true belief will mean that we also can't provide an answer to the question of distinctive value (e.g., the tertiary problem). Also, even if we have an answer to (3), it doesn't mean we have answered the most important question with regard to the value of knowledge—namely, Why does knowledge have *distinctive* value over anything that falls short of knowledge

Given this, what are the options, then, if we are to hold on to the intuition that knowledge is of distinctive value? The first option we have is deny (1). I'm going to ignore this possibility here since I take the real source of (1) to be the belief that (2) is true.[141] Rejecting (2), then, seems to be the obvious choice if we are going to ultimately deny (3).

Yet, how exactly should one go about rejecting (2)? First, we need to get clear on what exactly (3) entails. In claiming that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good I am claiming that the good in question, true belief, is ultimately non-instrumentally valuable. For example, (1) makes that claim that justification is only instrumentally valuable in that we value it as a means to true belief. True belief, however, is to be valued as an end. Its value is not derived from its relation to any other good.

Further, in claiming that the fundamental epistemic good is true belief, I am claiming that true belief is the primary epistemic goal at which we are aiming. If something is the primary or fundamental epistemic goal, it seems to follow naturally that this goal would also be the fundamental epistemic good. This assumption runs the other way as well. If I take true belief to be the fundamental epistemic good, it seems to follow that I ought to take true belief to be my primary epistemic goal. This being the case, it follows, then, that true belief is not only the

[141] For an argument that targets something similar to what (1) claims see Alvin Goldman and Erik J. Olsson, "Reliabilism and the Value on Knowledge," in *Epistemic Value*, ed. Adrian Haddock, Alan Millar and Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19-41. For a summary and critique of this argument see Pritchard, "Veritism and Epistemic Value", 8-14.

fundamental epistemic good, but also the primary epistemic goal.[142] After all, it would seem odd to claim that the primary epistemic goal is true belief while the fundamental epistemic good at which we are aiming is something different. I take it, then, that the important question to ask about (2) is why one should *assume* that true belief is the primary epistemic goal.[143] Why not knowledge, for example? Knowledge, after all, has been the primary issue both ancient and contemporary philosophers have been concerned with.

A thorough defence of why true belief is the primary epistemic goal (as opposed to knowledge) will take us beyond the scope of this section. In the end, what we are really looking for is a response that will guide us in ultimately rejecting (3). However, I will offer a brief response as to why rejecting (2) isn't plausible and why we should look elsewhere for a rejection of (3). First, it seems natural to assume that true belief is that which we are aiming at given that most would endorse, *prima facie* anyway, the idea that our primary epistemic goal as agents is to maximize true beliefs and minimize false ones. As Pritchard puts it, "many epistemologists would be attracted to epistemic value T-monism, at least pre-theoretically (i.e. independently of considering any problems that a commitment to this would generate)".[144]

Despite this apparent consensus, however, there are those who would reject the notion that true belief is the primary epistemic goal (and thus the fundamental epistemic good). There are two different camps of thought here. First, there is Timothy Williamson who, as I understand him, takes knowledge to be the fundamental epistemic good. Thus, knowledge would be the primary epistemic goal. On this account, however, Williamson would still be an epistemic value monist.[145] However, another way to reject the idea that truth is the fundamental epistemic good (and thus not the primary epistemic goal) is to deny value monism and accept a pluralist account

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[142] In the literature, it seems that many simply assume the two are synonymous. Saying that true belief is the primary epistemic goal is to simply endorse the idea that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good. I have kept them apart, however, in order to keep the distinction clear. However, I take it that what we ought to be aiming at as agents is just whatever the fundamental epistemic good in question is.

[143] I prefer to use "primary epistemic goal", but one could just as easily ask why true belief is the "fundamental epistemic good". Whatever phrase one uses, they are going to be defending, ultimately, the same thing.

[144] Pritchard, "The Value Problem for Knowledge", 14.

[145] For a good brief overview of knowledge first epistemology see Timothy Williamson, "Knowledge First Epistemology" in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* ed. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Routledge, 2011), 208-218.

of epistemic value. For example, one could argue that knowledge, justification, understanding, wisdom, etc., all have value and truth is just one of the many epistemic goods among others.[146]

However, despite the varying opinions mentioned above, there is still good reason to think that true belief is the primary epistemic goal. This is because the relationship that other goods, such as justification and knowledge, play with regard to true belief seem to be better understood when the other goods in question play an instrumental role with regard to true belief. Consider the following:

(4) We want justified beliefs because we want true beliefs.

Note that (4) seems much more plausible than

(5) We want true beliefs because we want justified beliefs.[147]

The relationship doesn't seem to follow in (5). We don't in fact desire true beliefs because we desire justified beliefs. The causal relationship doesn't seem to work in the way that is suggested by (5). Note that a denial of (5) isn't suggesting that justified beliefs have no value; rather, what is being claimed is simply that its value is instrumental to true belief. Given this, the true belief goal seems to be more basic than the goal of have justified beliefs. In other words, true belief seems more fundamental. I think there is a similar argument that can be made with regard to other goods such as knowledge and its relation to true belief. Consider the following:

(6) As epistemic agents, we ought to be concerned with maximizing true beliefs and minimizing false ones.

(7) Knowledge gives us the best chance of minimizing false beliefs while maximizing true beliefs.

(8) Thus, knowledge is merely epistemically instrumentally valuable with regard to true belief.

If we accept the idea that was put forward above—that we want justified beliefs because we want true beliefs—then the above seems to follow as well. Knowledge is simply a kind of true belief, namely one that is justified.[148] Thus, knowledge and justification play the same epistemic role with

[146] This is the line that Kvanvig takes. See "Truth is not the Primary Epistemic Good" in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, 286-295.

[147] This analogy is from David, "Truth as the Primary Epistemic Goal" 303.

[148] I am aware of course that knowledge isn't simply justified true belief. Perhaps think of justification here as "Getteir proof" justification. I take it that you can plug in another epistemic condition so long as the

regard to true belief. They both help us achieve the primary goal of maximizing true belief and minimizing false ones.[149]

Where then, does this leave us with regard to the swamping problem? If we accept that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good, I think there is a very easy solution to the swamping problem.[150] Here is a recap of what is going on in the swamping problem:

(1) Once the fundamental epistemic good in question is attained, no epistemic property that is merely instrumental can be added to confer additional value.

(2) The fundamental epistemic good is true belief.

(3) Thus, given (1) and (2), knowledge is of no more value than true belief.

We have tried, unsuccessfully however, to argue that the problem with the swamping problem is (2). With the swamping problem still unanswered, however, what other options are available? The solution, I think, is to argue that the conjunction of (1) and (2) do not entail (3). As was mentioned above, the swamping problem is really a thesis about epistemic value. And (2) is simply a specific claim about epistemic value, namely veritism.
Thus, what one should conclude from the swamping problem isn't

(3) given (1) and (2), knowledge is of no more value than true belief,

but rather,

(3*) given (1) and (2), knowledge is no more *epistemically* valuable than true belief.[151]

And of course (3*) is something a veritist can happily concede. Thus, we now have a revised swamping problem:

(1) Once the fundamental epistemic good in question is attained, no epistemic property that is merely instrumental can be added to confer additional value.

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condition is instrumental to the epistemic goal of true belief (e.g., such as warrant, a true belief that is the result of a reliable process, etc.).

[149] I realize here that I have not given a robust defense of veritism. However, what is presented should suffice given that I mainly concerned (see argument in the paragraph below) with showing that conceding (2) doesn't ultimately present a problem for showing that knowledge is of more *general* value than true belief. The issue with the swamping problem, as will be discussed below, is with epistemic value and not general value.

[150] This solution that I give below is first offered by Pritchard in "Veritism and the Swamping Problem", *(forthcoming)*.

[151] See Pritchard "Veritism and the Swamping Problem", 15.

(2) The fundamental epistemic good is true belief.

(3*) Given (1) and (2), knowledge is no more *epistemically* valuable than true belief

It now appears that we have a harmless conclusion for the thesis that we are trying to defend—namely that knowledge is of distinctive value. This conclusion should come as no surprise since all through the discussion of the swamping problem we have been primarily concerned with epistemic value as opposed to distinctive value.

With the real force of the swamping problem settled, we are now in a position to once again discuss the question of the general value of knowledge. And as discussed above, the real question that we need to answer is what makes knowledge distinctively valuable over and above anything that falls short of knowledge.

3.6 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for several things. First, I have argued that the question of the value of knowledge isn't so easily answered. I identified four different questions that might be asked concerning the value of knowledge. While each question brings different possible answers to the question of the value of knowledge, I conclude that the question we really need to answer is why knowledge is taken to be distinctively valuable (as described in the tertiary value problem above). If we can find an answer to this question, then we can answer the other relevant value questions that are discussed.

However, before demonstrating the final value of knowledge, I argue that we need to address the swamping problem. I argued that what is really at stake in the swamping problem is epistemic value and not distinctive value. Thus, if one concedes that true belief is the fundamental epistemic good (as I do), then this poses little problem for the belief that knowledge is of distinct value over and above that which falls short of knowledge. In the end, I conclude that the swamping problem alone does not rule out any potential solution we might have for the tertiary value problem.

The next chapter will be primarily concerned, then, with providing an answer to the tertiary value problem. I begin the next chapter with a discussion of Greco's achievement thesis and argue that if this account is successful, the reformed epistemologist is in a good position to adopt the achievement thesis in order to account for the value of knowledge.

§4 Knowledge as a Cognitive Achievement

4.1 Introduction

In §3, it was noted that any account of the nature of knowledge ought to provide an account of the value of knowledge.[152] It was further noted that in order to account for the value of knowledge, we must account for the intuition that knowledge is of distinctive value (i.e., distinctive in kind and not simply degree). Thus, we have identified the tertiary value problem as the attempt to show that knowledge has distinctive value over anything that falls short of knowledge. Further, the kind of distinct value that knowledge has, it is argued, is final value. (Something is said to be finally valuable (i.e., non-instrumentally valuable) because of its relational properties of the object in question.) How, then, does one go about arguing for the final value of knowledge (and in turn, answer the tertiary value problem)? One of the most plausible and eloquent accounts of the final value of knowledge is offered by the virtue epistemologist. Put simply, here is the argument:

1. Achievements are finally valuable.
2. Knowledge is a kind of achievement.

Therefore,

3. Knowledge is finally valuable.[153]

The argument is quite simple: knowledge is a *cognitive* achievement and thus finally valuable.[154] This, then, is the distinctive nature of knowledge. Mere true belief, as we will discuss below, isn't

[152] Various sections of this chapter and chapter 5 will appear in a forthcoming publication "A Robust Reformed Epistemology" in *God, Mind, and Knowledge* ed. Andrew Moore (Ashgate: 2013).

[153] For a good summary of the overall position see Greco, "The Value Problem", in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Routledge, 2011), 219-231.

[154] An important point of discussion here is the nature of wicked achievements. If I claim, for example, that achievements are finally valuable am I really claiming that all achievements are finally valuable? Claiming that wicked achievements have final value seems counter intuitive. Suppose there is some crafty murderer who chooses his victims based on the difficulty of fulfilling the murder. Each victim, then, is chosen as a result of detailed planning and the culprit demonstrates great skill in each crime that is committed. The criminal even overcomes all kinds of obstacles on the way to committing his crime (e.g., he avoids security and detection). Two questions arise as a result of this example. First, do we consider it an achievement? And second, if it is an achievement, is it the kind of success that has final value? Concerning the first question, the answer seems obvious—especially given the way the example is set up. After all, the agent certainly demonstrates the relevant abilities that are necessary for a genuine achievement. But does this mean that we need to say that this kind of achievement (namely, a wicked achievement) is finally valuable? One response to this might be to qualify the final value of achievements. In other words, I might claim that (1) excludes wicked achievements.

always the result of a cognitive achievement given its compatibility with luck. Knowledge, as the argument goes, is always the result of a cognitive achievement.[155] In other words, where there is knowledge there is a cognitive achievement. The crucial part of the argument of course comes in identifying and understanding (2). And as we will see below, this isn't nearly as straightforward as one would assume.

I begin the chapter by discussing two ways one might understand the nature of achievements:

(A1) Achievements are successes from ability.

(A2) Achievements are successes from ability that are creditable to the agent.

Both, I conclude, are insufficient in explaining the nature of achievements. I then offer another definition (A3) and then discuss a slightly modified version in (A4):

(A3) Achievements are successes from ability that are *primarily* creditable to the agent.

(A4) Achievements are successes because of abilities that are *primarily* creditable to the agent.

Thus, in saying that achievements are finally valuable all I am claiming is that the *nature* of achievements are such that they are generally finally valuable. This claim, then, seems consistent with the idea that not all achievements, however, have final value. Another way to respond to the problem of wicked achievements is claim that while all achievements are finally valuable, the value can be overridden by other factors. An example by Pritchard illustrates this nicely:

> that something is beautiful is always a consideration in its favour, even if sometimes the all things considered value of a beautiful thing is quite low, perhaps negligible or of negative value, because of other factors (e.g., that a child's life depends on the destruction of the artifact in question). Some things certainly are of pro tanto value in this way, and finally valuable things seem to be an obvious case in point in this respect. If we had to destroy a beautiful art work because a child's life depended on it, then while we would no doubt grant that this was the right thing to do all things considered, we would surely also recognise that in destroying this art work we are destroying something precious, something of final value. That is, we would recognise that we are destroying something of final value whose value has not been neutralised by the value of the child's life. (Pritchard, "Achievements, Luck and Value." *Think* 25 (2010): 1-12.)

Returning to the example above, then, we do have a case of a finally valuable genuine achievement. However, the wickedness of the achievement overrides the final value in question. In the end, whichever response is chosen, it's important to note that the claim that achievements are finally valuable isn't undermined by the problem of wicked achievements. In any case, when discussing the final value of achievements this does not include wicked achievements.

[155] As we will discuss below, though, it might be the case that a cognitive achievement while necessary for knowledge, is not always a sufficient for knowledge.

The problem with (A4), I argue, is that the notion of "primary credit" is inadequately explained and, further, (A4) doesn't account for the notion of joint achievements. (A4), then, serves as an adequate understanding of achievements so far as individual achievements are concerned *and* so long as the notion of "primary credit" is sufficiently explained. I then give an account of what "primary credit" amounts to and argue that achievements are primarily creditable iff the agent is responsible for nearby failures. This explains a number of difficult cases, I argue, including the Barney case.

Further, in section 4.6, I offer an account of joint achievements and argue that joint achievements represent cases of achievements where one individual agent isn't primarily creditable for the success in question. On joint achievements, then, two or more agents are creditable for the success in question. I give numerous examples of a joint achievement below. Last, concerning achievements, I discuss those achievements where the primary credit is undermined by luck. I argue that these cases (e.g., Barney cases) are still achievements, but not the kind of achievements that are compatible with knowledge. The only kinds of achievement that are compatible with knowledge are those achievements that are primarily or jointly creditable to the agent. This has important implications for how we understand and answer the tertiary value problem.

4.2 Achievements: An Initial Assessment

Before considering whether knowledge ought to be regarded as a cognitive achievement, we need to get clear on what exactly it means to say that something is an achievement. This is not nearly as straightforward as it might appear. In ordinary language we often think of achievements in different ways. Intuitively, for example, it seems that what counts as an achievement will depend on a variety of factors. Some factors to consider would be environment, age, or even natural abilities. These are all relevant factors when considering whether something counts is an achievement.[156] For example, walking on an uneven surface should pose little problem for an adult who walks on a regular basis. A child, however, who is just learning to walk will find it difficult to walk on an uneven surface. Yet, if the child does successfully complete the walk, we tend to think that this counts as an achievement (despite the fact that an adult completing the same task would not be considered as a genuine achievement). The reason for thinking the small child ought to be credited with an achievement, perhaps, is that many tend to think of

[156] I will discuss some of these issues below.

achievements as overcoming some obstacle. It's not really an achievement for the adult to walk on the uneven surface because it takes so little effort. The child, on the other hand, has demonstrated great ability by overcoming the uneven surface. Given this, does this mean that achievements are only considered genuine if the agent involved overcomes some obstacle along the way? These issues are not without controversy and we'll need to take each relevant point in turn.

Starting with a fairly straightforward definition, let's say that an achievement is success from ability.[157]

(A1) Achievements are successes from ability.

A well-known example from Sosa illustrates (A1) nicely.[158] Let's say that Archie the archer has the goal of hitting a certain target using his bow and arrow. There are three possible outcomes of having this goal. First, Archie can achieve the goal because of his abilities. Second, Archie can achieve the goal because of luck. And third, Archie can achieve the goal both because of his abilities and because of some other element (e.g., luck). Dealing with the first, let's say that Archie does in fact hit the target because of his abilities. According to (A1), this qualifies as a genuine achievement given that Archie is successful in hitting the target because of his abilities. What explains Archie's success is his ability as an archer.

Considering the second possibility, Archie takes aim and fires his arrow. The arrow is off target, but a gust of *unexpected* wind puts the arrow on course to hit the target. This, however, does not meet the condition set forth in (A1). While it's clearly the case that Archie has achieved his goal of hitting the target, he does so not because of his relevant abilities but because of the involvement of some external factor over which Archie has no control. Thus, given that the attainment of the goal in question fails to meet the criteria set out in (A1), we would not consider the attainment of this goal to be an achievement. What this means, then, is that an agent can be said to achieve something only if the achievement comes by way of some ability that can be credited to the agent. While Archie is successful in hitting the target, it is not, however, a success that is creditable to his ability as an archer.

Possibility three, however, is slightly different in that Archie hits the target both because of his ability and because of some external factor. Let's assume in this case that Archie is an

[157] See John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[158] Ernie Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (Vol. 1), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 2. See also Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value", 28-29.

expert archer. He always takes the environment into account (e.g., weather conditions, distance, etc.) and usually achieves his goal of hitting the target with ease. Thus, he takes careful aim and shoots his arrow. The arrow is headed straight for the target. However, a gust of *unexpected* wind blows the arrow exactly 5 degrees off course. Yet, surprisingly, another gust of *unexpected* wind blows the arrow 5 degrees back in the direction it came so that the arrow is exactly on its original course. Does this count as an achievement? After all, the way the example is described, had Archie's arrow not been on course to hit the target, it wouldn't have hit the target. Thus, had Archie not been an expert archer whose arrow was originally heading for the target, the goal would never have been realized. So his abilities play an important role here. Perhaps intuitions will vary in this particular case. However, it does seem clear that what is happening in this case is different from what is going on in the first case where Archie's success is clearly a genuine achievement (according to (A1) anyway).

I'm going to set aside the above example for now. The reason for this is that there are correlating features between this case and cases that might undermine the knowledge-as-achievement (KA) thesis. Thus, we can better answer the above example once all the relevant cases are discussed.[159] However, the above examples necessitate a reevaluation of (A1). Achievements need to be more than just success from ability. Achievements need to be understood as those successes from ability that are *creditable* to the agent. Archie's successful achievement of hitting the target, for example, needs to be such that we can credit the success of his achievement to his agency.

(A2) Achievements are successes from ability that are creditable to the agent.

While (A2) is an improvement on (A1) in that it clarifies where the credit for the achievement ought to be primarily focused, it does raise some other questions as well. One question, for example, is to what extent the achievement ought to be creditable to the agent. Does the achievement need to be *primarily* creditable to the agent or merely *partially* creditable to the agent?

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[159] What I will argue below is that this does count as a genuine achievement given that Archie, in this case, would be responsible for nearby failures. Put another way, in some possible world where Archie failed to hit the target, in this particular case, his lack of success would be a direct result of his abilities as an archer (despite the fact that Archie is an expert archer, in some close possible world he fails he would fail to hit the target). Note that this will only apply in cases where some external factor ensures the goal is met with success. Thus, in the second example, where there is only one unexpected gust of wind, the above condition would not apply.

