

**THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND
NATURALISM: AGENCY, CHARACTER AND
ADAPTATION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF**

by

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THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND NATURALISM: AGENCY,
CHARACTER AND ADAPTATION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF

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Abstract:

In this project, I defend Alvin Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism from Blake Roeber's use of the inscrutability argument. I argue that Roeber's criticism does not account for all species of religious practice. The primary subject is in reference to a criticism against religious beliefs which says that religious belief is little more than successful social or evolutionary adaptation in believing agents, here after referred to as the Genetic Criticism of Religion. I argue that a successful reply to his criticism shows that there are actually two modes of religious belief, which can be distinguished at least in part, by the motivation of the believing agent. Each mode has distinct implications for the reliability of human faculties. One way in which we might understand this distinction is through an account of motivation proper to the *proper* function of the believing agent. I conclude by arguing that Roeber's inscrutability argument is only successful with respect to one mode but not the other.

Dedication

Asher, Faith, and most importantly, Amanda.

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Chapter 1

The Genetic Fallacy

In an essay, C.S. Lewis accuses both Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx of what he calls ‘bulverism’ but which we may call the ‘genetic fallacy’ as I will explain.¹ I take the genetic fallacy to occur when an individual’s criticism of his interlocutor’s argument is based on the idea’s perceived origins. According to Lewis, both Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx make arguments to the effect that our religious beliefs are “ideologically tainted”² because of their origins. Lewis’ Freud attributes this taint to the needs that humans have for making the world around us seem somewhat within our control. Lewis’ Marx on the other hand, attributes this taint to sociological conditioning based on the economic advantage such beliefs have for some individuals in a given society, that it is because we exist as an economic class and that various religious beliefs help to perpetuate these social constructions, that religious belief is necessary to maintain the structure necessary to support complex societies.

As explained by Lewis, to commit bulverism, you assume that a belief is false because of the manner in which that belief came about rather than assessing the reasons for or against that belief. This is not necessarily what Freud is doing however.^{3 4} I will argue that there are two ways in which we can interpret Freud.

1. C.S. Lewis, “‘Bulverism’,” in **God in the Dock**, 5th ed. (William . Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 271–277.

2. Ibid.

3. Freud makes an argument that human nature is hostile to culture. However, the ability to form complex societies is a trait which does have adaptive value. Religion then is a necessary feature of human culture in that it tames the impulses hostile to culture present in human nature.

4. Sigmund Freud, **The Future of an Illusion** (Broadview Press, 2012), pp. 7-10.

What Freud is arguing is that in light of the fact that there are no acceptable evidences in favor of religious belief, then it is possible that religious belief derives from some other mechanism for belief-formation that is not truth-apt. If it is the case that religious belief is the result of these other processes, certain results should follow. These do follow, the results that we would expect if religious belief were the result of other processes, and therefore it is more likely that religious belief is the product of these other purposes rather than being truth-apt. In conclusion of his argument, the evidence that religious belief serves these other purposes is stronger than the evidence supporting the truth of its premises.

Therefore I will claim that it is more charitable to argue that Freud et al are not guilty of making a genetic fallacy, but rather that they are making a genetic criticism of religion. The genetic fallacy is the fallacy of concluding that a belief is false because of its cause rather than a proper assessment of reasons for or against it. The genetic criticism is the argument that a belief is unwarranted given that its cause is not truth-apt.

Given that they are making a genetic criticism against religion, one may wonder how it may be possible that only religious beliefs are problematic in this respect. Alvin Plantinga argues that in fact we can find non-religious beliefs also problematic in the same way. However, for Plantinga, what is problematic about the genetic criticism is the origins of our cognitive faculties according to the theories of naturalism and evolution which I will go on to explain shortly. A way out, Plantinga argues, is to consider a different origin story. He then posits the theories of theism and evolution which again I will go on to explain shortly. Naturalism, according to Plantinga, is self-defeating whereas theism is not.

Blake Roeber argues that there is a version of theism which is problematic in a similar fashion as naturalism and evolution. According to Roeber, this other version of theism does not give us reason to trust that our cognitive faculties are reliable. A moving point in his argument is that we would have no way of knowing, under his version of theism, that our cognitive faculties are reliable. I defend Plantinga by arguing that Roeber does not articulate a design plan that meets Plantinga's criteria for warrant and which Plantinga has available

to him. I conclude this thesis by giving an account of a possible design which I argue is already implied in Plantinga's theory of warrant and can be derived from classical theism; a fact missed by Roeber.

Chapter 2

Evolutionary Adaptation

2.1 Naturalism, Evolution and Theism

In Alvin Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism *EAAN*, he argues that the conjunction of naturalism and evolution, ($N\&E$), gives us little reason to suppose that our cognitive faculties are reliable (R), and hence little reason to think that the bulk of their deliverances are true. Additionally he argues that naturalism coupled with contemporary evolutionary theory is self-defeating by the way in which the genetic criticism is the consequence of ($N\&E$).¹ In this thesis, I only focus on the first and second claim. In order to understand the argument, I will begin by highlighting some important terms.

2.1.1 Concerns in Naturalism

The conjunction of naturalism and evolution ($N\&E$) competes with the conjunction of theism and evolution as a theory about the ultimate explanation of our existence. Plantinga argues that according to philosophical naturalism, there are no supernatural entities such as gods and spirits.² According to naturalism then, the only things that exist are physical entities such as planetary bodies, atoms, and chemical chain reactions and forces governed by various laws.

1. Alvin Plantinga, "Naturalism Defeated?," in **Naturalism Defeated?**, ed. James Beilby (Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 2.

2. In the section on semantic and syntactic distinction, I do a fuller analysis of the various forms of naturalism. section

Given this thesis, there are no existent supernatural entities, and all questions about events and states of affairs can only be answered given physical explanations. I do not know whether or not Plantinga would hold that material causes can give rise to the immaterial. However, I have reason to believe that whether or not material causes do give rise to immaterial ones, any view that purports this to be the case is similarly problematic.³ In the remainder of this chapter, naturalism will be the view that there are no non-material causal explanations. Given this, I will also show that naturalist views whether acknowledging immaterial existent substances or not are equally problematic.

Traits, Cognitive and Otherwise

According to evolution, there is a process which selects for organisms based on their likelihood for survival. There are many various criteria which we might argue determine the survivability index of an organism or species of organism. This is in part determined by various traits that are incorporated by the organism. For instance, cheetahs are very fast land animals. In order to catch prey, the cheetah has evolved with a particular trait that allows it to catch prey as fast as itself.

However, there are other methods that this land animal might have adopted in such a way as to be competitive. It might have evolved to survive in packs and hunt as a organized unit. It also could have evolved the ability to communicate using advanced symbols, or language. Instead however, the cheetah has evolved to be swift.

The cheetah, necessitated by its need for swiftness, has certain traits which allows it to overtake its prey. For instance, the smaller head size possibly lends to the animals agility while its larger chest capacity incorporates its enlarged heart. Given this theory

3. Some philosophers hold methodological naturalist views. According to these, we do not know whether there are supernatural entities which exist. Given this, naturalism is the best method we have to explain phenomena. Furthermore, it is easy to conflate physicalism, the view that all existent entities are material, and naturalism, the view that all existent entities (does not necessarily need be physical) can be explained by reference to physical things. For my present purposes, any reference to naturalism will be to what Plantinga calls philosophical naturalism which is the weaker thesis that there are no existent supernatural entities.

then, various traits evolving in a species either leads to its capacity to survive, or hinder those same chances. Those adaptive traits possessed by a given organism, given evolution, evolve in this organism incidentally. Therefore, if a species happens to have a trait that allows it to not just survive but to flourish, then this species will do so with much more success than another. Those traits that enable it to do so are adaptive traits, those that do not aid the survival of a species are not adaptive traits but rather maladaptive. Some adaptive traits are cognitive.

The cognitive faculties of an organism afford it the ability to perceive the environment around it. This allows it the ability to navigate its environment, locate prey and avoid danger for instance. Given the deliverances made to the organism by way of its cognitive faculties, the animal develops various beliefs such as ‘there is usually food behind this bush’ or ‘there are usually dangerous predators lurking in this area’.⁴

In the next section, I do a closer description of the relationship between beliefs and behaviors considering that the genetic criticism relies on the successful argument that these are related. According to Plantinga, as we will see, belief and behavior is not related, or at the least the relationship is inscrutable. Before that however, I will highlight a distinction between semantic properties of a belief and what Plantinga calls its syntactic properties.