Pritchard argues that what we want from an understanding of an achievement is that the cognitive success (true belief that comes about as the result of a cognitive achievement) be *primarily* creditable.

> In particular, we need to make a distinction between a true belief being *of credit* to an agent, in the sense that the agent is deserving of some sort of praise for holding this true belief, and the true belief being *primarily creditable* to the agent, in the sense that it is to some substantive degree down to her agency that she holds a true belief.[160]

Riggs, in a more ambiguous tone, claims that

> what we have to do in order to be responsible for some outcome is: enough. There is not some stable threshold of effort or determination or skill that must be superseded on my part before it is reasonable to say that I did such-and-such. I simply have to do enough to bring it about. If the world cooperates by making it easy, so much the better It would be silly to require that someone do more than was necessary to bring about some end in order for it to be attributable to them that they did so.[161]

Sosa, in a discussion on the nature of testimony and credit, takes somewhat of a middle ground:

> If we think of animal knowledge as apt belief and of belief as apt when correct attributably to a competence, then the fullest of credit often belongs to a group, even a motley group. Seated in the group collectively is a competence whose complex exercise leads through testimonial links to the correctness of one's present belief. The correctness of one's belief is still attributable in part to a competence seated in oneself individually, but the credit that one earns will be partial at best.[162]

What should we make of these three understandings of achievements? For now, I think we can ignore the proposal offered by Riggs. While Riggs is attempting to answer the same question as Pritchard and Sosa, his concerns seem better suited to a discussion on the distinction between strong and weak achievements.[163] As such, we will reserve this discussion until later in the essay. The issue, then, is between primary and partial credit.

4.3 Primary Credit vs. Partial Credit

The issue of primary credit vs. partial credit arose from a discussion concerning cases of testimonial knowledge where it was argued that the agent had acquired knowledge in absence of a

[160] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value", 40.

[161] Wayne Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit" *Synthese* 169 (2009), 215.

[162] Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (Vol. 1), 94-95

[163] Riggs is particularly concerned, as is Sosa, with the nature of testimonial knowledge. However, there is some confusion in the final part of the essay concerning the nature of easy achievements and its relationship to testimonial knowledge. The issue of easy achievements, however, is a separate issue from the one we are currently concerned with. What we are asking is to what extent does the ability of the agent need to explain the cognitive success. As we will see later, easy achievements do not undermine the notion of primary credit.

genuine achievement.[164] Thus, it seemed to follow that we had cases of knowledge where credit for the true belief was not attributable to the agent. This observation is important given that we are attempting to answer the tertiary value problem—that knowledge has distinctive value over anything that falls short of knowledge. Thus, if we have a cognitive success without knowledge, and the value of knowledge is explained in terms of a cognitive success, then it's not clear that knowledge is in fact any more valuable than anything that falls short of it. However, as I want to get clear on the nature of achievements before discussing its relation to knowledge and value, I will return to this specific problem later in the chapter when discussing cases of testimonial knowledge.

Returning to the definition of achievements, then, what arose from the issues surrounding the nature of achievements and testimonial knowledge is an important distinction between an achievement being *of credit* (partially creditable or deserving some credit) and an achievement being *primarily creditable* (the achievement being due in large part to the abilities of the agent). Let me begin by saying that it seems clear that there are very good reasons to think that what we want from an understanding of achievements is that they be primarily creditable. First, by weakening the notion of credit we, unwillingly perhaps, open the door to a wide range of cases that are problematic for the KA thesis.[165] In other words, if we allow for partial credit (in order to support our thesis) in some cases, it will be necessary to allow for partial credit in all analogous cases. And this might prove problematic for Gettier-type cases. Further, if achievements are thought to be valuable, then it seems that it would derive its value only from those successes that are significantly due to our abilities as an agent. We value achievements because of the effort, determination, and demonstration of abilities. Allowing for partial credit

[164] Riggs is one exception. See Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit, 209. Related, there are two important papers by John Greco and Jennifer Lackey that started the discussion on testimony. See Jennifer Lackey, "Knowledge and Credit", *Philosophical Studies* 142:27-42 (2009) and John Greco, "The Nature of Ability and the Purpose of Knowledge", *Philosophical Issues* 17:57-69 (2007). Pritchard, in discussing the testimonial case, makes an important distinction between an achievement being *primarily* creditable and an achievement being *of credit*. Something is primarily creditable when the goal in question is attained *because of* the agent's ability. In other words, an achievement is *primarily* creditable when the achievement is due in large part to the abilities of the agent. See Pritchard "Knowledge and Final Value", 40-41. However, I take it that what is also going on in the distinction between *of credit* and *primary credit* is that something can be *of credit* when the agent deserves at least partial credit for the achievement. And, as noted above, the agent deserves *primary* credit when the achievement is due in large part to the abilities of the agent. I think this is a more natural way to understand the distinction. I discuss this in more detail in sections 4.6 and 4.7 with respect to testimonial knowledge.

[165] More on this in the following sections.

cheapens, in a sense, what we normally expect from those who have achieved something as a result of their abilities. The following example will illustrate this preference nicely:

> **Mt. Everest**: Edmund and Didier both have a desire to reach the top of Mount Everest. The primary goal, then, of both Edmund and Didier is to reach the peak. Edmund, who has been training for some time, successfully climbs Mount Everest by starting at the base. Didier, on the other hand, realizes his goal by taking a short and painless helicopter ride to the summit.

What's clear is that both have achieved their goal. However, while it is perhaps valuable to reach the top of Mount Everest (e.g., you are at the highest point on the planet), surely the person who has reached the summit of Mount Everest by starting at the base has achieved something more significant than the person who takes a helicopter to the top. The reason for this is that Edmund clearly has reached his goal because of his abilities. Didier, on the other hand, has reached his goal perhaps only *partially* because of his abilities. The reason why we value the achievement of Edmund has to do with the effort and abilities on display.

Not only has Edmund achieved something more significant in terms of value, it's not entirely clear that Didier has actually achieved anything *significant*. Thus, in terms of value, we value the effort and ability of the person who started at the base because we value the effort it takes to achieve this particular success more than the mere attainment of the success. And while Didier has successfully reached his goal, the success is not due to his abilities in any *significant* way. The credit, in the case of Didier, is due to the helicopter and her pilot. And not, as it were, to the abilities of Didier. Edmund, on the other hand, has successfully climbed Mount Everest *because of* his abilities. What explains the success in question, then, are the abilities of Edmund.

Now, there is some ambiguity in this example that needs to be clarified. First, we are strictly speaking about achievements in terms of value. As of yet, we are not saying that Didier's success is not an achievement. What is being claimed is that in understanding achievements, they are often considered valuable when the success is primarily creditable. Despite this, however, one might still think that Didier has met the conditions that are set forth in defining an achievement. After all, he does deserve *some* credit for reaching the summit. He chose a helicopter instead of a car, he might have chosen a clear day instead a stormy windy day, or he might have chosen an expert pilot as opposed to a novice. These things are all certainly of credit to Didier.

However, it could be argued that what we want from an understanding of the nature of achievements is an account where the success in question is primarily a result of Didier's agency—one where the success in question is primarily due to his ability. In other words, what

we want from a definition of achievement is one where the success in question produces a result that is *primarily creditable* to the agent.[166] Didier, for the most part, is a passive bystander. And we expect those who claim to have achieved something to be active throughout the process. In this case, Didier is not an active participant when it comes to him successfully reaching his goal. In the above example, then, only Edmund's manner of reaching the peak can be said to be *primarily creditable* to him. In the case of Didier, his success is primarily due to the proper functioning of something external to him—namely, the helicopter.

Keep in mind, of course, that it is still *partially* creditable (of credit) to Didier that he reached the top of Mount Everest, but it is not *primarily* creditable to him as an agent (in other words, it's not *because of* his ability). It's of credit to Didier because he still exercised some of his abilities to reach the top. And had he not used some of his abilities, he never would have reached the top (e.g., the ability to recognize that he needed an expert pilot as opposed to a novice). Nevertheless, it might be argued that it is still not the kind of success we would normally call an achievement given that his success was not attained *because of* his abilities.[167]

Thus, prima facie anyway, the notion of partial credit lacks the explanatory power that comes with a definition of achievement that requires primary credit. The notion of primary credit seems to explain why we value achievements in the first place. This leads us to a more refined definition of achievements:

> (A3) Achievements are successes from ability that are *primarily* creditable to the agent.

From (A3), it follows that any account of achievements where the success in question is not primarily creditable to the agent, the agent lacks a genuine achievement. This explanation does well to explain what is going on in the case of Didier and why one might believe that a helicopter ride to the top of Everest is not a genuine achievement.

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[166] For more on this see Duncan Pritchard, "Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology," *The Journal of Philosophy* 109 (2012): 247-279.

[167] Another way to think about this is that there are really two successes in question here. First, there is the goal of picking an expert pilot and then there is the goal to reach the summit because of the abilities of the expert pilot. In choosing the expert pilot (and assuming Didier successfully reaches the top), the agent exercises his relevant abilities (the ability to recognize what it takes to reach the summit of Everest with a helicopter and choosing an appropriate pilot). In this case, then, we have a genuine achievement. However, once Didier assumes a passive role inside the helicopter, he becomes a passive participant to the success in question. Thus, the only one who gets credit for the success of reaching the summit is the pilot (and of course in cases where Didier is the pilot this would count as a genuine achievement).

However, this is not the whole story concerning partial credit as it has significant explanatory power in other cases. Consider the following example:

> **Emie:** Let's image that there is a small child named Emie. Emie can walk on her own most of the time, but like most children she has trouble when the ground is uneven or littered with obstacles (e.g., rocks). In other words, under normal conditions Emie's ability to walk is apparent. However, the environment isn't always a friendly one and she now finds herself on a trail that is uneven and strewn with large rocks. However, she still needs to go from point A to point B. She stands to her feet and wobbles along. As her father, I notice that she isn't going to make it on her own so I stand behind her. I catch her when she falls and hold her arms as she navigates the more difficult obstacles on the path. In due course, however, Emie arrives at her destination.

Now, Emie's successful arrival at point B isn't *primarily* due to her abilities. In fact, it seems that her success could be creditable to me. Without me, she wouldn't have reached her destination. Despite Emie's lack of primary credit, however, I think the intuition here is that for Emie this is still an achievement; regardless of the fact that her success is not primarily creditable to her agency. Perhaps the explanation here is that Emie has found herself in an *excessively* hostile environment. Thus, all that is required in such an environment is some exercise of the relevant ability for that success to be counted as an achievement.[168] Moreover, there is another example that seemingly reflects poorly on the criteria for achievements that is offered in (A3). Consider the following example offered by Greco:[169]

> **Wayne**: Wayne plays center forward for a local football team. His teammate Ashley is a speedy winger for the same team. As it typically happens, Ashley is the creative player who makes possible all the goals that Wayne scores. This occasion is no different. Ashley dribbles the ball past several players and Wayne nods home the sublime cross that Ashley delivered from the wing. Wayne celebrates his achievement with his teammates as they congratulate him.

The above example is typical of many football matches. The one who scores the goals seems to get all the praise despite not having done most of the work that led up to the goal. The reason, I think, is that the agent (Wayne in this case) seems have achieved something *because of* his abilities. This is in spite of the fact that Ashley, the speedy winger, seems to deserve at least some of the credit for the goal. If Ashley, on the other hand, had crossed the ball and it bounced off Wayne's head while he wasn't paying attention, the way in which we view the success in question would be

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[168] This argument will be important in the next chapter when we discuss whether knowledge of God is a genuine cognitive achievement. Thus, the same argument concerning excessively hostile environments might apply to our knowledge of God. Perhaps the human condition is so severe that the environment in which we as humans find ourselves is *excessively* hostile in relation to our cognitive ability. Thus, the cognitive success in question need not be *primarily* creditable to the agent, but only *partially* creditable to the agent.

[169] Greco, "The Nature of Ability and the Purpose of Knowledge", 64-65

quite different. In this case, we wouldn't consider the goal that Wayne scored to be a genuine achievement. He is involved, but not in the right way.

Perhaps the reason we think that Wayne's goal is a genuine achievement in the original case (even if both Ashley and Wayne are partially creditable), is because, as Greco puts it, "credit for success, gained in cooperation with others, is not swamped by the performance of others. It's not even swamped by the outstanding performance of others. So long as one's own efforts and abilities are appropriately involved, one deserves credit for the success in question." [170]

It would seem, then, that we have two counter examples to the idea that the success in question must be primarily creditable if the agent is to be credited with a genuine achievement. In both cases, it seems that partial credit is all one needs in certain cases. While I agree that the Emie case is problematic for (A3), Greco's example might turn out to be harmless. This is because it's not clear that we don't have two distinct achievements in the football analogy. In Greco's football example we have two agents with two very distinct roles to play. Ashley, the speedy winger, has the goal of crossing the ball in order that Wayne might score the goal. Wayne, the burly center forward, has the goal being in the right position so that he can be on the end of a great cross in order to score the goal. Each individual, in this case, seems to be primarily creditable for the respective success in question. While there is cooperation, we determine the success of Wayne's desired end (to score goals) based on the actual outcome and whether the outcome is primarily down to his abilities. In this case, it is down to Wayne's ability. He was in the right position and headed the ball into the goal. Ashley's goal, however, is to move quickly past his opponents in order to provide a great cross. There are two different goals and thus two different achievements. And each of the agents in this case can be primarily creditable for their achievement. Further, if Wayne failed to score the goal from a great cross, Ashley still achieved the success in question—namely, providing a great cross. [171]

However, while I find this explanation plausible, it's not clear that Ashley and Wayne couldn't have the same end. [172] One might be able to conjure up an example where the goal in question is the same for both of the players involved and their mutual cooperation is essential.[173]

[170] Ibid., 65.

[171] I will return to this example later in the chapter when discussing Lackey's testimony case.

[172] Provided we set up the example in a slightly different manner. The way in which Greco sets up the example, however, it does seem that there are two distinct goals at play (the aim of setting up goal by providing a great cross and the aim of scoring the goal from the great cross).

[173] Consider two center forwards who both have the goal of scoring. One is driving forward toward to goal and just as he is about to shoot, he trips and inadvertently kicks the ball in the path of the other forward

Rather than worry about the many possible examples, we still have the Emie case which still poses a problem for (A3). Thus, we need another solution in order to retain the idea that primary credit is a necessary condition for a genuine achievement. However, the notion of primary credit has important explanatory power and we are not in position to give this up as of yet. Thus, for the time being, we will move to an equally important topic: the relationship between knowledge and achievements.

4.4 Knowledge-as-Achievement Thesis

Thus far, we have examined the nature of achievements and have tentatively concluded that an achievement is a success from ability that is *primarily* creditable to the agent. However, there is at least one, possibly two, counter examples that might challenge the notion that *primary* credit is a necessary condition for a genuine achievement. Yet, we are not in position to reject the notion of primary credit as it has important explanatory power. The aim of this section, and those remaining in this chapter, will be to provide a more detailed understanding of the nature of achievements by analyzing the debate surrounding the "knowledge-as-achievement" (KA) thesis. In doing this, we will then be in position to better offer an account of both the nature of achievements and the value of knowledge.[174]

The KA thesis is most strongly defended by those who offer a virtue theoretical account of knowledge. The robust virtue epistemologists, as they are sometimes called, offer an account of knowledge that is the direct result of one's cognitive ability. Or, put another way, the true belief comes about *because of* the agent's ability. As we are ultimately concerned with the final value of knowledge, it will be useful to see how this understanding of knowledge relates to the

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who slots the ball into the goal. What's interesting here is that the player who scored didn't really do any of the hard work that led up to the goal. This is similar to Greco's case, except that it might difficult to claim, as I did above, that the two players have two distinct goals in mind (and thus two different achievements). Further, there is an element of luck involved in that the player didn't intend to pass the ball. His aim, in this example anyway, was to shoot the ball in order to score.

[174] I am specifically concerned here with the virtue theoretic account; or as it is sometimes called, robust virtue epistemology. While there are a variety of important virtue theoretic accounts of knowledge, I am primarily concerned with Greco's account and to some extent the one offered by Riggs and Sosa. The reason for this is that these accounts, especially Greco's, link in nicely with the value question (which is ultimately what we are concerned with). It will be important to note here that while I will discuss the virtue theoretic solution to the value problem, I am in no way committing myself to this account of the nature of knowledge. What I am committing myself to, however, is merely that if knowledge is an achievement, then the reformed epistemologist is well placed to offer an account of the value of knowledge (in this case, specifically religious beliefs like the belief that God exists). The claim I make can be much weaker than this as well. Even if it turns out that not *all* knowledge is an achievement and only some instances of knowledge are finally valuable, I can still show why knowledge of God, for example, is finally valuable.

final value of knowledge. The KA thesis, as it relates to final value, can be summarized in the following way:

(1) Achievements are finally valuable.
(2) Knowledge is a kind of achievement.

Therefore,

(3) Knowledge is finally valuable.[175]

The central idea, then, is that knowledge is a cognitive achievement, achievements are finally valuable, and thus knowledge is finally valuable. If successful, robust virtue epistemology (RVE) provides a compelling account of how relationship between knowledge, achievements, and value. What makes knowledge valuable is the effort and ability it takes to achieve knowledge. Thus, not only is knowledge a result of our cognitive abilities, it might also explain the intuition that knowledge is distinctively valuable.

Before discussing some recent critiques of this account (especially with regard to (2)), it's important to highlight its obvious appeal. First, it's important to keep in mind that on the robust virtue account, true belief must be the result of the agent's cognitive ability. In other words, true belief is formed *because of* the agent's cognitive ability.[176] There is an important causal connection, then, between the ability of the agent and the true belief. Given this, (RVE) and the KA thesis can explain a number of difficult Gettier cases.[177] Consider the following well-known Gettier cases:

> **Nogot**: S believes that her co-worker Nogot owns a Ford. S has many good reasons for believing that Nogot owns a Ford. For example, Nogot has told her that he owns a Ford. Thus, on the basis of such evidence, S forms the belief that someone in the office where she works owns a Ford. However, it is not

[175] For a good summary, see Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value", 31. See also Greco, "The Value Problem", 224-225.

[176] Greco takes *because of* to mean that S's ability explains *why* S has the true belief. There is an important causal connection that Greco wants to make between the true belief that is gained and the ability it takes on the part of the agent to get the true belief. See Greco, "Achieving Knowledge", 74. However, as some have pointed out (see Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value", 27.), it's difficult to see how one should understand *because of* in this context. Should it be in understood in the strong sense or weak sense? In footnote 5 of this chapter, I pointed out that *because of* reflects that idea that the agent be primarily creditable. While this is the idea that we are working with at the moment, I will offer a different understanding of this concept below. I suggest that the notion of *primary credit* is useful, but overly restrictive. If a true belief is gained *because of* the ability of the agent, then, as I will argue, in some close possible world where the goal is not attained, the agent must be responsible for nearby failures. This, I think, is how one should understand primary credit.

[177] See Greco, *Achieving Knowledge,* 71-75.

> that case that Nogot owns a Ford. Yet, some in the office, Havit, does in fact own a Ford. S's belief that someone in her office owns a Ford is therefore true. [178]
>
> **Sheep Case**: S sees what he takes to be a sheep in the field. S knows that the field he is looking at is owned by Jones who commonly lets his sheep graze in the field. S therefore forms the belief that there is a sheep in the field. On this occasion, though, what S is looking at is in fact a sheep dog that looks a lot like an actual sheep. Unbeknownst to S, however, there is a sheep in the field that is hiding behind a rock. Thus, S's belief that there is a sheep in the field is true. [179]

From these examples, then, it's not difficult to see how the KA thesis can solve these important Gettier cases. In each case, the agent in question fails to acquire the true belief as direct result of her agency. As Riggs puts it, the true belief that is present is not attributable to the agent in question. [180] In both cases, the agent comes to the true belief in a way that fails to be creditable to the agent's epistemic faculties. Consider the sheep case. The agent has acquired the appropriate belief, but not *because of* his cognitive abilities. His normally reliable faculties led him to believe that there was a sheep in the field while he was in fact looking at a dog. So the epistemic goal in question was achieved (e.g., he gained a true belief about the sheep in the field), but not as a result of his cognitive abilities. It was simply a matter of luck. The same goes for the first case. There is no connection between the true belief that was achieved and the cognitive abilities of the agent.

For the robust virtue epistemologist, then, the benefit of such an account is obvious. The account seems to explain a whole host of important Gettier problems and it provides an answer to the intuition that knowledge is of distinctive value. However, there are important challenges to (RVE) and the (KA) thesis on which it depends. Many of these objections come in the form of a rejection of (2).[181] With this in mind, we will discuss the important challenges related to (2).

Two things to note about the KA thesis. First, recall that the KA thesis is supposed to solve the value problem. Specifically, it is supposed to answer the tertiary problem—that knowledge has distinctive value over and above anything that falls short of knowledge. In order for this to be the case, knowledge must always be a cognitive achievement and cognitive achievements must always amount to knowledge. On the RVE account, a cognitive achievement

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[178] Keith Lehrer, "Knowledge, Truth, and Evidence," *Analysis* 25 (1965): 168-175

[179] Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977), 105.

[180] Riggs's main motivation was to find a theory of knowledge that properly addressed the issue of luck. He defines knowledge as a true belief that is attributable to the cognitive agent. See Riggs, "Two Problems of East Credit", 203.

[181] Though Pritchard also questions the validity of (3). See "The Nature and Value of Knowledge", 66-73. This will be discussed in the section on weak achievements.

is both a necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge. This being the case, we ought to understand the KA thesis in the strong sense (that it is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge) and not the weak sense (that it is merely a necessary condition). Thus, in order for the KA thesis to accomplish what it hopes, it needs to address problematic cases of knowledge without achievement *and* cases where there is an apparent achievement without knowledge.

Given this, I first will discuss whether there are cases that involve a cognitive achievement without knowledge; and second, discuss whether there are cases of knowledge that don't involve a cognitive achievement. If it turns out that either one of these claims is true, the (KA) thesis would need to be either revised considerably or abandoned all together if it is to answer the tertiary value problem.[182]

4.5 Achievements without Knowledge

Despite the obvious appeal of (RVE), however, there do seem to be cases where there are genuine cognitive achievements that don't amount to knowledge. This of course poses a serious problem for a holistic understanding of the KA thesis. Consider the following case offered by Pritchard:

> **Archie:** Archie is a skilled archer who, under normal conditions, successfully hits the target at which he aims. The goal in question is successful because of the ability of Archie. This counts as a genuine achievement. However, on Archie's next shot things are slightly different. Archie selects his target and successfully hits the target because of his skill. Yet, while Archie is successful because of his ability, he is unaware that there are force fields around all the other targets. This means, then, had he selected any other target he would have failed in his goal.

There are several things going on this example. First, we have two different cases. One where Archie successfully achieves the goal in question because of his ability. On the second account, Archie successfully achieves the goal in question because of his ability despite the fact the he could have easily failed. The problem, then, is with the second case. Archie is successful because of his ability and it seems that the success in question is primarily creditable to his agency. Pritchard lays out the problem with such an account of achievements clearly:

[182] Keep in mind that (2) of the KA thesis isn't directly undermined if there are cases of genuine achievements that don't amount to knowledge. The problem is that the RVE maintains that their account can answer the value problem (which, as we saw in the previous chapter, involves accounting for the value of knowledge over and above anything that falls short). If this is the case, it will, as stated above, need to address issues surrounding those cases where there is an achievement that does not amount to knowledge.

> The problem that cases like this pose for the robust virtue epistemologist is that if we allow Archie's success to count as an achievement, then we seem to be compelled to treat *cognitive* successes which are relevantly analogous as also being achievements. Given the KA thesis, however, this would mean that we would thereby be compelled to regard the cognitive achievement in question as knowledge, even despite the luck involved. [183]

In order to see why this is problematic, consider the following well-known 'Barney' case:

> **Barney:** Barney, unknowingly, is driving through barn façade county. In barn façade county all the barns are made to look like actual barns. Barney, however, happens to see the barn in barn façade county that is an actual barn. Thus, Barney forms the true belief that he has seen a genuine barn.

This Barney case, then, is supposed to be analogous to Pritchard's Archie case. In the Archie case, Archie is successful because of his ability. However, he could have easily failed as well (and his success was, in part, due to luck). In the Barney case, Barney is successful because of his cognitive ability. However, he could have easily failed as well (and his success was, in part, due to luck).[184] This being the case, Barney's true belief that there is a barn in front of him does not amount to knowledge given the element of luck that is involved. Pritchard's argument holds—there are cases of cognitive achievement that do not amount to knowledge.

How, then, should the robust virtue epistemologist respond to this claim? There are several interesting responses that might be made. First, you might claim that the Barney case is a genuine cognitive achievement *and* an instance of knowledge. Second, you might claim that there is a disanalogy between Pritchard's Archie case and the Barney case. On this line, you would concede that the Archie case is a genuine achievement while the Barney case isn't a cognitive achievement. There is a third option however. You might claim that neither the Archie case nor the Barney case represent genuine achievements.

Starting with the first option, one could just deny the idea that Barney doesn't have knowledge in this case. One could argue that there isn't knowledge undermining luck in this case and thus Barney does know that there is a barn in front of him. While this view isn't popular, it does have some support. Perhaps those motivated by such a response are inspired by the following example:

> **Fanny:** Fanny is an avid football fan. Every morning, she looks up the results of all the football games from the previous day on the internet. This particular morning, however, the computer in her office is broken. She leaves her office and wanders down the hall in hopes of finding a functional computer. As she walks by her colleague's office, her colleague is reading off the results from the previous day's matches. Unbeknownst to Fanny, though, her colleague has a list where all the scores except one are incorrect. Fanny

[183] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Final Value", 35.

[184] Note that I am taking it as a given that Barney does not have knowledge of the barn that is in front of him due to the element of luck that is involved. I will discuss this more below.

> only hears her colleague read off one score, but it's the one result she was desperate to know. And as it turns out, it was the one correct result on the list. Content by this, Fanny wanders back to her office.

The intuition here, I think, is that Fanny does know in this case. And yet, this seems to be analogous to the Barney case which most, rightly I think, reject as an instance of knowledge. Perhaps what is going on in cases like this is that there are several possible *different* instances of knowledge. In the Barney case, however, there is only one possible instance of knowledge—whether Barney sees a red barn. Yet, in the Fanny case, there is possible knowledge of the result of game a, game b, game c, etc. And Fanny wants to know the result of game b, which turns out to be the one correct result on the sheet. Thus, Fanny couldn't have easily been wrong about the result of game b in the same way that Barney could have easily been wrong about the red barn.

From this, it seems to follow that had Fanny's colleague read a list of varying results from the same game, then even if she had heard the correct result it wouldn't have been an instance of knowledge. For example, imagine the score in question is a match between Greece and England. Fanny really wants to know the result of this game. However, if we say that Fanny's colleague has a sheet with 10 different results of the same Greece/England match and Fanny walks by and happens to hear the correct one, then this wouldn't count as an instance of knowledge. In short, she doesn't know in this case because she could have been easily been wrong about the Greece/England match. And the colleague in question isn't a reliable source concerning the Greece/England match. This scenario, then, seems more analogous to Barney case.

However, if Fanny's colleague has a sheet with 10 *different* results from 10 *different* matches, and the scenario unfolds as initially described above, it seems that Fanny does know in this case because she couldn't have been easily wrong about the Greece/England score. The colleague in question is a reliable source about the Greece/England match. Thus, this counts as an instance of knowledge. Though, as mentioned above, this case is not analogous to the Barney case.

The second response is more interesting and it's the one offered by Greco.[185] Greco argues that there is a disanalogy between the Barney case and the Archie case offered by Pritchard. There are two steps in this argument. First, abilities need to be understood relative to the environment. Greco offers an example of Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter to illustrate this point. In claiming that Jeter has the ability to hit a baseball, we are merely saying that he has the ability to hit the baseball in conditions that are normal for baseball. So, for example, Jeter presumably lacks the ability to hit a baseball on the moon. However, if Jeter were able to hit a

[185] See Greco, "The Value Problem", 229.

baseball on the moon it would not be *because of* his ability. And given that our definition of achievement is success because of ability, then despite Jeter's accomplishment, it is not an achievement (given that his success is not because of his ability).

If this is right, then we can see how the Barney case wouldn't count as a genuine achievement either. If Barney finds himself in barn façade county, then given that Barney doesn't have the ability to differentiate between an actual barn and a barn façade, even if he gets it right with respect to seeing an actual barn, it's not success because of ability (and thus not an achievement).

Even if the above reasoning is correct, we still have the problem of the Archie case. The solution offered by Greco is to deny that the two cases are in fact analogous. In Pritchard's Archie case, it's not part of the analogy that the archer be able to discriminate between those targets that have invisible force fields and those that don't. But in cases of knowledge, the agent in question ought to be able to discriminate between cases of p and not-p. In the Barney case, Barney does not have the relevant cognitive ability and thus believing the truth is not a success from ability.[186]

While I find Greco's response interesting, there is a better way to understand what is going in the Barney and Archie case. After all, even if there is a disanalogy between the Archie case and Barney case, there is still an element of luck that is involved in the Archie case. We seem to have a lucky achievement. Thus, we need some kind of condition whereby the lucky achievements do not count as genuine achievements. This brings us to the third option which claims that that neither the Archie case nor the Barney case represent genuine achievements.

4.6 Rethinking the Notion of Primary Credit

Recall that we defined achievements in the following way:

(A3) Achievements are successes from ability that are *primarily* creditable to the agent.

Given our discussion above, and to avoid confusion, let's modify this slightly and change "from" to "because of".

[186] Ibid., 229-230.

> (A4) Achievements are successes because of abilities that are *primarily* creditable to the agent.[187]

Let (A4) represent achievement(pc) where (pc) stand for primary credit. Now the problem with (A4) is that it generates strange results (such as in the Barney and Archie case) with regard to knowledge. The Archie and Barney case seem to be analogous, yet when it comes to the Barney case we are faced with a genuine achievement(pc) that doesn't amount to knowledge. While Greco offers an interesting response, it does seem problematic to reject the intuition that the Barney and Archie cases are not analogous. They are both cases where the agent involved uses his ability to successfully realize his goal. Thus, they both seem to represent examples of genuine achievements(pc).

In order to give an appropriate response to the challenge that the Barney case represents an achievements(pc) that does not amount to knowledge, I think we need we need to examine what exactly (A4) is trying to say with regard to achievements. Part of the problem, I think, is that we don't have a good understanding of what it means for an achievement to be primarily creditable. In seeking to better understand the relationship between achievements and primary credit, we need a better understanding of what it means for a success to be *primarily* credible to the agent. Once we have a working definition of primary credit, we can then examine the ramifications it might have on the cases outlined above.

Given the ambiguity of achievement(pc), what exactly does it mean for a success to be *primarily* credible to an agent? What are the conditions that need to be met in order for an agent to receive primary credit? There are at least two conditions that need to be met in order for the success in question to be primarily creditable. First, a success is primarily creditable to an agent when the success in question comes about, and to a significant degree, because of the relevant ability of the agent. Second, and more controversially, success is primarily creditable to an agent if the agent is *responsible* for nearby failures. I take it that the second condition follows naturally from the first. And further, if the second condition is met, the first will also be met. Why is this exactly? In cases where the agent is responsible for nearby failures, it seems that in turn the agent can be credited with success in the actual world. Being credited with real world (primarily creditable) success comes as a result of being responsible for nearby failures. Thus, in

[187] In more recent literature, Pritchard has used the phrase "significantly creditable" instead of the previously preferred phrase "primarily creditable". See *Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology*, The Journal of Philosophy (forthcoming). While "significantly creditable" seems weaker than the idea of "primary credit" that is being presented thus far, I take it that Pritchard is using these phrases interchangeably.

determining whether an agent is primarily creditable for the success in question, one only needs to determine if the agent would be responsible for nearby failures. If the agent is responsible for nearby failures, we have a genuine achievement(pc). Consider an expert architect who designs a building largely considered by most experts to be a modern marvel. The expert architect designs this particular building in an area where high winds are common. This fact, however, is of little concern to the architect because his design allows for such winds to be present without affecting the structure of the building. As things stand, it is clear that that this architectural feat is a genuine achievement. The expert architect is successful because of his abilities and the success in question is primarily creditable to him as an agent. However, in some nearby possible world where the building collapses due to high winds, it is clear where the responsibility lies. The responsibility of the collapsed building rests solely on the shoulders of the architect. [188]

In order to see how this condition plays out with some of the examples we used above, let's start with an uncontroversial example where it is generally agreed that there is a genuine achievement(pc):

> **Archer:** Archie is a skilled archer who, under normal conditions, successfully hits target at which he aims. Archie always takes things like wind and distance into account before taking aim. Archie takes aim and successfully hits his target. The goal in question is successful because of the ability of Archie. This counts as a genuine achievement.

The question, then, is whether the above case counts as a genuine achievement where the success in question is primarily creditable to the agent. In order to determine this, we need to see if the above case meets the second condition of primary credit, which states that the agent must be responsible for nearby failures. Consider the following case, where Archie, in some close possible world, fails to hit the target:

> **Archer*:** Archie is a skilled archer who, under normal conditions, successfully hits the target at which he aims. Archie always takes things like wind and distance into account before taking aim. Archie takes aim, but misses his target. As Archie fails to hit the target, it is not a genuine achievement.

In the second Archie case, he alone is responsible for his failure. Archie does have the relevant ability for his environment and usually hits the target with ease. In this instance however, he

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[188] I take it that this case is rather uncontroversial. It's clear that those who are primarily credited with the success in question will also be responsible when there is a failure to succeed. Of course we can imagine a scenario where the responsibly of the collapsed building is not because of the architectural design (e.g., the building crew did not follow the design plans correctly, the materials used were compromised, etc.). But this does little to undermine the thesis that when a success is primarily creditable, it ought to entail the notion of responsibility for failure. Keeping in mind of course that in this example what is being implied is that the design itself is somehow faulty and not some external factor unrelated to the control of the architect.

failed to exercise the relevant ability. Perhaps it was a lack of concentration or a lapse in judgment about the actual distance. Whatever the cause may be, Archie has the ability in a favorable environment, but still fails.

The question to be answered, however, is how such a condition will hold up against the controversial examples discussed above. With this is mind, then, let's look at some of the more problematic cases to see how they measure up to the claim that a genuine achievement(pc) ought to be evaluated in terms of responsibility for nearby failures. Let's begin with Pritchard's force field case:

> **Archie:** Archie is a skilled archer who, under normal conditions, successfully hits the target at which he aims. The goal in question is successful because of the ability of Archie. This counts as a genuine achievement. However, on Archie's next shot things are slightly different. Archie selects his target and successfully hits the target because of his skill. Yet, while Archie is successful because of his ability, he is unaware that there are force fields around all the other targets. This means, then, had he selected any other target he would have failed in his goal.

As noted above, the problem with accepting this as a genuine achievement is that we are then compelled to accept analogous cases of cognitive successes as genuine achievements despite the obvious lack of knowledge (see Barney case above). However, Pritchard's force field case only meets one of the conditions with regard to the success being primarily creditable (and thus a genuine achievement). We can certainly say that Archie's success comes about because of his abilities. However, it is clear that Archie would not be responsible for nearby failures had he failed to hit the target. If Archie had taken aim at another target, and missed because of the force fields, it's not clear that he is responsible for this failure, as he doesn't possess the relevant abilities to distinguish between a target with no force field and a target with a force field. Thus, if he is not responsible for nearby failures, he can't be credited with an actual real-world success and thus we don't have a genuine achievement(pc). Pritchard's Archie case, then, is not an example of a genuine achievement(pc).[189]

If the Archie case is indeed analogous to the Barney case, then the same principle ought to apply:

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[189] It will be important to note that just because the Archie case isn't a genuine achievement(pc), it doesn't follow that it isn't some other kind of achievement. Primary credit entails responsibility for nearby failures, but there might be some other kind of credit sufficient for an achievement that doesn't entail the notion of primary credit. This would of course challenge the idea that primary credit is a necessary condition for a genuine achievement.

> **Barney:** Barney, unknowingly, is driving through barn façade county. In barn façade county all the barns are made to look like actual barns. Barney, however, happens to see the one barn in barn façade county that is an actual barn. Thus, Barney forms the true belief that he has seen a genuine barn.

Like the above Archie case, it appears that Barney's success comes about as the result of his relevant abilities. In the Barney case, however, we have a cognitive success that ought to result in knowledge. Yet, as discussed above, it is agreed that the Barney case is not a case of knowledge. Thus, it would seem that we have an example of a genuine achievement(pc) without knowledge. However, the Barney case doesn't meet the second condition that is required for a success to be primarily creditable (and thus an achievement). Surely Barney isn't responsible for nearby failures in barn façade county. Here is modified account Barney case where he fails is a nearby world:

> **Barney*:** Barney, unknowingly, is driving through barn façade county. In barn façade county all the barns are made to look like actual barns. Upon entering Barn façade county, Barney observes a fake barn and concludes that he has seen an actual barn. Thus, Barney forms the false belief that he has seen a genuine barn.

In this case, Barney certainly isn't responsible for failing to achieve his goal of only having true beliefs. (I am assuming here of course that Barney is like any other good epistemic agent and wants to maximize true beliefs.) He doesn't possess the relevant abilities to distinguish between a real barn and fake barn in barn façade county. Thus, if Barney isn't responsible for nearby failures, he can't be credited with an actual real-world success and thus we don't have a genuine achievement(pc). The Barney case, then, is not an example of a genuine achievement(pc).

For sake of clarity, we can define achievement(pc) in the following way:

> **Achievement(pc)**: Achievements are primarily creditable to the agent in question when the success in question comes about, and to a significant degree, because of the abilities of the agent. Further, a success is primarily creditable to an agent iff the agent is responsible for nearby failures.

Now there are at least two problems with understanding the nature of achievements in the manner described above. First, it could be argued that this definition is overly restrictive. If we understand achievements as achievement(pc), then there might be very few successes from abilities that we would consider as genuine achievements. This is an important objection given that we are hoping to describe knowledge as a cognitive achievement. This being the case, if the definition of achievements is overly restrictive then knowledge will be unreasonably difficult to attain.

A second objection to achievement(pc) is that the relationship between primary credit and responsibility for nearby failures is ambiguous. After all, one might easily argue that one's ability to successfully complete some task isn't *directly* relevant to the fact that one is responsible for nearby failures. In other words, the ability to hit a target with an arrow is an action that

demonstrates one's ability; responsibility for failing to hit the target is a wholly separate issue.[190] However, I take it that this objection fails to recognize an important part of the definition of achievement(pc)—namely that the achievement be primarily creditable. With this in mind, the objection fails given that primary credit entails responsibility for nearby failures. And in the cases mentioned above (Barney and Archie), it's not clear that either is responsible for nearby failures. Thus, if one is to object to this definition of achievements, the objection needs to come in the form of rejecting *primary credit* and not what it might entail.