Semantic and Syntactic Distinction

It is doubly important that we stress that naturalism is a method of explanation about physical phenomena rather than a theory which states that all existent things are purely physical. It is possible that given at least one version of naturalism (naturalistic reductionism), all phenomena can be reduced down to constituent substances. A belief then would be nothing over and above the relationships between the various neurological

4. It is not clear whether there is anything like belief in the human sense present in non-human animals. But at the very least we could say that there is some animal correlate, something which functions like a belief in terms of its being shaped by sensory input and generating behavioral output. However, for the sake of argument, I will call the animal correlates “beliefs” even though they are very unlike human beliefs in very important ways.

components comprising a given brain state at a given time (ontological). Additionally, phenomena can be thought of as something existing separately from the individual parts comprising the phenomena in question (emergentism). A belief then might be some entity that is over and above the neurological components comprising it. Because either ontological reductionism or emergentism is a theory that would explain all phenomena, we could show the semantic/syntactic distinction by comparing properties of beliefs given ontological naturalist or emergentist theories, as well as properties of sound waves given the same.

It is not clear whether Plantinga is arguing in favor of reductionism or emergentism.⁵ I will try to highlight the implications for either. Plantinga states that beliefs have *semantic* and *syntactic* properties.⁶ The semantic properties of a belief, he argues, comprise the *contents* of that belief. Take a particular belief, *‘that p’*, for instance. The belief *‘that p’* references the actual contents of one’s belief and is considered by Plantinga to be the semantic property of that belief. This account would appear to be an emergentist account of belief states. The semantic property of the belief would appear to be something over and above the various neurological components (or other physical characteristics of a given belief) correlating with a given brain state at a given instance.

An ontological reductivist however might argue that the belief is nothing over and above the physical characteristics comprising the belief in question. All phenomena is reducible to the physical characteristics of a given thing including physical laws governing their interactions. Whether Plantinga is giving a naturalistic account on the presupposition of ontological naturalism or emergentism is not clear, but I will try to show in the coming sections that his criticism applies to either.

5. There are various forms of reductivism that I am not including here. My reason for this is that these larger concern whether scientific study is qualified to make these sorts of assertions. For instance, methodological naturalism is the less strong thesis that we as of yet have no way of determining whether ontological naturalism or emergentism is the case and as such we can only argue that methodological naturalism is a better hypothesis for investigation owing to aforementioned inability. However, Plantinga’s EAAN is an argument that the metaphysical statuses that we can ascribe to beliefs given naturalism can work in a theory of knowledge. The forms of reductivism that I do not include are not concerned with the metaphysical concerns surrounding belief.

6. Plantinga, “EAAN,” p. 6.

Like beliefs, there are also syntactic properties of sound waves; namely the physical particles compressing and releasing resembling something like a wave and it is these particular interactions between various physical entities that a reductionist might refer to as the syntactic properties of sound waves. The semantic properties of sound waves would be what the ordinary speaker (or an emergentist if the ordinary speaker happens to also be a philosopher) references whenever she speaks of sound waves. It is plausible that an emergentist thinks of something over and above the individual physical components that comprise sound waves.

Assuming that ontological naturalism (*oN*) is true, and by consequence that (*oNE*), there is a strong possibility that the semantic property of a belief will be nothing over and above a particular neural event.⁷ A specific physical state of the brain at the moment that the belief is held. The problem that Plantinga attributes to this scenario is that we cannot feasibly associate the content of a belief with some particular physical state.

Now as we all know, it is far from clear how a neural structure can acquire a content. How does a neural event somehow get assigned a certain proposition as its content?⁸

This is problematic because we usually consider that ‘true or false’ relates to the semantic properties of belief, which Plantinga does, and these are solely related to a belief’s content which (unless you are an emergentist) themselves have no correlation with those physical properties that comprise the belief. Therefore it is hard to see how the prospect of a belief being true or false correlates with the believer who is also a bundle of physical components and properties governed by physical laws.