Yet the question that remains, however, is what exactly is going on in the Archie case with respect to his abilities. Perhaps we might concede that it's not an achievement(pc), but isn't it possible to be credited with a genuine achievement without conceding that Barney and Archie represent cases of achievement(pc)? Here is a case that might get us closer to a better understanding of achievements:

> **Jean**: Jean is a world famous tightrope walker. Jean has famously crossed many well-known landmarks and is widely regarded for his abilities and skills in tightrope walking. On this particular occasion, Jean attempts to cross the Niagara Gorge between the New York and Canada. With much fanfare, he successfully crosses the Niagara Gorge. However, unbeknownst to Jean (and those who admire him), there was an evil demon who very much wanted Jean to fall into Niagara Falls. Yet, Jean's guardian angel was determined to thwart the evil demons efforts and battles the evil demon throughout the crossing. Thankfully, as it turns out, Jean's guardian angel defeats the evil demon and because of this, Jean is able to successfully cross the gorge.

The first point that should be noted is that Jean's crossing the Niagara Gorge is at least *partially* the result of his abilities as a tightrope walker. However, it is not *fully* a result of his abilities as a tightrope walked. We can safely assume that the success in question is at least partially a result of his abilities as a tightrope walker because had there been no evil demon or guardian angels present, Jean would have successfully crossed the Niagara Gorge.[191] However, according to achievement(pc) this would not qualify as a genuine achievement. Surely George isn't responsible for nearby failures in this case. If the evil demon had defeated Jean's guardian angel and

[190] I take it that argument is related to the one that Pritchard is making with respect to the Barney and Archie cases. Regardless of what else is going on in the analogies, the success in question is a result of the agent's ability. Barney identifies a genuine barn because of his cognitive abilities and Archie hits the target because of abilities as an archer. Greco, on the other hand, wants to argue that there is something about the environment, and the relationship between the abilities relevant to that environment, that make the Barney case problematic in identifying it as a genuine cognitive achievement.

[191] Note that I don't think it's a necessary requirement of joint achievements that the agent successfully have the ability to complete the objective on their own. In this particular case, however, it helps in highlighting the ability of Jean regardless of the external factors. As I will argue below, cases of testimony represent a joint achievement where the primary agent involved cannot complete his task on his own. The efforts and abilities of someone else are clearly *necessary* in cases of testimony.

succeeded in pushing him off the rope, this isn't something Jean could be responsible for. Jean's ability to walk across the Niagara Gorge doesn't include the ability to ward off (invisible) evil demons. Despite this, however, I think we can safely say that this is a genuine achievement. However, this is not an achievement that is primarily creditable to Jean. In other words, we don't have an achievement(pc).

While we don't have an achievement(pc), it's clear that we do have an achievement that is *partially* or *jointly* creditable to both Jean and the guardian angel. In this particular case, without the guardian angel, Jean would not have successfully crossed the Niagara Gorge. What's important to note here is that while Jean has the relevant abilities to cross the gorge without assistance from his guardian angel, the conditions of the environment demand that Jean's guardian angel interfere or intervene in such a way that had the guardian angel not interfered, Jean would have otherwise been unsuccessful.[192]

> **Achievements(jc)**: Achievements are jointly creditable when two or more agents are involved with the success in question and the success in question comes about because of the abilities of the agents involved. Achievements(jc) are distinct from Achievements(pc) in that a single agent is not primarily creditable for the success in question.

Achievements(jc) explains a number of problematic cases that were previously discussed. The Emie case described above is a prime example of an agent that needed some sort of help or intervention in order to successfully complete her goal. Emie's environment was excessively hostile for her abilities. Yet, she was still able to complete her goal with the help of her intervening agent. The intuition that Emie's success still counts as a genuine achievement is explained, rightly I think, through achievements(jc). Further, the football case discussed by Greco and Pritchard points to another possible example of achievements(jc).[193]

Despite this explanation, however, there are still several question that must be asked before we can begin to discuss the nature of cognitive achievements with respect to knowledge of God. First, how exactly does an understanding of achievements(jc) help us with respect to the

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[192] In a previously published essay ('A Robust Reformed Epistemology' in *God, Mind, and Knowledge,* Ashgate, forthcoming), I referred to the notion of "joint credit" as "partial credit". In retrospect, "joint credit" captures the concept much better than "partial credit". This is because in the cases where there are two agents involved in a success, "joint credit" stresses the relevance of more than one active participant. "Partial credit", however, is overly ambiguous.

[193] Though I think it is possible to explain the football case in terms of a joint achievement, I take it to be more likely that the football case is an example of several different achievements. As I describe above, there is the achievement that involves crossing the ball and the there is the achievement that involved scoring the goal.

problematic Archie and Barney cases highlighted above? Second, with respect to knowledge, does this explanation of achievements get us any closer to understanding the relationship between knowledge and credit in cases where testimony is involved? And last, in what specific ways can an agent demonstrate that the cognitive success in question is the result of their ability?

I will discuss the second concern first as it will hopefully shed light on the Barney and Archie cases. Further, I will deal with the third concern last and discuss the nature of strong achievements and how overcoming obstacles is one way in which it might be demonstrates that the cognitive success in question is the result of one's cognitive abilities.

4.7 Achievement(jc) and Testimonial Knowledge

A possible benefit of the achievements(jc) thesis is that it explains what is going on in cases that involve testimony. Testimonial knowledge and attributable credit has been problematic for those who endorse the achievement thesis about knowledge.[194] Here is a common example, first put forth by Lackey:[195]

> **Chicago Visitor**: Having just arrived at the train station in Chicago, Morris wishes to obtain directions to the Sears Tower. He looks around, approaches the first adult passerby that he sees, and asks how to get to his desired destination. The passer-by, who happens to be a Chicago resident who knows the city extraordinarily well, provides Morris with impeccable directions to the Sears Tower by telling him that it is located two blocks east of the train station. Morris unhesitatingly forms the corresponding true belief.

To be clear, it needs to be determined whether the above case of testimonial knowledge represents a genuine achievement. Keeping in mind, of course, that I have broadened the notion of a genuine achievement to include achievements(jc) *and* achievements(pc). However, there may be another option available to us. We might readily claim that Morris doesn't have knowledge in this case. As Riggs states, "I am surprised that it is offered as an uncontroversial example of

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[194] See Jennifer Lackey, "Why We Don't Deserve Credit for Everything We Know", Synthese 158:345-361 (2007). Also by Lackey, see "Knowledge and Credit", *Philosophical Studies* 142:27-42 (2009). Pritchard address this problem at length in *The Nature and Value of Knowledge,* 40-43. One thing to note about Lackey's original paper on this is that she describes 'credit' in a way that most virtue epistemologist (who hold to the achievements thesis anyway) might reject. She claims that the credit view is "If S knows that p, then S deserves credit for truly believing that p". This, however, isn't quite right. The issue isn't simply whether S deserves credit, but whether S's knowledge of p is a result or is creditable to his cognitive agency. As Pritchard rightly points out (see above reference), it's ambiguous as to what "deserving credit" might entail. It might simply mean that S deserves some kind of praise for a job well done. What is the issue, however, is whether testimonial knowledge is the result of the agents cognitive abilities. Despite missing this important point, Lackey's example is an important one.

[195] Lackey, "Why We Don't Deserve Credit for Everything We Know", 352.

testimonial knowledge. Why on earth would we say that Morris knows where the tower is when he picked a stranger at random, and unhesitatingly (and, one assumes, unreflectively) accepted what that person said? On the face of it, this is a terrible epistemic practice. Intuitively, more is required on the part of the hearer than simply opening his brain and putting into it whatever some random stranger has to say."[196] I take it here that Riggs wants Morris to play a more active role if the counterexample that Lackey has in mind is to succeed. However, I don't think Lackey's case need imply that Morris is simply "opening his brain and putting into it whatever some random stranger has to say." Even so, all one needs to do in order to address Riggs' complaint is to note that Morris has no good reasons to not ask the first person he sees (perhaps the Chicago native didn't look like a tourist, an evil demon, etc.). Certainly the example by Lackey implies this much. Moreover, surely one can modify the Chicago Visitor case to include a bit more detail about why Morris choose the first person he saw. Either way, it seems rather unproblematic to grant Morris with knowledge in this case. Thus, at this point anyway, I don't think we need be troubled by Riggs' objection to the Lackey case.

The next point, then, is to determine whether Lackey's testimony case is a genuine achievement. First, let's consider whether the case represents an achievement(pc). Recall that one of the requirements for an achievement(pc) is that the agent be responsible for nearby failures. While I think there are cases of testimonial knowledge where the agent might be responsible for nearby failures, Lackey's case doesn't seem to be one of them. If Morris walks up to what appears to be a reliable source of information concerning the Sears Tower (e.g., the testifier doesn't look like a tourist, scam artist, evil demon, etc.), then Morris is within his epistemic boundaries to believe that the testifier is a reliable source of information (which it turns out he is). However, had the testifier mistakenly told Morris to take a right out of the train station instead of a left towards to the tower, it's hard to imagine that Morris is to blame. Surely he is not responsible for an otherwise reliable agent giving him slightly wrong directions? If this correct, then the Lackey Chicago Visitor case doesn't represent a genuine achievement(pc).

The other option that is available, however, is that cases of testimony are not achievements(pc), but rather achievements(jc). What's interesting about this proposal is that Lackey seemingly agrees that such a proposal is reasonable, but adds that achievements(jc) are still susceptible to Gettier-type cases.[197] I take it, however, that this is separate question and one that

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[196] Riggs, "Two Problems of East Credit", 209
[197] Lackey, "Knowledge and Credit", 33.

can be dealt with only *after* one determines whether the more typical cases of testimony (i.e., Gettier free cases of testimony) represent a genuine achievements(jc). Greco,[198] Riggs,[199] and Sosa[200] have all claimed, in one form or another, that cases of testimony represent a joint effort amongst individuals. As Riggs puts it,

> "Why do we suppose that someone has to get *all* the credit? Why not just say that both parties involved get some credit for the recipient's true belief? It is vanishingly rare for any human being to accomplish anything completely on the basis of his own powers and abilities alone. And yet, even in many of those cases, we unhesitatingly attribute such accomplishments to people." [201]

While achievements(pc) are perhaps more common than Riggs seems to indicate, the point put forth by him and others is simply this: collaboration with others toward a common goal is a creditable success so long as the success in question demonstrates sufficient ability for a genuine achievement. Lackey's testimony case (and other similar cases of testimony) represents a genuine achievements(jc) by meeting these requirements. Morris approaches someone who appears to be a Chicago native (after all, he has no reason to think otherwise) and asks the location of a prominent landmark in Chicago, the Sears Tower. At this moment, the testifier, as any good epistemic agent, becomes jointly involved in Morris' aim—to know the location of the Sears Tower. It's important here to see the testifier as an important part of the overall goal in the same way that the guardian angel, in the tightrope case, is an active agent heavily involved in making sure Jean completes his task. The testifier becomes an active agent in Morris' desire to know the location of the Sears Tower. The testifier gives good directions and the hearer, Morris, reliably processes the testimony that is presented. It's a team effort. Morris couldn't have known the location of the Sears tower without the help of a reliable testifier in the same way that the Jean couldn't have crossed the Niagara Gorge without the help of his reliable guardian angel. Related, Morris couldn't have known the location of the Sears tower without being a reliable hearer in the

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[198] Greco, "The Nature of Ability and the Purpose of Knowledge", 65.

[199] Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit", 215.

[200] Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (Vol. 1), 93-95

[201] Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit", 215. The example that Riggs gives to support this statement asks us to consider a drowning child. In the example, the agent that saves the drowning child notices that the current will bring the child right to where he is standing. The agent then rescues the child by pulling the child from the water once the current brings the child close enough to be rescued. Riggs claims that this is an example of very little effort being attributable to the rescuer. After all, he claims, "most of the work… was done by the river". Despite this, claims Riggs, the rescuer deserves the credit and thus we have a genuine achievement. This example, I think, is a poor one. I take it that this is a genuine achievement(pc) and not an achievement(ic) as Riggs claims. The child was saved as result or because of the rescuers abilities. There is no other agent involved in the case to share the credit. The river has no abilities that are attributable. The tightrope case, however, does represent an achievement(jc). There are two agents involved who both have the same end in mind—that Jean successfully crosses the Niagara Gorge.

same way that the Jean couldn't have crossed the Niagara Gorge if he wasn't a reliable tightrope walker. Given this, knowledge via testimony represents genuine achievement that is jointly creditable to the parties involved.

4.8 Luck, Achievements, and Knowledge

Lackey's testimony case is supposed to show that there are cases of knowledge that are not creditable in any significant way to the agent involved. In other words, knowledge isn't always a cognitive achievement. However, it is argued that while testimony many not represent an achievement that is primarily creditable, it does represent a joint achievement. Lackey is willing to concede that there are instances of testimonial knowledge where the credit might be shared.[202] So far, then, the KA thesis isn't undermined in any significant way. However, we should be cautious, Lackey claims, because the joint credit view (as I am calling it) makes credit for achievement too weak and opens the door to Gettier-type cases. Lackey puts it this way:

> As should be clear, either horn of this dilemma undermines the Credit View of Knowledge at its core. For, on the first horn, credit may be adequately blocked in Gettier-type cases, but only at the expense of also blocking credit in countless cases where testimonial knowledge is intuitively present despite minimal work being done on the part of the hearer. And, on the second horn, credit is secured in cases of testimonial knowledge where such minimal work is done by the recipient, but only at the expense of also securing credit in Gettier-type cases. Either way, the Credit View not only fails to shed light on what is absent in Gettier-type cases, but it also fails to explain the additional value that knowledge has over merely accidentally true belief.[203]

What Lackey is claiming, then, is that if we allow cases of testimonial knowledge to be creditable to the agent in question (i.e., we've made credit weak enough to include cases of testimony), then notion of credit is far too weak and we must therefore attribute credit in Gettier-type cases as well. I take it that this observation is generally right and does indeed pose a problem for the robust virtue epistemologist. After all, one could easily set up a Gettier case that involves credit for testimonial knowledge. Thus, if there are Gettier-type cases of testimony where credit is attributable, then the cases highlighted earlier, the Barney and Archie cases, might also represent genuine achievements.[204] Let's take each point in turn. First, it seems clear that the achievement thesis, so far anyway, can handle at least some of the Gettier cases.[205] However, there seem to be

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[202] Lackey, "Knowledge and Credit", 34.

[203] Ibid.

[204] Recall that it was claimed earlier that the Barney and Archie cases do not represent an achievement(pc) given the agents lack of responsibility for nearby failures.

[205] Consider the Chisholm's sheep case:

certain Gettier-type cases that aren't adequately dealt with by proponents of the achievement thesis.[206] Consider this modified testimony case.

> **Chicago Visitor***: Having just arrived at the train station in Chicago, Morris wishes to obtain directions to the Sears Tower. Unbeknownst to Morris, however, the mayor has asked all Chicago natives to mislead all visitors who ask the location of the Sears Tower. If they ask, the Chicago natives are told to give the visitors the wrong directions. Except for Smith, all the Chicago natives at the train station that day plan to comply with the mayor's demands. Morris arrives, looks around, and approaches Smith who happens to be the first adult passerby that he sees. The passer-by, who happens to be a Chicago native who knows the city extraordinarily well, provides Morris with impeccable directions to the Sears Tower by telling him that it is located two blocks east of the train station. Morris unhesitatingly forms the corresponding true belief.

Two things to note about this modified Lackey testimony case. First, it is nearly identical to Lackey's original testimony except that Morris, crucially, could have easily been wrong. Second, this case is analogous to the Barney case. Concerning the first note, I think we can easily assume that Morris does not have knowledge in this case (in the same way that he doesn't have knowledge in the Barney case). However, Morris has exactly the same role in this modified case that he has in the original case: He steps off the train, approaches the first person he sees (the person he sees appears to be a Chicago native and he has no reason to think that the testifier is a tourist or an evil demon), and gets impeccable directions. There seems to be no reason in this instance to assume that Morris cannot be credited with a genuine achievement in the modified testimony case (especially given that we credit Morris with a genuine achievement in the original case). Furthermore, and concerning the second note, this case is analogous to the Barney case. We have a genuine achievement without knowledge.[207]

Where, then, does this leave us with respect to achievements and knowledge? Recall that so far we have identified two types of achievements: achievements$_{(jc)}$ and achievements$_{(pc)}$. Both

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> **Sheep Case**: S sees what he takes to be a sheep in the field. S knows that the field he is looking at is owned by Jones who commonly lets his sheep graze in the field. S therefore forms the belief that there is a sheep in the field. On this occasion, though, what S is looking at is in fact a sheep dog that looks a lot like an actual sheep. Unbeknownst to S, however, there is a sheep in the field that is hiding behind a rock. Thus, S's belief that there is a sheep in the field is true.

It is these types of Gettier cases that I take to be easily dealt with by the achievement thesis. However, as we will see, there are other Getttier cases that are not so straightforward.

[206] See Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology*, 94-97 (see especially, fn. 1, p. 96) and Pritchard, 'A Defence of Quasi-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony', *Philosophica* 78 (2008), 15-17. Pritchard's distinction is very helpful here. There are two kinds of luck in the Gettier cases: intervening and environmental. As we will see, the cases that the virtue epistemologist ought to be concerned about are the cases of environmental luck.

[207] Keep in mind that we have identified the KA thesis with the RVE attempt to account for the value of knowledge. Thus, if they are to adequately deal with the value problem they must answer the tertiary value problem. If we have knowledge without cognitive achievements then we don't have an answer to the value problem.

of these types of achievements are compatible with the KA thesis. However, we have now identified another type of achievement—one that is not a kind or type of knowledge as the robust virtue epistemologist claims. In order to see this, let's return to the Barney case. It was claimed above that the Barney case did not represent a genuine achievements(pc) given that Barney did not meet the necessary requirements (he wasn't responsible for nearby failures). However, what the testimony cases have illustrated is that in weakening our understanding of achievements, we must also concede credit in some Gettier cases. The Barney case represents such a case.

Put another way, what these Gettier cases have shown is that there are certain environmental factors that undermine the notion that achievements are *only* those successes from ability that are either *primarily* or *jointly* creditable to the agent. Three such cases are the modified testimony case above, the Barney case, and Pritchard's force field Archie case. What this amounts to, then, is that while luck doesn't undermine a genuine achievement, it does undermine the notion of primary credit.[208] While the other two types of achievement are compatible with knowledge, it appears we now have a third kind of achievement that is incompatible with knowledge—it's an achievement that has primary credit (or joint credit) undermining luck (achievement(pcul)).[209] How exactly is primary credit undermined by luck? In the Barney case, the cognitive success isn't merely the result of his cognitive abilities. What *explains* his cognitive success is both his cognitive abilities and luck. Put another way, what explains Barney's lack of knowledge isn't merely his lack of primary credit (which myself, Greco, and other robust virtue epistemologists would agree he lacks), but the combination of the success in question being a result of his creditable cognitive faculties and environmental luck.[210]

We now have three types of achievements: achievements(jc), achievements(pc), and achievements(pcul). Only the first two are sufficient for the robust virtue account of knowledge (i.e., knowledge is a kind or type of success from ability), yet all three types of achievements are sufficient for a cognitive success (i.e., the cognitive success being truth gained via the cognitive abilities of the agent). Given this, we are now compelled to give a weaker account of the analysis

[208] It's important to note here that while my conclusion is similar to Pritchard's and Lackey's, I argue that the Barney case (and those similar) is an achievement but not one that is primarily creditable.

[209] Note here that I am using "primary credit" (and not joint credit) because what is debatable in the Barney case is whether the agent is primarily creditable. Thus, this third type of achievement that is incompatible with knowledge could just as well be an achievement where the joint credit is undermined by luck.

[210] While Greco, for example, would claim that Barney lacks primary credit, it's clear that he still has sufficient credit for knowledge (even though in this case he lacks knowledge).

of knowledge—one where a cognitive achievement is not sufficient for knowledge, but merely necessary. The strong version of the KA thesis fails to account for the value of knowledge. Knowledge, in every instance, does not have distinctive value over that which falls short of knowledge.[211] A weaker suggestion must be offered: *Knowledge, in most cases, is more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge.*

This, however, does not undermine the thesis that knowledge is of final value. After all, if this account is correct, knowledge is always a cognitive achievement. One can happily concede that knowledge is always a cognitive achievement without endorsing, as the robust virtue epistemologist does, that cognitive achievements are *sufficient* for knowledge. This is because the KA thesis isn't undermined by the above conclusion. The KA thesis states that

(1) Achievements are finally valuable.
(2) Knowledge is a kind of achievement.

Therefore,

(3) Knowledge is finally valuable

Note that (2) isn't undermined by the above analysis. However, the KA thesis is to be understood in the weak sense given its inability to deal with the value problem.

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[211] This weaker account is similar to the one offered by Pritchard. See Pritachrd, 'Cognitive Ability and the Extended Cognition Thesis', *Synthese* 175 (2010), 133-51. COGAweak, according to Pritchard, is "If S knows that p, then S's true belief that p is the product of a reliable belief-forming process which is appropriately integrated within S's cognitive character such that her cognitive success is to a significant degree creditable to her cognitive agency." COGAstrong, on the other hand, entails a "primary credit" requirement: "S knows that p iff S's true belief that p is the product of a reliable belief-forming process which is appropriately integrated within S's cognitive character such that her cognitive success is primarily creditable to her cognitive agency. Pritchard goes on to highlight the difference between COGAweak and COGAstrong in the following way:

> "Note that both these theses in effect treat the question of the extent to which the cognitive success is creditable to the agent's cognitive agency as being the test by which one determines whether it should count as the product of cognitive ability. More generally, on both views one can use this test to determine whether a reliable belief-forming process is appropriately integrated within an agent's cognitive character such that it counts as a bona fide cognitive ability. Where the two accounts differ is on the extent to which the cognitive success in question is creditable to the agent's cognitive agency. Whereas the strong account, COGAstrong insists on a very demanding relationship between cognitive success and cognitive agency on this score, such that knowledge can be defined in terms of the satisfaction of this relationship, the weaker account, COGAweak, allows other factors to be substantively relevant to one's acquisition of knowledge."

On COGAweak, then, there are other factors that are relevant to one's acquisition of knowledge. This also fits well with my definition of joint achievements. An agent might not be primarily creditable for an achievement, as other factors might play an important role in the acquisition of knowledge. This will be important in the cases of testimonial knowledge that I discuss below.

Moreover, while there are certain anti-luck conditions that might make this virtue epistemic account more appealing for a general analysis of knowledge—Pritchard's Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology, for example, is one such account that deals nicely with the Barney and Archie cases—we can ignore these accounts as we are merely concerned with an analysis of religious knowledge and whether knowledge of God is in fact a cognitive achievement.[212] And while it might be true that knowledge in general isn't *always* more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge, it doesn't follow that knowledge of God isn't always more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge.

Before moving on to this discussion in the next chapter, I want to briefly discuss a lingering question concerning the nature of strong and weak achievements.

4.9 Strong vs. Weak Achievements

What's so great about achievements? Thus far, we have taken this question for granted. Recall the KA thesis:

(1) Achievements are finally valuable.
(2) Knowledge is a kind of achievement.

Therefore,

(3) Knowledge is finally valuable.

But what, if anything, makes an achievement finally valuable? We came close to answering this question while evaluating the Mt. Everest Case:

> **Mt. Everest**: Edmund and Didier both have a desire to reach the top of Mount Everest. The primary goal, then, of both Edmund and Didier is to reach the peak. Edmund, who has been training for some time, successfully climbs Mount Everest by starting at the base. Didier, on the other hand, realizes his goal by taking a short and painless helicopter ride to the summit.

It's certainly clear why we think that Edmund has achieved something. Further, it is also clear why we *value* Edmunds success over the success of Didier. Edmund overcame an extremely hostile environment while successfully reaching the summit. The effort and clear ability it takes to reach the top of Mount Everest is certainly something we value. Didier, on the other hand, was a passenger in a helicopter who did very little to successfully accomplish his goal. Did he overcome any obstacles along the way? Not really. In fact, the way the example is set up, he could have

[212] See Duncan Pritchard, "Anti-Luck Virtue Epistemology" *Journal of Philosophy*.

been asleep for most of the ride. Thus, the question is what is so valuable about Didier's successful goal of reaching the top?

Perhaps the issue here is that achievements, *when understood in terms of final value*, are more than just successes because of ability (after all, it was noted earlier that Didier does demonstrate some ability). And in order for achievements to be understood as such, it needs to be the case that achievements are also the result of overcoming obstacles or the demonstration of significant skill.[213] Of course one could just deny that Didier's success, on whatever account, represents a genuine achievement. But there are other examples where agents seemingly demonstrate an achievement (according to our definition) that requires little effort or skill on the part of the agent:

> "Suppose that in normal circumstances I raise my arm. Here we clearly have a successful action on my part, in that there is something that I am aiming to do and which I do in fact do. Moreover, if circumstances really are normal then there ought to be no problem with the idea that this success was *because of* the exercise of my relevant 'arm raising' abilities. But would we naturally call the raising of one's arm in these circumstances an achievement? Intuitively, the answer is 'no', and the reason for our reluctance to so describe this success is surely because of the ease with which it was brought about."

Here we have a success that seemingly meets our previous requirement for a genuine achievement. It is certainly a success because of ability. Yet, as the example states, raising one's arm is hardly the kind of achievement that we value. It takes very little effort or skill, under normal conditions, to raise one's arm. The success is so predictable one hardly has to think about it.

It might turn out that this is a worry that we need not be overly concerned about. As Riggs points out:

> What we have to do in order to be responsible for some outcome is: enough. There is not some stable threshold of effort or determination or skill that must be superseded on my part before it is reasonable to say that I did such-and-such. I simply have to do enough to bring it about. If the world cooperatives by making it easy, so much the better It would be silly to require that someone do more than was necessary to bring about some end in order for it to be attributable to them that they did so.[214]

Riggs' claim that there is not some stable threshold of effort or skill that is necessary for a success to be considered an achievement is certainly within reason. On Riggs' account, then, knowledge could still be an achievement—albeit a very weak one that requires very little effort or skill on the part of the knower. However, is this weak understanding of an achievement what we have in

[213] Pritchard, "Understanding", 70.
[214] Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit", 215.

mind when we think of an achievement being finally valuable? As Pritchard points out, this wouldn't explain why we value achievements in the first place. And if the KA thesis is true, then we still need an account where the value of achievements is properly understood and accounted for.

Returning, then, to the points raised by Pritchard, there are two things that need to be addressed as a result. First, if the strong achievement thesis is correct, doesn't this rule out too many cases where the achievements are seemingly easy? Also, are there instances of knowledge that are deemed too "easy" to count as a genuine achievement? After all, it might turn out that while some genuine achievements are indeed too weak to be valuable, cognitive achievements may not suffer the same fate.

Concerning the first question, is it the case that we rule out too many genuine achievements with the strong understanding? Keep in mind that there are certain achievements that might appear easy, but still require great skill and ought to be considered strong achievements. Consider Michael Jordan effortlessly sinking a routine 3-point shot in a basketball game. For the average person, this is something exceedingly difficult. But for Michael Jordan, this shot is might be rather routine. However, the sinking of a 3-point shot, while not the type of obstacle-overcoming achievement that summiting Mt. Everest might represent, still requires great skill. It looks easy to us, and perhaps it is easy for Michael Jordan, but it still requires great skill that comes as the result of continual practice.

What about knowledge then? Are there equivalent cases of knowledge where the achievement is equally as easy as raising one's arm? The usual suspect in this case is perceptual knowledge:

> Suppose that I form that true belief that the wall before me is white by looking at it in entirely normal circumstances. Here we have a cognitive success and the cognitive success is, intuitively, appropriately related to my relevant cognitive abilities in such a way that it is because of cognitive ability. And yet it seems odd to think of such a success as an achievement on my part, given that this is a cognitive success which is neither the result of my overcoming a significant obstacle that that success nor involving the exercise of significant cognitive skill.[215]

Now there are two conclusions one might draw from the above example. You might think, like Pritchard, that perceptual knowledge is problematic as it represents a weak achievement. If this is the case, then not only is knowledge only *sometimes* more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge, it also isn't *always* the case that knowledge is of final value. However, I take it that

[215] Pritchard, "Understanding" 69.

things aren't so straightforward with regard to perceptual knowledge. Perceptual knowledge, as it turns out, might be a strong achievement after all. One might think, for example, that cases of perceptual knowledge are similar to those achievements that appear easy, but require great skill. It was noted above that Michael Jordan sinking a 3-point shot is a strong achievement because of the skill that it requires. However, this isn't an ability that he was born with. While the success in question appears effortless, and is for someone like him, it is only effortless because he has perfected the skill through repetition. Perhaps perceptual knowledge is similar. It's not the case that our perceptual faculties identify a white wall from the outset. We aren't born with these abilities. Our perceptual faculties develop over time. And while it might be the case that sinking a 3-point shot requires much more development, this isn't an argument against the claim that our perceptual faculties, while effortlessly contributing to our cognitive successes now, required development and refining in order to be presently successful.

If the above argument is correct, then perceptual knowledge is a strong achievement. Regardless of how one takes the above argument, however, our main thesis isn't undermined. All that needs to be shown is that religious knowledge, specifically knowledge of God, is in fact a strong achievement. This being the case, we are now in a position to defend the idea that knowledge of God is an achievement because of success from ability (achievement being understood in the strong sense). Further, it will be argued that knowledge of God is not only of final value because it is cognitive achievement, it is also more valuable than anything that falls short of this knowledge.

§5 Is Knowledge of God a Cognitive Achievement?

5.1 Introduction

We now turn to the most pressing question: Is knowledge of God a cognitive achievement? Put simply, does knowledge of God have anything to do with the cognitive abilities of the agent? In answering this question, I hope to show two things. First, that knowledge of God is finally valuable; and second, that knowledge of God is more valuable than anything that falls short of this knowledge. If successful, we will effectively answer the tertiary value problem. In order to do this, then, I will adopt a similar approach to that endorsed by the robust virtue epistemologist (RVE)—namely, the achievement thesis. While it is noted in the previous chapter that RVE fails to account for the tertiary value problem, it is further claimed that reformed epistemology needn't suffer the same fate.[216] This is because reformed epistemology, on the model I am endorsing anyway, effectively deals with the tertiary value problem. Thus, if the above holds true, knowledge of God will need to be a strong achievement (in order to demonstrate its final value). Further, it will also need to be the kind of cognitive achievement where the cognitive success is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge of God (in order to fully deal with the tertiary value problem).[217]

I will make three main arguments in this chapter in order to demonstrate that knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement. First, I will argue that the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis*, whether primarily or partially, is down to the cognitive abilities of the agent who believes. Second, I will argue that the cognitive success of having a true belief about God is the result of overcoming a hostile environment that is not conducive to belief in God given the cognitive consequences of sin. The maxi-environment that we all find ourselves in is hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. This, I argue, results in the belief being a strong achievement. Last, I argue that those cases (e.g., Barney cases) which undermine the successful answering of the tertiary value problem are absent on the model of religious knowledge that I am

[216] The kind of religious knowledge we are concerned with here is knowledge of God. As discussed in the chapter 1, I am specifically concerned with the Christian God as understood in orthodox traditions.

[217] Keeping in mind of course that the religious account of knowledge I am working within is reformed epistemology. There might be other accounts of religious knowledge where these arguments will not apply and the final value of religious knowledge will not be adequately demonstrated.

endorsing. In the end, I demonstrate that knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement and has distinct value over and above anything that falls short of this knowledge.

I also deal with two main objections to my model. First, I argue against the idea that my model endorses a semi-Pelagian soteriology. I do this by drawing a distinction between warranted belief in God and saving faith. Given that this project concerns only the former, I claim that one needn't be overly concerned with the theological disputes concerning Divine grace and human agency. I also consider the objection that my model is too narrow and doesn't consider the relationship between religious knowledge and children. In the end, I maintain that *if* children do in fact have knowledge of God, my model sufficiently accommodates these types of cognitive successes.

5.2 The Problem Explained

Perhaps an easy way around the question of whether knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement would be to simply demonstrate the parallels between perceptual knowledge and religious knowledge. On the reformed account of religious knowledge, the similarities are obvious. Both perceptual knowledge and religious knowledge are the result of my cognitive faculties which, when successful, are the result of my cognitive abilities. In each of the cases, the cognitive success in question is appropriately related to my cognitive abilities. What *explains* the cognitive success in those cases are my cognitive abilities. But of course things aren't this easy. As explained in the last chapter, perceptual knowledge falls under the category of a weak achievement.[218] Thus, if knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement of the sort that is required, it needs to be the kind of achievement, for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, that we value. In other words, it needs to be a strong achievement—the kind of success where the agent demonstrates great skill or the overcoming of some obstacle on the way to believing. So the parallels between perceptual knowledge and religious knowledge must come apart if we are to insist that religious knowledge is a *strong* cognitive achievement.

Prima facie, this seems very problematic for the specific religious epistemology we are endorsing.[219] To begin, it seems that the cognitive faculty responsible for belief in God, the *sensus*

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[218] Noting of course that there might be cases of perceptual knowledge that are in fact strong achievements, I am referring to those cases of perceptual knowledge that are more typical or ordinary—those cases where there are no epistemic defeaters and thus no obstacles to overcome.

[219] Recall that reformed epistemology makes the claim belief in God is the result of a properly functioning faculty. Further, unbelief is the result of a malfunctioning cognitive faculty.

divinitatis, is all too similar to our perceptual faculties. So even if our account of religious knowledge must somehow be different or distinct from perceptual knowledge, it's not clear how exactly they differ. After all, like perception, belief in God is supposed to be immediate in the same way that our perceptual faculties give us immediate knowledge of the external world. Similar to perceptual beliefs, reformed accounts of religious knowledge often claim that the agent "simply finds himself" believing in God. Thus, on this understanding, the same problems that afflict the strong achievement thesis with regard to perceptual knowledge also afflicts any account of religious knowledge. The question for religious knowledge is the same: What kind of obstacle are we overcoming on our way to belief in God?

Related to the concern above, another immediate worry is that one might also wonder in what specific ways an agent is creditable for having knowledge of God. The question here concerns the role the agent plays with regard to moving from unbelief to belief in God. Recall that, unlike our perceptual faculties, the *sensus divinitatis* is a malfunctioning faculty that is in need of repair if the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are to give us true belief about God. Those who believe in God, then, go from a malfunctioning cognitive faculty to functioning cognitive faculty. What, if anything, is the explanation for this? Consider the following example:

> **Majestic Sunset**: Jon and Jane are both skeptical about the existence of God. Neither of them are convinced by any of the arguments that are traditionally associated with theism. Further, neither of them has ever had any kind of religious experience that many theists claim to have had. As it happens, Jon and Jane take a trip to the mountains and both take in a beautiful majestic sunset. However, much to Jane's surprise, skeptic Jon becomes believer Jon while observing the majestic sunset. He comes to believe in God on the model provided by Plantinga. It is some experience—a majestic sunset for example—that triggers the *sensus divinitatis*, which in turn gives rise to the belief that God exists. Jon, lacking direct control over his beliefs, simply finds himself believing in God.[220] Skeptic Jane, however, being in the same exact environment as Jon, finds herself with no such belief. For Jane, the majestic sunset doesn't trigger the belief that God exists.

What is interesting about this example, I think, is that two people with similar beliefs about God enjoy the same sunset. Yet only one comes away a theist, while the other remains a skeptic. Is it really plausible to say that Jon has anything to do with the previously malfunctioning cognitive faculty? It could be argued that Jon's believing is really down to luck. After all, Jon has no control or knowledge of the faculty that gives rise to his belief in God. It just so happens that Jon's cognitive faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, stopped malfunctioning while skeptic Jane's cognitive faculty, the *sensus divinitatis*, continued to malfunction. If Jon's belief about God is true, then

[220] As a non-voluntarist I am assuming, with Plantinga, that we don't control what we believe. See Alvin Plantinga, "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function", *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988), 37.

Jane's continued skepticism is a result of bad epistemic luck. And if Jane's continued skepticism is a result of bad epistemic luck, then perhaps Jon's belief is a result of good epistemic luck. In which case, Jon's belief in God is not the kind of cognitive achievement we are looking for.[221] As Zagzebski notes:

> Theistic believers whose faculties are working properly are heavily blessed with good luck. Nontheistic believers whose nonbelief is due to the fact that their faculties are not working properly are cursed with epistemic bad luck. The fact that the presence or absence of warrant is very heavily, if not totally, a matter of luck does not, however, alter the fact that warrant is intended on this theory to be a normative concept.[222]

What we need is an account on which Jon's belief and Jane's lack of belief are not down to luck. What I will argue, then, is that there is an important story to be told with regard to the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis* and the nature of cognitive achievements. The *sensus divinitatis* is like any other faculty in that it malfunctions when not exercised in the appropriate environment. Perceptual faculties, for example, malfunction with age and fail to be reliable when not used in the environment for which they were designed. Attempting to use your perceptual faculties in the ocean, for example, would not produce the same result as using your perceptual faculties on a clear sunny day. The same goes for the *sensus divinitatis*—it is prone to malfunction.

But what exactly, if anything, causes the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis*? The answer to this, on the reformed account we are endorsing, is the cognitive consequences of sin. Skeptic Jane's failure to believe, then, is the result of cognitive dysfunction brought about by sin. Believer Jon's previous cognitive dysfunction was also the result of sin, but his new found belief is the result of a properly functioning *sensus divinitatis*. And this properly functioning *sensus divinitatis* needs to be the result, crucially, of Jon's efforts and abilities.[223]

The key, then, in identifying knowledge of God as a cognitive achievement is an account of what the agent's role in the belief forming process amounts to. It won't be enough to simply

[221] Note that here that I am claiming that it is not the kind of cognitive achievement that we are looking for. It wouldn't, for example, be a cognitive achievement that is sufficient for knowledge. Similar to the Barney case, Jon could have been easily been wrong about the existence of God had this true belief been simply the result of luck. Keep in mind that while this still be a cognitive achievement, it is not the kind of achievement that is sufficient for knowledge. As we discussed in the previous chapter, only those achievements that are either *primarily* or *jointly* creditable are sufficient for knowledge. Achievements(pcul) are not, however, sufficient for knowledge.

[222] Linda Zagzebski, "Religious Knowledge and the Virtues," in *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology* ed., Zagzebski (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1993), 202.

[223] I don't think one ought to worry too much about *how* or *why* the cognitive came to malfunction. All that matters, for our purposes, is that the proper functioning of Jon's faculty is down to his efforts and abilities. While I discuss this later in the chapter, it is only highlighted to add more detail to model.

compare the *sensus divinitatis* to our perceptual faculties given the problems that ordinary perceptual knowledge is faced with concerning strong achievements.[224] Thus, any account we provide will not only need to identify this role, but also stay to true to the account of religious knowledge we are endorsing.

5.3 The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Malfunctioning Cognitive Faculty

Before we can determine what role the agent might play in the belief forming process, we need to return to a topic we briefly discussed in the second chapter. We need to determine what, if anything, is wrong with the faculty that gives rise to belief in God. This will take us through, albeit briefly, some of the more cherished theological dogmas of the reformed tradition. To begin, consider these words from Calvin:

> There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. Ever renewing its memory, he repeatedly sheds fresh drops. Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their Maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honor him and to consecrate their lives to his will. If ignorance of God is to be looked for anywhere, surely one is most likely to find an example of it among the more backward folk and those more remote from civilization. Yet there is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God. And they who in other aspects of life seem least to differ from brutes still continue to retain some seed of religion. So deeply does the common conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it inhere in the hearts of all! Therefore, since from the beginning of the world there has been no region, no city, in short, no household, that could do without religion, there lies in this a tacit confession of a sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all.[225]

This natural awareness of God, as Calvin puts it, is what we are calling the *sensus divinitatis*. It's a cognitive faculty that is part of our original prelapsarian cognitive equipment. It functions primarily as that faculty which gives rise to belief in God. Or as Calvin puts it above, it's that faculty that is supposed to give us a sense of deity in our hearts.[226] In its original state, then, the

[224] There are of course accounts of perceptual knowledge that might meet the strong achievement thesis. Perhaps there are defeaters present and in order to determine if your perceptual faculties are accurate you engage in a lengthy process of reasoning. This, then, might meet the strong achievement thesis as you would be demonstrating great skill in the belief forming process. I'm going to ignore these types of perceptual knowledge, though, given that most perceptual knowledge is not of the kind discussed in this example.

[225] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F.L. Battles (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), 44. This is the translation I will use when referring to Calvin's *Institutes*.

[226] Note that at this point, according to Calvin anyway, this faculty isn't necessarily aimed at giving rise to the Christian God that Calvin is concerned with. As Helm puts it, the "sense of God is universal, and is capable of finding expression in a variety of theologies; polytheism in religion, for example, is for Calvin evidence of the operation of the sensus (though of its malfunctioning) equally as much as monotheism." Paul

sensus divinitatis gave us true beliefs about God in *all* those situations or environments where it was originally intended to function. One way to think about this is that in those environments that now only *sometimes* give rise to belief in God, they would have, in their original state (and if exercised in the proper environment for which they were created), *always* given rise to belief in God.

But the story has changed. It isn't the case that particular environments *always* give rise to belief in God. Despite this, however, what's important to note is that while this faculty is part of our prelapsarian cognitive equipment, it is also a part of our postlapsarian cognitive equipment. In other words, the *sensus divinitatis* wasn't lost after the fall of humankind.[227] The above quote by Calvin stresses the universality of this cognitive equipment.[228] What is lost, however, is the original *function* or *purpose* of the *sensus divinitatis*. And as we noted above, the original function of the *sensus divinitatis* is to give rise, when occasioned by the appropriate circumstance and in the appropriate environment, to those true beliefs about the existence of God. As Plantinga notes, "this natural knowledge of God has been compromised, weakened, reduced, smothered, overlaid, or impeded by sin and its consequences."[229] This statement on the noetic effects of sin from the *Canons of Dort* sums up nicely the reformed understanding of sin and the consequences:

> Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutatory knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he

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Helm, "John Calvin, the 'Sensus Divinitatis', and the Noetic Effects of Sin," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* Vol. 43 No. 2 (April, 1998), 90.

[227] The fall of humankind refers to the story in the early part of Genesis when humans disobeyed God and introduced sin into the world. I take it that one needn't take the creation narrative in Genesis literally in order for the point to be made that sin, regardless of when or how it was introduced into the world, has corrupted an otherwise properly functioning faculty. Further, one needn't take the narrative literally in order for the point to be made that the sensus was originally intended to function in a world without sin. We will discuss some of these points later in the chapter.

Also, it is argued by John Beversluis that the above quote by Calvin applies only to those in a prelapsarian world. See Bevesluis, "Reforming the Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (April 1995), 193. I discuss later in the chapter, but the quote is clearly referring to the universality of the *sensus divinitatis.* In a prelapsarian world, belief in God would be uncontroversial. In the quote, however, the picture being painted is that of world with lots of false belief about God. Something that properly functioning *sensus divinitatis* doesn't allow.

[228] Note the strong words by Calvin from the above quote: "Yet there is, as the eminent pagan says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God." This insinuates Calvin's belief that the *sensus divinitatis*, no matter how impaired, is functioning in a postlapsarian world.

[229] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 184.

> brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will and finally impurity in all his emotions.[230]

As a result of this historic fall from grace, what we have now is the same faculty whose role in the belief forming process has been compromised. Thus, if some majestic sunset triggers the *sensus divinitatis* and gives Jon (from the example above) a non-inferential true belief about God, it wouldn't follow that every majestic sunset would trigger, in everyone all the time, a non-inferential true belief about the existence of God. While the *sensus divinitatis* is a universal cognitive faculty, it doesn't produce universally true beliefs about the existence of God.

There is one important question that we must address before we can offer a solution to the noetic effects that sin has on a malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis*. We need to know a bit more about why exactly the *sensus divinitatis* no longer gives *everyone* accurate beliefs about the existence of God. From the above discussion and the discussion in chapter 2, we noted that sin has an effect on the *sensus divinitatis*. But what this amounts to isn't entirely clear. Is it the faculty itself that is diseased? Or are we as individuals oppressing the faculty (knowingly or unknowingly) in such a way the deliverances of this faculty are no longer accurate or clear? Answering these questions will of course bring us closer to providing an answer to the question of the relationship between the a cognitive achievement and belief in God.

We have briefly mentioned that the cognitive consequences of sin were introduced after the fall (when and how this happened isn't entirely relevant to our discussion), which entails, as a result of the noetic effects of sin, that the *sensus divinitatis* will malfunction. But what exactly does this amount to? And how exactly does the *sensus divinitatis* malfunction? There are three ways to look at this, all of which I take to be correct. The first is that the *sensus divinitatis*, as an independent cognitive faculty, is itself diseased and malfunctioning. The second way to look at the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis* is that there is something about the nature of the agent that, in a sense, smothers or corrupts the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. The third way to understand the malfunctioning of *sensus divinitatis* would be to claim that there is something about the environment in which the *sensus divinitatis* is attempting to function. Put another way, the environment in which the agent finds himself in is hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. On the first account, the faculty itself is diseased and thus the deliverances of the *sensus*

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[230] *Canons of Dort* in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids, MI: CRC Pulications, 1988), III-IV.I, 133. For a good brief discussion of this quote and the reformed understanding of the noetic effects of sin see Michael Sudduth, *The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2009), chapter 7.

divinitatis are hindered because the faculty itself is in need of repair. On the second account, however, the *sensus divinitatis* would malfunction because it was meant to function in a specific kind of person. The nature of this person, though, has been corrupted as a result of sin.

A detailed look into these differences would take us well beyond the scope of this project and into, as Plantinga calls it, deep, dark, and gloomy theological waters.[231] However, it should be noted that Calvin, where most contemporary discussions on the *sensus divinitatis* originate, sees the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* being hampered primarily because of human nature. In other words, Calvin would claim that there is something wrong with us as agents that explains cases of unbelief. Helm agrees and notes the following about Calvin's view:

> What is error about God due to? According to Calvin it is not due, basically, to a lack of information. Error is not due to ignorance. Nor is it due to mere weakness. Nor is it due to the influence of the environment; nor to a combination of these factors. In fact, it is surprising that Calvin seems to pay little or no attention to the fact that the environment now bears the marks of the fall, and might be expected to affect the triggering of the sensus… Rather, error is due to perversity or willfulness of the human self, a perversity that is often, but not always, or necessarily accompanied by, and made possible by, self-deception. Because the issue of God's existence is of considerable importance for men and women, that is, it is not a mere theoretical or trivial issue, sin leads, via a mechanism of self-deceiving willfulness, to the true God being displaced from within the category of the divine by many gods, or by no god.[232]

Plantinga seemingly takes note of this as well and argues that because of the noetic effects of sin our ability to know God is hampered by our human nature:

> Due to that basic and aboriginal sin *pride*, I may unthinkingly and almost without noticing assume that I am the center of the universe (of course if you ask me, I will deny thinking any such thing, vastly exaggerating the importance of what happens to *me* as opposed to what happens to others. I may vastly overestimate my own attainments and accomplishments, consequently discounting the accomplishments of others. I may also fail to perceive my own sin or see it as less distasteful than it really is; I may fail to see myself as a creature, who, if not viewed through the lens of Christ's sacrifice, would be worthy of divine punishment. (Thus among the ravages of sin is my very failure to note those ravages.) Our grasp of ourselves as image bearers of God himself, the First Being of the universe, can also be damaged or compromised or dimmed. For example, we may think the way to understand human characteristics and ventures such as love, humor, adventure, art, music, science, religion, and morality is solely in terms of our evolutionary origin, rather than in terms of our being image bearers of God. By failing to know God, we can come to a vastly skewed view of what we ourselves are, what we need, what is good for us, and how to attain it.[233]

Plantinga is no doubt heavily relying on the work of Calvin and other reformed thinkers here.[234] The idea is that we, or better, our human nature, suppresses the deliverances of the *sensus*

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[231] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 213.

[232] Helm, "John Calvin, the 'Sensus Divinitatis', and the Noetic Effects of Sin," 98.

[233] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 213-14.

[234] Consider this quote by Jonathan Edwards: "It is inexpressible, and almost inconceivable, how strong a self-righteousness, self-exalting disposition is naturally in man; and what he will not do and suffer to feed and gratify it…; and all to do sacrifice to this Moloch of spiritual pride or self-righteousness; and that they may have

divinitatis in that we are more concerned with ourselves and what we desire, than knowing anything about God. We understand the world around us in terms of our own accomplishments, rather than the work of someone like God. The deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* tell about something about someone *other* than ourselves who deserves our attention and praise. And given who we are, in our postlapsarian depraved state, this isn't something we naturally desire. On this account, then, the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis* is down to our self-righteous, prideful attitude that comes as the result of sin.[235]

The second way in which the *sensus divinitatis* might malfunction would be the result of the postlapsarian environment. Similar to the above proposal, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are suppressed or hindered. But on this account the deliverances of *sensus divinitatis* are hindered not because of human nature, but because of the environment in which the *sensus divinitatis* is currently attempting to function. It's an environment that is not conducive to belief in God and thus hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. In what way exactly is this environment not conducive to belief in God? Put simply, it's an environment where individuals must constantly confront potential defeaters to theism. For example, it's an environment where those who are innocent and most vulnerable suffer, die of starvation, and are afflicted with painful diseases. It's an environment where natural disasters afflict those who live in parts of the world where they already have access to few resources. These examples of course are all instances of the philosophical problem of evil.[236] On this account, then, the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis* is down to the suppression of the faculty as a result of the hostile environment.[237]

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something wherein to exalt themselves before God and their fellow creatures." Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), 241-42.

[235] Plantinga notes that the damage of the *sensus divinitatis* isn't necessarily the result of that individual's sin whose *sensus divinitatis* is malfunctioning. This is right, I think, and falls in line with the reformed idea that we inherited sin and thus we inherited a malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis*. John 9:1-3 is often referenced to support this idea. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, fn. 22 p. 214.

[236] What I have in mind here is the evidential problem of evil and not the logical problem of evil. The latter is rarely discussed philosophically, with the former presenting more of problem for theists.

[237] What's important to keep in mind here that the *sensus divinitatis* is meant to function in a prelapsarian environment—an environment where the cognitive consequences of sin are not present. Belief in God, on this account anyway, would be uncontroversial. There would be no sin and thus no defeaters for belief in God. It's functioning in postlapsarian environment is what makes belief in God controversial. Further, Calvin, oddly I think, never thought or entertained the idea that the created order now bears the marks of the fall. As Calvin understood it, God reveals himself and "daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe. As a consequence, men cannot open their eyes without being compelled to see him." But this point is inconsistent with the idea that the whole of creation is fallen and thus in need of redemption. Compare what Calvin says in *Institutes* I.V.I. and Romans 8.

The third way in which the *sensus divinitatis* might malfunction would be that the *sensus divinitatis* itself, as an independent cognitive faculty, is diseased or broken as a result of sin. This would be similar to other cognitive faculties that malfunction as a result of disease. As Plantinga points out, "there is such a thing as cognitive disease; there is blindness, deafness, inability to tell right from wrong, insanity; and there are analogues of these conditions with respect to the operation of the *sensus divinitatis*."[238] So in the same way that a genetic disorder might cause my perceptual faculties to malfunction (blindness, impaired vision, etc.), sin causes the *sensus divinitatis* to malfunction. At this point we needn't worry about the extent in which the *sensus divinitatis* is diseased or broken. The claim is that on this account the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are seriously hindered as a result of the damaged faculty.

Thus, on the model we have been discussing, the deliverances of *sensus divinitatis* have been damaged, corrupted, interfered with, and hindered; or perhaps even the faculty itself is in need of repair. Of the three models presented, though, what is the correct way to think about the *sensus divinitatis*? I think we can happily concede that all three might bear some truth. The noetic effects of sin are such that the human nature, the environment, and the faculty itself have all been affected.[239] What needs to be shown, then, is whether my account of the agent's involvement in the repair and restoration of the *sensus divinitatis* can be accommodated by all three of the discussed noetic effects of sin. If successful, the model I am offering will demonstrate that the agent who believes in God can *overcome* the cognitive consequences of sin.

5.4 From Malfunction to a Properly Functioning Cognitive Faculty

In order to get clear on the nature of achievements with regard to religious belief, we outlined some possible accounts of the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis*. One possibility that is mentioned is that the environment we currently find ourselves in is hostile and not conducive to belief in God. Our present environment, as whole, is less than favorable for the proper

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[238] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 184.

[239] Even if one doesn't agree with this conclusion, it should be noted that the account I provide will in reality apply to each position individually or collectively. While Calvin's view is seemingly more narrow, certainly Plantinga's view could be interpreted to include aspects of the three noetic effects listed above (though it should be noted that Plantinga's account is vague in this regard and seems to conflate the noetic effects at various points). Other reformed theologians and philosophers that have touched on this topic include Abraham Kuyper, Emil Brunner and more contemporary thinkers like Wolfhart Pannenberg and Wolterstorff. For an excellent summary of their respective positions see Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of How Sin Affects Our Thinking* (Lanham, Maryland.: Lexington Books, 2000). Moroney also provides his own account on the noetic effects of sin.

functioning of the *sensus divinitatis*. But in what ways exactly does an agent who has a true belief about God participate in the process? Can it really be said that belief in God is *because of* my cognitive abilities as an agent? There are many ways, I think, that the cognitive success in question might be *primarily* or *jointly* creditable to the agent. Briefly, perhaps putting yourself in the right environment might suffice. After all, certain environments are more conducive to belief in God than others. This might involve, for example, participating in the sacraments or spending more time reading books from those who are favorably disposed to theism. Or perhaps being open-minded is a virtue and despite the disposition you have to not believe in God (recall Calvin's idea that human nature suppress the *sensus divinitatis*), you, as a virtuous agent, won't rule out the possibility of theism. In other words, you're not hostile to the idea of theism despite the excessively hostile environment you find yourself in and your *seemingly* natural disposition to not believe in God. The idea, then, is that these things will nurture and repair the *sensus divinitatis* so that the deliverances are no longer hindered. It is this process, the process of nurture and repair, where the agent is directly involved. If this model is correct, it is possible for knowledge of God to be appropriately attributable to the agent in question.

We need to take each of these claims in turn in order to see exactly how an agent's knowledge of God is the result of his cognitive abilities and thus a cognitive achievement.[240] To begin, let's get clear on the kind of environment the *sensus divinitatis* it is currently attempting to function in. Let's call the environment that the *sensus divinitatis* is currently attempting to function in the maxi-environment.[241]

> **Maxi-Environment:** The maxi-environment is that environment in which the *sensus divinitatis* is currently malfunctioning. Its malfunction is due, in part or whole, to the fact that this environment is not conducive to belief in God. The result of this is that the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are suppressed.

So the maxi-environment is not conducive to belief in God. You might think that one way around this would be to improve the maxi-environment. Perhaps eradicating poverty, hunger, or

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[240] As a reminder, we briefly discussed the possibility that perceptual beliefs might be similar to theistic beliefs. While it was claimed that perceptual beliefs might be thought of as genuine achievements (after all, true beliefs that are formed as a result of our perceptual faculties demonstrate sufficient cognitive ability), it was conceded that perceptual beliefs aren't the kinds of achievements that are needed in order to demonstrate final value. Thus, in claiming that belief in God must be the result of our cognitive abilities, I am claiming that the achievement must be understood in the strong sense—e.g., in that it overcomes some obstacle.

[241] This is the term that Plantinga uses, though the way I am using it here will be slightly different. Plantinga's discussion of maxi and mini environments is related to accidentally true beliefs on his account of warrant. For a discussion on this see Plantinga, "Warrant and Accidentally True Belief," *Analysis* 57.2 (April 1997), 140-145.

diseases would result in an improved maxi-environment. After all, it is noted above that these are all instances of evil and it would certainly go a long way in creating an environment that is more conducive to belief in God. This solution, however, seems improbable given the unlikelihood that one could ever eradicate *all* evil. Further, a hostile environment isn't the only problem when it comes to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*—our human nature and the diseased or broken *sensus divinitatis* also play a role. So how do we overcome this hostile maxi-environment? Put another way, how do we stop suppressing the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*? The way to do this, I argue, is by engaging in those activities in those *mini-environments* where the surroundings are more conducive and favorable to belief in God.

> **Mini-Environment:** The mini-environment is that environment where the surroundings are more favorable and conducive to belief in God. While the mini-environment is still contained within the hostile maxi-environment, the mini-environment is more favorable or conducive to belief in God thereby allowing, in a more clear and unhindered manner, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*.

The model then is this. The natural world that we currently find ourselves in is one where the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are hindered. The natural world, in its postlapsarian state, is such that there are many potential defeaters to belief in God. The environment isn't favorable and thus in order to liberate the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis,* we need to be in those environments that are more favorable or conducive to belief. Put simply, we escape the effects of the maxi-environment by our presence in the mini-environment. What kinds of mini-environments are more conducive to belief in God? Following Pascal here, you might say that a place of worship or a place where belief is accepted and not rejected is the ideal mini-environment.[242] You might even go further and argue that active participation in those mini-environments make the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* more probable. Whatever the mini-environment (church, participation in the sacraments, reading more Augustine and less Dennett), in escaping the maxi-environment you create a more conducive environment, an environment that is more similar to that environment for which the faculty was originally created. On this model, the mini-environments are intended to be more like the original prelapsarian environments and a lot less like the postlapsarian maxi-environment.

To be clear, it's not the case that participation or involvement in those mini-environments guarantees the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. The model is much weaker than

[242] Pascal of course isn't concerned with maxi and mini-environments directly (especially as we are understanding it). He is concerned, though, with showing that there is a connection between participation and belief. See footnote below.

this. For example, writing on Pascal's Wager, Nicholas Rescher points out that the Wager really is a first step argument that is best understood as the "heart's journey toward belief."[243] The model I am presenting is similar. It's a first step argument where the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis* necessitates a kind of nurturing of the faculty. And the nurturing of this faculty, I argue, begins by maximizing your time in those environments that are more conducive to belief in God.

What we have so far, then, is a model that concerns the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* in a hostile maxi-environment. But is there a model where the nurturing of the *sensus divinitatis* actually repairs a broken faculty or changes our corrupt human nature? After all, it is argued that the malfunctioning of the *sensus divinitatis* is not merely down to the unfavorable maxi-environment, but also the result of the *sensus divinitatis* itself being broken and our corrupt human nature. Given this, is it possible that the above model actually applies to *all* the discussed hindrances of the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*? In short, yes. Placing yourself in those mini-environments that are more favorable to belief in God not only decreases the noetic effects of sin that resulted in the hostile maxi-environment, but also begins the healing process of both the broken faculty and our human nature. Concerning the latter, if our postlapsarian human nature is such that we see nothing beyond ourselves and have no desire to worship anyone but ourselves, it could be argued that certain environments are such that they counter the selfishness and egotistical attitude that hinders the deliverance of the *sensus divinitatis*. Being in those environments where humility and selflessness are encouraged, is in effect more like the environment where the *sensus divinitatis* was originally created to function. Thus, the process of cognitive renewal whereby the effects of the maxi-environment is weakened and our corrupt human nature is diminished, begins with us being in the right kind of environment.[244]

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[243] Nicholas Rescher, *Pascal's Wager* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1985), 121-127. The argument I am making here isn't of course anything similar to the Wager. Some of the implications of the Wager, however, are closely related. As Rescher points out, "the Wager argument is thus no more than a starting point. Its potential contribution is at most that which Pascal envisaged for it as a mere beginning for the Heart's enlightenment of Mind… The aim of Pascal's wager is to induce people to try the religious life. It appeals to prudence because in apologetics prudence is the best available instrument we have before taking the plunge, as it were. Later on, *ex post facto*, one can of course do more—and better." The model I am presenting, then, is similar. It's the effects of the mini-environment that nurture the *sensus divinitatis* which lead to belief.

[244] It is no part of the model to say that this is the only way in which the process begins. Perhaps the "heart's journey to belief" begins in other ways. Being open-minded, for example, is one way in which the nurturing of the *sensus divinitatis* might happen. You do not believe in God, but you are not opposed to the idea and earnestly seek the truth. You read books on the topic, spend time with those with whom you disagree, etc. In other words, you don't rule out the possibility, remain open to the idea, and you are overall a good epistemic agent. On this model, it could be argued that in being the right kind of person you exhibit the kind of

But what about the repair of the *sensus* divinitatis? The above model also fits nicely with the idea that the faculty itself is diseased or broken and in need of repair. The repair of the broken faculty involves being in those environments where healing and restoration can take place. However, to focus merely on this would be to tell only part of the story. Put simply, the ravages of sin are *also* healed by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. As Plantinga notes,

> there is the repair of the *sensus divinitatis*, so that once again we can see God and be put in mind of him in the sorts of situations in which that belief-producing process is designed to work. The work of the Holy Spirit goes further. It gives us a much clearer view of the beauty, splendor, loveliness, attractiveness, glory of God. It enables us to see something of the spectacular depth of love revealed in the incarnation and atonement. Correlatively, it also gives me a much clearer view of my heinousness of sin, and of the degree and extent to which I myself am enmeshed in it. It gives me a better picture of my own place in the universe. Perhaps I will no longer see myself as the center of things, or see my wants, needs, and desires as more important and more worthy of fulfillment than anyone else's. I may come to see that I fit in as one of God's children, all of enormous value even if all vastly less important and valuable than God, and all equally important and valuable. [245]

Thus, what we have here is the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit that heals both the broken and malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis* and our corrupt human nature. It allows for the proper functioning of the *sensus divinitatis* in a postlapsarian environment, which would otherwise remain hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. The result of the right kind of nurturing, which Calvin eloquently summarizes, is this:

> Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows is the true God. [246]

With a malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis* we are like those who attempt to read without the necessary tools. The regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, however, is such that the right kind of nurturing and healing results in the accurate deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*.

In summary, then, the model I am proposing sees the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* as a process that we are involved in. By placing ourselves in the right kinds of environments we allow the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* to function in a more familiar environment—an environment that is more favorable and more similar to the one in which it was originally intended to function. In the end, the result is that belief in God is an achievement. It's an

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virtues that are consistent with true belief and thus diminish, in some important way, the noetic effects of sin on the human nature.

[245] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 280-281.

[246] *Institutes*, 70.

achievement because the success in question is the result of *our* cognitive abilities as agents. Further, it's the kind of achievement that has final value. In other words, it's a strong achievement. It's the kind of achievement where the agent overcomes a significant obstacle to belief. The agent overcomes a significant obstacle—the maxi-environment—by placing himself in those kinds of environments that are more conducive to belief in God.

5.5 Joint or Primary Credit?

In the previous chapter it is argued that there are two kinds of achievements that are compatible with knowledge: achievements(pc) and achievements(jc). Further, it is argued that both kinds of achievements are to be understood in the strong sense if we are to retain the idea that achievements are of final value.[247] The question, then, is whether knowledge of God is primarily creditable or merely jointly creditable to the agent. An important caveat to note here is that belief in God would be primarily creditable on the weak achievement thesis. In this regard, the *sensus divinitatis* might function like our perceptual faculties and give rise to belief in God in the appropriate environment. On this account, the belief would be *explained by* or the *result of* our cognitive ability, similar to beliefs that come about as the result of our perceptual faculties. However, given that we are concerned with providing an account of the strong achievement thesis (whether this be joint or primary), the question we are concerned with might be put this way: Is the success in question the result of a cognitive ability that results in a strong achievement? Thus, with regard to the question of primary or joint credit, the question is whether the cognitive success (in this case the success is true belief in God that is the result of overcoming some obstacle to belief) is explained *primarily* because of the abilities of the agent?

At this point, given that both joint credit and primary credit are sufficient for a genuine achievement, it may seem of little consequence which kind of achievement knowledge of God amounts to. However, we need to keep in mind that the model we are presenting is supposed to be consistent with the reformed approach to epistemology. And it might turn out that one or both of these types are inconsistent with some of the cherished dogmas of reformed philosophy and theology. With this in mind, we need to be clear on what kind of (strong) achievement knowledge of God amounts to.

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[247] Keep in mind that in discussing achievements, unless otherwise noted, I am referring to strong achievements.

To begin, the model I am presenting above is most compatible with the idea that knowledge of God is an achievements(jc). The reason for this is that knowledge of God on the primary credit account, intuitively anyway, presents serious problems for the reformed account. To begin, it's not obvious on reformed accounts whether knowledge of God really has anything to do with the agent. There is extensive discussion in reformed literature about God being *solely* responsible for the belief of the theist.[248] The noetic effects of sin are so severe that God needs to significantly intervene if the agent is to have knowledge of him. Thus, it is God, *through* the repair of the sensus divinitatis, who is primarily responsible for the belief of the agent. There is no primary (or perhaps even *joint*) credit to speak of on this account. The agent is too blind, unwilling, and averse to the things of God. We are passive agents in the process and overcome no obstacles on the way to belief. God removes all the obstacles and supernaturally fixes the broken faculty. What is our role, then? We simply believe. After all, we had little choice. Consider a modified version of the Emie example from the previous chapter:

> **Emie*:** Let's image that there is a small child named Emie. Emie can walk on her own most of the time, but like most children she has trouble when the ground is uneven or littered with obstacles (e.g., rocks). In other words, under normal conditions Emie's ability to walk is apparent. However, the environment isn't always a friendly one and she now finds herself on a trail that is uneven and strewn with large rocks. However, she still needs to go from point A to point B. She stands to her feet and wobbles along. As her father, I notice that she isn't going to make it on her own. So I pick her up and carry her from point A to point B.

In this modified example, the success in question is not the result of an agent that is active in the process. There are obstacles to overcome, but Emie does nothing significant to bring about her success. Her abilities are not on display, God's are. Thus, Emie* is consistent with the view that it is the abilities of God, not the agent, that explain true belief.[249]

Cleary, if Emie* is analogous to the way we come to believe in God then the problem of primary credit sufficient for a genuine achievement becomes apparent. But this doesn't merely present a problem for the notion of primary credit, it also poses a problem for the idea of joint credit. If God is *solely* responsible for the agents believing (e.g., removing obstacles, healing and

[248] For a good introduction to these topics see Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1966).

[249] This line of thinking also has implications for the example given above where Jon believes and Jane doesn't. If the agent does nothing in the process, it might seem that it's ultimately down to God's choosing. Whether or not this is just or fair is a discussion that unfortunately goes beyond the scope of this chapter. And while I'm inclined to think that the above reasoning is false, I don't think it follows that God's intervention in the case of Jon (as opposed to Jane) is *necessarily* arbitrary. Even though we don't have access to the reasons behind the choice, it doesn't follow that God doesn't have a *good* reason to intervene in the case of Jon and not Jane.

enabling the *sensus divinitatis,* etc.) then knowledge of God isn't an achievement of any sort and demonstrating the value of knowledge on reformed accounts will be difficult.

However, the above model is too strong.[250] On the model I am endorsing, the original Emie and tightrope cases from the previous chapter are more analogous to the model I am endorsing:

> **Emie:** Let's image that there is a small child named Emie. Emie can walk on her own most of the time, but like most children she has trouble when the ground is uneven or littered with obstacles (e.g., rocks). In other words, under normal conditions Emie's ability to walk is apparent. However, the environment isn't always a friendly one and she now finds herself on a trail that is uneven and strewn with large rocks. However, she still needs to go from point A to point B. She stands to her feet and wobbles along. As her father, I notice that she isn't going to make it on her own so I stand behind her. I catch her when she falls and hold her arms as she navigates the obstacle. In due course, Emie arrives at her destination.
>
> **Jean**: Jean is a world famous tightrope walker. Jean has famously crossed many well-known landmarks and is widely regarded for his abilities and skills in tightrope walking. On this particular occasion, Jean attempts to cross the Niagara Gorge between the New York and Canada. With much fanfare, he successfully crosses the Niagara Gorge. However, unbeknownst to Jean (and those who admire him), there was an evil demon who very much wanted Jean to fall into Niagara Falls. Yet, Jean's guardian angel was determined to thwart the evil demons efforts and battles the evil demon throughout the crossing. Thankfully, as it turns out, Jean's guardian angel defeats the evil demon and because of this, Jean is able to successfully cross the gorge.

In the cases noted above, the agent is an active participant in the process. However, as noted in the previous chapter, these cases represent an achievement(jc). This is because of the hostile environment that Emie and Jean find themselves in. Some environments are *excessively* hostile in relation to one's ability. Thus, what is required is the exercise of the relevant ability for that success to be counted as an achievement. Both Emie and Jean possess the ability to successfully complete their goals. Yet, in their *current* environments, they need some sort of intervention. Noting, of course, that their respective abilities are still on display. What explains their successes, in part anyway, are their abilities.

The model I am proposing is very similar. The human condition is so severe that the environment is *excessively* hostile in relation to one's cognitive ability. Thus, the agent and God are at work together in overcoming the maxi-environment. The agent, by putting himself in those environments that are more conducive to belief in God, aids in the nurturing and proper function of the *sensus divinitatis*. God, through the Holy Spirit, also aids in the repair and restoration of the *sensus divinitatis*. This understanding of the *sensus divinitatis* claims that God must intervene given

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[250] I will return to this briefly in the sections below. While I reject the idea that belief in God on reformed accounts must accept the notion that God is primarily creditable, it's not clear that this isn't the traditional position. Thus, I will discuss some of these concerns below.

the severity of the human condition on the *sensus divinitatis*. The cognitive consequences of sin are so great that the *sensus divinitatis* is unable, without divine intervention, to produce true beliefs about God. Despite this intervention, however, it should be clear that the belief forming process is a joint effort and one where mutual cooperation is necessary.

Is it ever the case that knowledge of God (as I am understanding it on the reformed account) is primarily creditable to the agent? This depends on one's understanding of the role that God might play in the belief forming process. If God plays a minimal role, whatever that might entail, then perhaps the success in question is primarily creditable. One would need to construct a weaker model of the healing and repair of the *sensus divinitatis* where the agent is the primary reason for its proper functioning. Whatever the weaker notion entails, however, it will be difficult to retain the distinctive reformed character that is provided by the achievement(jc) model I am offering above.

5.6 Benefits of this Model

In this section I want to focus on two benefits of the model I am presenting.[251] First, if the above model is correct, we are in a position to answer, convincingly I think, a problem that was raised by early critics of reformed epistemology. The problem, as described by DeRose and others, is that religious beliefs are not typically acquired in the same immediate or spontaneous fashion that perceptual beliefs are.[252] Religious belief often times seems to be a gradual one, as Keith DeRose claims, that has an element of a "gentle nudge" rather than some immediate or firm belief. Put another way, the reformed account seems to suggest that the agent is passive in the process and is then suddenly "zapped" by a deity into believing.[253] Pritchard sums up this concern nicely:

> The problem with this construal of the epistemology of the religious belief is that it overstates, in relevant respects, the parallels between religious experience and perceptual experience. In particular, there is a worry about the putatively analogous "spontaneity" of religious and perceptual beliefs. It was noted above that religious beliefs, like perceptual beliefs, can sometimes seem to have the same sort of "directness" that one might find in the perceptual case, as if one is directly responding to a religious being in the way that one directly responds to objects in the physical world via perception. It was this spontaneity of perceptual belief that made it apt for a radically non-evidentialist construal since evidence seemed to play no essential warranting role as regards standard perceptual belief. The problem, however, is that whereas this sort of

[251] The most obvious, of course, has already been discussed: that we can account for the final value of knowledge of God.

[252] See Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology,* 188-91 and Keith DeRose, *Are Christian Beliefs Properly Basic,* unpublished manuscript.

[253] Ibid.

> "directness" is the norm in the perceptual case, it is more naturally thought of as the exception to the norm in the religious case. Indeed, whereas perceptual beliefs seem to be, in the main, "forced" upon us, religious beliefs often seem to be formed in a far less immediate and compelling fashion. As Keith DeRose has put it, normal religious belief is rarely understood in terms of being "zapped" by a divinity, as Plantinga seems to understand it; instead, the more common way of conceiving of such belief is in terms of being "nudged" or "invited" towards a certain sort of doxastic commitment.[254]

The above points really address two concerns. First, that religious belief doesn't typically come about in the same way that perceptual beliefs do. This is because, it is assumed, that religious beliefs aren't forced upon us like perceptual beliefs are. Religious beliefs are thought to be more like the experience described by C.S. Lewis who claims to have come to religious belief "kicking and screaming".[255] The second worry that seems to be raised is that the agent is more active in the process than is typical of perceptual beliefs. Being "nudged" or "invited" toward a doxastic commitment certainly isn't something that happens with perceptual beliefs. While the account I am providing doesn't alleviate all these concerns, it can deal with at least *some* of these worries. The account I am providing takes a middle ground approach by claiming that while belief in God is ultimately immediate and basic, it is not analogous to many of the typical cases of perceptual belief as the criticism suggests. In other words, the immediacy and basicality of the belief is where the similarity ends. And while this is one of the concerns raised above, another concern is that religious beliefs are acquired by a passive agents who do nothing more than find themselves with belief in God. But, as my account suggests, this isn't the whole story. Cases of perceptual belief, for example, rarely involve the overcoming of obstacles to belief. The account I am endorsing sees the process of knowing that God exists in a much more detailed and intricate manner than reformed accounts initially suggest. Perhaps the belief is immediate and basic (and thus shares this similarity with perceptual belief), but the nurturing of the sensus divinitatis is necessary if the belief is to ever come about in the first place. Thus, the agent plays an active role in the process. It's a process of nurturing that often takes time and commitment and is thus not equivalent to unsuspecting agents being "zapped" into religious belief.

Second, my account addresses the claim that the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are arbitrary. Recall the example given above where Jane and Jon are simultaneously enjoying the same experiences; yet Jon, as it turns out, comes away believing in God while Jane doesn't. What, if anything, explains this phenomenon? On the model I presenting, what explains the properly functioning faculty in Jon is the nurturing and healing of the *sensus divinitatis* that has taken place.

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[254] Pritchard, *Reforming Reformed Epistemology*, 189.

[255] C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1955), 221.

What explains the lack of function in Jane, as stressed by the reformed epistemologist, are the cognitive consequences of sin. Thus, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are not random, down to luck, or merely the result of God choosing Jon over Jane; rather, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* is process that involves an active agent who plays a role in the belief forming process.

5.7 Criticisms and Concerns Addressed

In this last section I want to discuss a number of objections that might come about from this account.[256] The first objection that one might raise is to question whether the knowledge-as-achievement thesis is compatible with reformed theology. The first response to this objection might come in the form of a question: Does it matter? How important is it that the model above be compatible with the various nuances of reformed theology? Since I am committing myself only to reformed epistemology and not a holistic embrace of the reformed tradition, it would seem that this worry is of little significance.

Further, note that this same question might be asked of the reformed epistemologist. I take it that Plantinga and other reformed epistemologists see their model as consistent within the reformed tradition (as do I), but are not committed to providing a model that is wholly compatible with everything that Calvin, for example, and other reformed theologians claim. The key here is that reformed epistemology bears some of the important marks of the reformed tradition (e.g., the sensus divinitatis), but whether the entire model is consistent with the reformed tradition is going to be difficult to assess given the lack of uniformity amongst reformed scholars. The same, I think, applies to my model. My model bears some of the markings of the reformed tradition, (eg., because of the cognitive consequences of sin, belief in God, in a postlapsarian environment, is more difficult and controversial), while the various nuances of the model are going to be difficult to assess and may depart slightly form more traditional understandings.

Despite this, however, there is one point I would like to clarify with regard to my model that might serve to alleviate some of the concerns that might be raised by those committed to

[256] Many of the objections discussed here were raised at two different conferences where early and recent versions of this chapter (and portions of chapter 4) were presented. The first was at *The British Society for the Philosophy of Religion* held at Oxford in 2011. The second was at the *Society of Christian Philosophers* held at the University of Colorado, Boulder in 2013. Also, an anonymous reviewer from Ashgate Publishing provided some very helpful points that will be discussed in this section.

this tradition.[257] Put simply, it might be thought that the above model is committed to a semi-Pelagian soteriology. Semi-Pelagianism is the view that God and humans work together, jointly, for salvation. This view is often seen as a compromise between the Augustinian view of predestination and the Pelagian view of autonomous human agency. Rebecca Weaver summarizes the semi-pelagian view clearly:

> Like Augustine, his adversaries in this controversy acknowledge the necessity of grace but believed that it was equally important to affirm the significance of human agency. They insisted that human persons have a genuine role in shaping their own lives and destiny; therefore, they objected to the teaching of a sovereign predestinating grace that severely diminishes or even denies human agency.[258]

The Augustinian view, however, differs significantly:

> According to the bishop of Hippo, such restoration rests on God's grace, given freely and without regard to human merit, rather than on the pattern of the person's life or the character of the person's actions. One effect of this view is the severance of the linkage between a person's actions and that person's ultimately destiny, since restoration depends entirely on God's grace and not at all on human moral achievement.[259]

First, it's important to note that semi-Pelagianism was rejected by the church at the Synod of Orange in 529. And despite some similar language between my model and the semi-Pelagian model, it is not my intention to resurrect a semi-Pelagian soteriology that is deemed unorthodox. Thus, I think the claim that my model reflects a semi-Pelagian soteriology conflates those significant differences between warranted belief and saving faith. Warranted belief, as I understand it, is sufficient for knowledge. Unlike saving faith, however, warranted belief is not sufficient, for example, for what theologians call *justification* (in the words of Erickson, justification is the legal process of being brought into union with Christ).[260] Put another way, knowledge of God doesn't entail any change in one's standing or relationship with God.[261] Further, knowledge of God doesn't imply any kind of reestablishment of this relationship or the

[257] The following point isn't merely one that is of concern to those in the reformed tradition. It might, as it turns out, be a point of contention for various religious traditions.

[258] Rebecca Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency: A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), ix. Note that the "adversaries" in the above quote are the theologians who advocate the semi-Pelagian view. For a brief definition see "Semipelagianism" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* eds., F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 1491. Further, the semi-Pelagian view is sometimes referred to as the doctrine of synergism, which holds that "God and man together accomplish what must be done in order for man to be saved." See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 911.

[259] Ibid., 2.

[260] *Christian Theology*, 904-905.

[261] Now it might be the case that relationship entails knowledge, but my model, rightly I think, avoids these more complex theological doctrines. My model is concerned with the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* producing warranted belief.

regeneration of the individual who comes to believe in God on the model I am proposing. Justification, adoption, regeneration are all part of the process of saving faith and are not necessarily related to warranted belief. Thus, the tension between divine grace and human agency isn't at play on the model I proposing. My model makes no claims about the role of human agency in soteriological terms (justification, adoption, regeneration, etc. are all, happily, down to the divine grace). In short, semi-Pelagianism is concerned with divine action and its role in saving faith. The model I am proposing, however, is merely concerned with the role that we as humans play in the process of warranted belief.[262]

A second objection that might be raised is that my model is not sufficiently diverse to accommodate other models of religious knowledge. So, for example, my model says nothing about those who come to knowledge of God on the bases of, say, testimony or the traditional arguments for theism. While it is true that my model says nothing about other examples of religious knowledge, this doesn't necessarily entail that my account is overly narrow. The account I am providing is meant to serve a specific purpose: namely, account for the value of knowledge within a broad understanding of reformed epistemology. Note, I haven't chosen to examine the value of knowledge with regard to reformed epistemology arbitrarily. I take it that this account of religious knowledge is consistent with the ideas set forth in chapter 1. In this regard, then, the account might be seen as narrow, but it is certainly sufficient for the overall goals of the project. Thus, the responsibility of providing an all-inclusive account of the value of religious isn't necessary. It would be up to those who endorse *other* models of religious knowledge to provide an account of the value of knowledge as it specifically relates to the account they are endorsing.[263]

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[262] There is another related point of contention here that might be solved in the same manner. The model I am proposed sees the individual as merely crippled in a sense. The illustration I give of the small child Emie is a good example of this. In the example, Emie has some ability, but needs help along the way in order to get from point A to point B. The reformed tradition, however, would see the agent as more analogous to a dead man attempting to walk. So it's not merely that the agent has some trouble along the way and needs a helping hand; rather, on the reformed account, the agent is dead (and thus completely useless and helpless) and needs to be *carried* from point A to point B. I take it that the same distinction above between warranted belief and saving faith apply here as well. When it comes to saving faith, we are, perhaps, like the dead man—wholly unable to contribute anything to our regeneration and justification (in the theological sense). But warranted belief in God is less theologically complex and is more similar to the Emie case discussed. We need help to achieve the success, but we are merely hampered by the environment and not totally useless as a result.

[263] The reason for adopting this specific model has to do with the fact that I take reformed epistemology to be the kind of religious epistemology that we want and expect (see chapter 1). Where these other models of religious knowledge fall short, reformed epistemology succeeds. Thus, part of its success is that it does in fact allow for an account of the value of knowledge. Whether other accounts of religious knowledge can make such a claim remains to be seen.

Related to the above objection, it might also be claimed that my model is too narrow in that it doesn't account for religious knowledge in children. The objection here is that if knowledge of God (and its subsequent value) is dependent on the overcoming of some obstacle to belief, how does my model accommodate religious belief in children? After all, children who are born into a friendly mini-environment might never be exposed to the hostile maxi-environment that is described above.[264] In order to see the force of this objection, consider the following example:

> **Allan**: Allan is a small child who happened to be born into a very religious Christian family. He attends his religious ceremonies every week and for as long as he can remember, he has always believed in God. He never remembers a time when he didn't believe in God and he has never questioned God's existence. The same goes for all of Allan's friends. For as long as they can remember, they have also always believed in God. In fact, most everyone that Allan knows believes in God and his beliefs, as of yet, have never been challenged.

From the example, it appears that Allan is born into a very favorable environment and one that is conducive to belief in God. If this is the case, then Allan doesn't need to overcome any obstacles—there simply aren't any. He is surrounded by like-minded people and has, as the example puts it, always believed.

Despite the force of this objection, there are two ways one might respond to this example. First, one might simply claim that children lack knowledge. Children, like Allan in the example, might have very strong beliefs, but they simply lack knowledge. There is an important theological component to this response. For example, this response is consistent with the attitude, historically anyway, that religious organizations might have taken towards children. Within the Christian tradition, Catholics and Protestants alike have baptized babies and, when they were of "sound mind", they would confirm their belief and faith. Generalizing briefly, the idea is that baptism seals those children making them part of the covenant until they are old enough to decide for themselves. Babies and small children lack the reasoning capacity to think for themselves and thus inherit the benefits of the faith until they have developed the necessary reasoning skills that are required.

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[264] One problem with this objection is that it's unclear what exactly is meant by the term "children". I assume, for the purposes of this paper anyway, that children might mean anyone who lacks the reasoning skills we would expect of a normal, cognitively functioning adult—adding of course that they would need to be under a certain age. How old, however, might differ according to cultures and their customs. Despite this somewhat unclear definition, I take it that a general understanding of what it means to be a child is sufficient for the force of the objection.

While this approach is appealing, it does face some difficulties for the account I am proposing. To begin, it's not clear that children can't have knowledge of God on the reformed account. If knowledge of God is similar to perceptual knowledge (in that there is some cognitive faculty that gives rise to both kinds of beliefs), denying this type of religious knowledge might entail the denial of perceptual knowledge in children as well. Rather than delve into the different issues at play here, perhaps the objection can be phrased in somewhat weaker fashion: *If* children have knowledge of God, how does my model accommodate this possibility?

In order to answer this objection, let's return to the example above. First, it's important to keep in mind that regardless of the Allan's very favorable mini-environment, the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are still hindered, smothered, and broken. The maxi-environment that he was born into is still hostile to the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis*. Thus, the same exact process as the one described above needs to take place in order for the *sensus divinitatis* to function properly. The obstacles are virtually the same for everyone. Where there is knowledge of God, there is the nurturing and healing of the *sensus divinitatis*. Still, one could argue, the sorts of obstacles that Allan had to overcome are not equivalent to the sorts of obstacles someone else in a less favorable mini-environment would have to overcome. This is true. The child of Billy Graham might have had a much easier time than the child of Nietzsche. However, the "hardness" of the success doesn't determine the legitimacy of the achievement. Suppose I go to the doctor and she tells me that I need to lose 20 pounds in order to be at my ideal weight. In order to do this, she claims, I need a healthy diet and I further need to train and run in a marathon. Committed to living a healthy life, I begin a strict daily regimen of diet and exercise. And, per my doctor's instructions, I train and run in a marathon. After sometime, I reach my ideal. Suppose also that I then find out that my friends Kyle and Jamie also went to the doctor and were told they were 10 and 5 pounds over their ideal weights respectively. Kyle is told that he needs to train and run a half marathon while Jamie is told that he needs to train and run a 5k. Kyle and Jamie obey the doctor's orders and return to their ideal weight.

Now while it is clear that I put in the most effort in order to reach my ideal weight, this does not take away from the fact that Kyle and Jamie achieved something as well. Should you be more impressed by my achievement than that of Kyle and Jamie's? Perhaps, but only in the same way that you'd be more impressed that Nietzsche's son is a theist as opposed to Billy Graham's son. In the end, the legitimacy of an achievement isn't undermined by the supposed or perceived easiness of the task. Thus, while children who are born into those very favorable mini-

environments seemingly overcome very little, their warranted belief it is still a cognitive ability of the sort we looking for when evaluating genuine achievements.

5.8 Luck, Knowledge of God, and the Tertiary Value Problem

It was conceded in the previous chapter that the achievement thesis is not sufficient for a general account of the value of knowledge where the tertiary value problem is addressed. This concession was due to the fact that we cannot account for Barney type cases where agents demonstrate a cognitive achievement and still lack knowledge. While this might not be problematic for the final value of knowledge (the KA thesis isn't undermined by these types of cases), it is problematic for the tertiary value problem in that knowledge is not more valuable than that which falls short of knowledge. However, the same problems needn't afflict the account I am providing. On the model I am presenting, there seem to only be cases of evidential luck, which are not incompatible with knowledge. Consider the following example:

> **Bank Robber:** Suppose a bank is being robbed. The bank robber, unbeknownst to anyone at the bank, is Jesse James. Despite his face being plastered all over the city's most wanted signs, no one at the bank recognizes him given the mask he is wearing. James demands and receives all the money at the bank. On the way out, however, James' mask accidentally slips off with just enough time for a frightened bank teller to recognize that the bank robber is Jesse James. James quickly places his mask over his face and escapes.[265]

What's important to note here is that the agent involved (the bank teller in this case) is lucky to have obtained the evidence for the belief that the bank robber is Jesse James. Yet, it seems clear that despite the bank teller's good fortune, she still knows that Jesse James is the bank robber. This is because it is widely agreed that *evidential* luck is compatible with knowledge; while other forms of luck, such as veritic luck, are incompatible with knowledge. Evidential luck, according to Pritchard, is that kind of luck where "it is lucky that the agent acquires the kind of evidence that she has in favor of her belief."[266] On the model I am proposing, cases where luck is involved are of the evidential type described above.

In order to see this, let's consider some examples. Suppose I am out of town and want to watch a football match at a local pub. I find out that the game is showing at a pub called St.

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[265] See Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 193.

[266] Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemic Luck* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 136. For more on this issue see Mylan Engel, "Is Epistemic Luck Compatible with Knowledge?" *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1992) 59-75. A paper by Peter Unger gives several accounts of luck that are also compatible with knowledge. See "An Analysis of Factual Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 157-170.

Michael's Pub. With this information, I head out the door and make my toward St. Michael's. On the way, I get a bit disoriented given the excitement and enthusiasm I have for the match. I stop and ask for directions to St. Michael's. Unbeknownst to me, however, there is a church also called St. Michael's close to the pub. The local individual giving me directions assumes I want to go to St. Michael's cathedral (perhaps he notices I am not a local and believes I want to take pictures). I end up at church and have a Plantinga-type religious experience of the sort described in this essay.

What we have from the above example, I believe, is a case where the agent luckily acquired evidence in favour of her true belief. It is not a case of knowledge undermining luck. One might think, however, that the above example isn't close enough to the Barney-type cases discussed in the previous chapter. Here, then, is another example that is more similar to the Barney case, but still a case of knowledge-compatible evidential luck. Suppose I want to talk about religion with someone. I make my way to the local university where I've heard that philosophy grad students often talk about these things. As I arrive, I see a group of students at the university who, from their appearance and conversation, seem to be the ones I am looking for. Unbeknownst to me, however, 10 of the 11 graduate students are adamantly against religion. And if I approach any of those 10 graduate students, they will do their best to convince me that God does not exist. However, I approach the one theist in the group. We begin to talk and, on the model suggested above, I have a Plantinga-type religious experience of the sort described earlier in this essay.[267] Compare the above example with the following case of evidential luck:

> **Detective:** A detective is trying to solve a murder mystery. Upon receiving a reliable tip, he walks into a room which contains a total 11 boxes. 10 of the boxes in the room contain misleading evidence about the murder the detective is trying to solve. Fortunately for the detective, he opens the one box that contains evidence about the true nature of the murder. From the evidence found in the box, the detective finds and arrests the suspect.

Given the details of example above, it's clear that the detective in this case knows the true nature of the murder. The detective is lucky, but it is only a matter of luck that he has obtained the *evidence* for p; it is not, crucially, a matter of luck that his belief in p is true. This is what distinguishes Barney-type cases from these types of cases. In the Barney case, Barney's belief that p is lucky. The Detective Case, then, is an example of evidential luck where the luck involved doesn't undermine his knowledge. Further, the Detective Case is analogous to the case above

[267] Keep in mind of course that we are assuming that the belief is true. After all, Plantinga's model (and the one we are endorsing) is that theism is warranted only if *true*.

where I approach the one theist philosopher in the room. The belief that God exists is only evidentially lucky, but it is not a matter of luck that my belief in God is true.

So what explains the lack of Barney-type cases for this specific kind of religious knowledge? What seems to be going on here is that the *sensus divinitatis* isn't analogous to our perceptual faculties. Our perceptual faculties can give us true beliefs about red barns even when we could have easily been wrong about the red barns. Our perceptual faculties are easily misled in certain environments. The same doesn't apply to the faculty we are calling the *sensus divinitatis*. The faculty either gives rise to belief in God or it doesn't. And on the model I am describing, it only gives rise to belief in God if nurtured in the appropriate environment. Consider this analogous example. Suppose I have a specific faculty that, when functioning properly, detects genuine red barns. I am in Barn Façade County where some alien—who is unaware that I have this faculty—erects a bunch of barn façades. Like the original case, I look at the only genuine red barn in the county. In this case, I believe, it is clear that I do know that there is a genuine red barn in front of me. The reason is that unlike the original Barney case, it is not a matter of luck that my belief in p is true. I couldn't, in this case anyway, have easily been wrong about the red barn. This red barn faculty functions similarly to the *sensus divinitatis*. When one forms a warranted belief about the existence of God, one cannot have easily been wrong. The deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are sure.

One might wonder, however, whether evidentially lucky true beliefs about God are still strong achievements? The response to this objection is similar to response given above concerning religious knowledge in children. The same process of nurturing and repair of the *sensus divinitatis* is undertaken where there is evidential luck. The agent involved is still overcoming obstacles to belief and must still involve himself in the mini-environment. While the agent has luckily found himself in the right kind of environment, it's no different than a child who was born into those environments that are more conducive to belief in God. Is the agent lucky, fortuitous, and perhaps blessed?—perhaps, but not in any way that undermines knowledge or the cognitive achievement of knowing that God exists.

AFTERWORD

The primary aim of this thesis was to determine whether knowledge of God is a cognitive achievement. We were concerned about this question because of the implication it has on the value question. The value question, put simply, is this: Is knowledge of God more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge? Moreover, why all the emphasis on knowledge as opposed, for example, to mere true belief? Isn't having a true belief about God just as valuable as knowledge of God? The attention that has been given to knowledge (as opposed to mere true belief) would indicate otherwise. Rightly or wrongly, we value knowledge over other epistemic states that seemingly fall short of knowledge. Knowledge of God, as I have claimed in this thesis, is no different. There is something unique, precious, or desirable about knowledge of God. In our effort to show that knowledge of God is more valuable than a mere true belief about God, we opted to consider this question in light of recent work being done by the virtue epistemologist. The virtue epistemologist (e.g., Greco and Sosa) locate the value of knowledge within the context of achievements. Knowledge is valuable because it's an achievement. This being our model, knowledge of God, if it is more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge, needs to be a cognitive achievement.

But what's so great about a cognitive achievement? It was argued that we value achievements because of the effort or ability that is on display in the process. Further, we value achievements often times because of the obstacles that are overcome in the process. The agent must, therefore, be an active participant in the process. On the model I have endorsed, the agent in an active participant in the belief formation process. Thus, in understanding knowledge of God as a cognitive achievement, the agent plays an active role in the process. Further, the agent, with respect to belief in God, overcomes significant obstacles on his way to belief in God. The agent, as an active participant in the process, overcomes the cognitive consequences of sin. The process isn't the result of dumb luck or a being zapped by a deity, but the result of a properly functioning *sensus divinitatis* that has been nurtured and repaired as a result of the efforts of the agent.

I described two kinds of environments that the *sensus divinitatis* is currently attempting to function in. First, there is the maxi-environment where the deliverances of the *sensus divinitatis* are hindered or smothered. The maxi-environment is that postlapsarian environment where the agent

is faced with many potential defeaters or obstacles to belief. The mini-environment, however, is that environment that is more conducive to belief in God. It might be described as an environment that is more similar to that prelapsarian environment where the *sensus divinitatis* was originally intended to function (e.g., where belief in God would be uncontroversial). The important point here is that the mini-environment is a place where the malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis* can be nurtured or repaired. As an agent, you place yourself in those environments that are more conducive to belief in God and escape the noetic effects of sin thereby nurturing and repairing the *sensus divinitatis.*

The primary obstacle in demonstrating that knowledge of God is cognitive achievement came as a result of the specific model of religious epistemology that was endorsed in this thesis. For reasons mentioned in chapter 1, reformed epistemology was our starting point. The problem, though, is that it's not clear on reformed accounts that the agent plays *any* role in the process. Put another way, one might wonder if the reformed account allows for a true belief about God to be *attributable* to the cognitive abilities of the agent. The difficulty of answering this question was somewhat alleviated in that we conceded in chapter 4 that achievements needn't be *primarily* creditable, but merely *jointly* creditable. Thus, it is both God and the agent who are involved in the belief forming process. This of course raised the question of whether the account I am providing is semi-pelagian. The response to this charge is straightforward. This project concerned warranted belief and not saving faith. The issue concerning human agency and divine grace is best understood in the context of saving faith and not, as I am describing it here, warranted belief.

The question, of course, is whether this project has been successful. Early in the project it was claimed that we should expect a religious epistemology to consider issues from contemporary philosophy. This, it was argued, will deepen and clarify our understanding of the accepted religious epistemology (in this case, reformed epistemology). Insofar as this expectation is concerned, we have done this. And in doing this, we have contributed to the discussion and issues that encompass religious epistemology, but especially reformed epistemology. We have also provided a better understanding of the agent's role in the belief forming process and provided a unique way to understand the malfunctioning *sensus divinitatis*. In all of this, I think, we have been true to the ideas of reformed epistemology and retained some of the distinctive features for which it is well known. Are there other projects that might come as a result of this thesis? Indeed, I believe there are many. In this regard, then, the project is incomplete. It has not covered every possible understanding of the value of knowledge as it relates to God. However,

the aim of this project was to provide a useful example of how those who work in religious epistemology might incorporate contemporary themes into their research projects. Thus, this project will hopefully serve as a foundation for other projects in religious epistemology that consider not only the value question, but other areas of contemporary philosophy as well. Considering this, one might, for example, look for a different way to understand the value of knowledge as it related to reformed epistemology. Perhaps knowledge of God is valuable because it is part of the design plan. God always intended for his image bearers to know him and this desire alone is what makes knowledge of God more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge.

Perhaps another project that might come as a result is an investigation into the analysis of understanding. We have claimed here that knowledge of is more valuable than that which falls short of this knowledge, but what is the relationship between knowledge and understanding in a religious context? Understanding, as outlined by Kvanvig, is a unique epistemic state that involves an internal seeing or appreciating of explanatory and other coherence-inducing relationships in a body of information. It has also been described as something that requires a deep appreciation, grasp, or awareness of how things hang together. Understanding, then, is seemingly different than knowledge. It requires more, epistemically, of the agent. And if this is the case, there are several ways that a focus on understanding might benefit religious epistemology. First, if understanding requires a different kind of appreciation or awareness than knowledge requires, then perhaps this is the epistemic state that the religious believer ought to aim for. Understanding can be seen as the difference between *warranted belief* and *saving belief*. Perhaps an example can illuminate this point to some extent. One might think, for example, that the state of knowing the truth claims of a particular religion is as a belief that saves. In other words, believing religious claim x ensures some kind of present or future reward (e.g., eternal life). However, there is a problem here. There seem to be some who have the correct beliefs (or even knowledge) about some religious claims, yet lack the kind of belief that ensures the reward in question. Consider, for example, what James says about belief: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the *demons* believe and tremble” (James 2:19). What we have here is a group of agents who believe and seemingly have knowledge. However, this belief seems to be a different kind of belief. They lack, in other words, saving belief—the kind of belief that entails some present or future reward.

The point to be made, then, is that one group seems to have a warranted belief (a necessary condition for knowledge), while the other group can be said to have saving belief (a necessary condition for understanding). But what are the indicators of understanding? After all, how can we tell if one person has simple belief and the other has saving belief? I think there are different ways to answer this question, but one possibility is to explore the notion between understanding and action. From the text in James, good deeds are what separate simple belief from saving belief. In this context, then, understanding involves a deep grasp or awareness that saving belief inevitability leads to the right kind of action.

While the notion of "understanding" presents some interesting topics for discussion in religious epistemology, there are of course other areas in contemporary philosophy that can illuminate and enrich the discussions in religious epistemology. This, I think, presents a promising future for religious epistemology. And while my project represents only a small part of this overall aim, it will hopefully encourage others to engage in similar kinds of research.

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