According to Plantinga then, the physical properties associated with a belief are its syntactical properties. These are the ‘neurophysiological or electrochemical properties’ that construct the cognitive environment with which the belief is associated.⁹ These can consist of the firing of certain neurons involved in the brain processes that are associated with that

7. Plantinga, “EAAN,” p. 213.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 7.

belief as well as those properties doing the actual firing. Some would argue that a belief is nothing over and above these physical neurological properties and the relationship between them at a given instance.¹⁰ For instance, a reductivist would say that there is no such entity as p , but it is merely a sort of way in which we refer to a systemic formulation of a set of those physical properties in a particular subject's cognitive environment which occur at various intervals in relation to someone's belief 'that p '.

Similarly, it can be argued that these syntactical properties can be associated with sound waves. These are the physical particles which compress and release at various intervals. When the particles most closely situated in proximity to our ear drum cause it to vibrate, this results in what to us sounds like sound. The most important conclusion of this construction, at least according to a reductivist, is that there is no such thing as a '*sound wave*', semantic notion, but it is merely the way in which we refer to the movement between these physical particles.¹¹ However, in a similar fashion, we might have called this particular state of the physical properties generally comprising what we call a '*sound wave*', something else instead.

In other words, naturalism in the manner which Plantinga uses it is not the proposition that such things as mental and emotional states are in themselves physical properties, nor is it the proposition that mental states can be reduced to physical properties, there is a lot of debate on either proposition. All brain states, including our beliefs, can be deduced as a specific state in which my brain exists at a particular moment in time or as some entirely other existent thing. My thought '*that p*' given this consequence, is merely a state of my brain wherein I have particular neurons firing at specific intervals equating to my thought

10. McKay and Dennett describe a cognitive environment as a input output system which would reliably lead to false belief. Various perceptual inputs come into the system and there are manipulated until a belief as an output results. Something goes wrong (or right) during the process and false beliefs result. However, it is admitted by McKay and Dennett that there is still no agreement for just what this system looks like and how a model of such a system could be made. A part of the problem is that the false beliefs can be built into the design as a desired aim for this system in which case nothing went wrong during the process. (Ryan T. McKay and Daniel C. Dennett, "The evolution of misbelief," **Behavioral and Brain Sciences** 32, no. 6 [2009]: pp. 496-498)

11. Once again this is subject to one's interpretation of physical things.

‘*that p*’ or my beliefs can be something else entirely over and above physical components comprising my brain state at a given moment.

2.1.2 Problematic Physicalism

Naturalism then, as defined by Plantinga, is the idea that there is a self-organizing physical reality. This means that the nature of this physical reality is not imposed by any other super natural entities, intelligent minds or other intelligent agents. According to naturalism, there are no non-physical explanations to nature such as Zeus being the reason for California’s drought-ending rain or that we can explain our own specific existence by reference to other intelligent beings.¹²

Given naturalism, there is a physical process through which all phenomenon can be explained. Our faculties of perception and introspection, such as sight and memory arise in us through naturalistic processes. An observation that researchers have made is that over time, some organisms cease to exist while others continue in present or mutated form. Largely, those organisms which continue existing are forms better suited for continued existence than those that are not. An alien species such as one suggested, footnote 12, is an example of a highly successful and highly evolved organism.

2.1.3 Belief and Behavior

Plantinga argues that there are four ways in which beliefs can exist in relation to behavior and adaptation. Much of this argument will revolve around the question of whether or not there is a relation between behavior, belief and fitness. There are four theories

12. These may either be spirit beings or highly intelligent extra terrestrial beings which, though non-spirit beings, we correlate with our own existence. Rather than attributing our existence to these intelligent entities (the extra-terrestrials), we instead attribute our existence to natural forces which first gave rise to these intelligent entities, the extra-terrestrials, which in turn created us via processes of bio-engineering or some similar process.

surrounding this question.

The Four Relations

(i) *epiphenomenalism* According to epiphenomenalism, an organism's behavior is not caused by its beliefs. Rather, behavior is caused by physical states of affairs related to its brain states including certain neural impulses and movements and the laws governing these. If this is the case, then beliefs would play no role in the actions of organisms because they are semantic rather than syntactic. Furthermore, it would be hard to discern where and to what role evolution has in the formation of our beliefs. Because the relationship between the semantic properties of beliefs and brain states is inscrutable, the beliefs themselves would then be invisible to evolution. Given this, the probability that our beliefs are true or mostly true is low or at the very least inscrutable.

(ii) A second option is what he calls *semantic epiphenomenalism*. According to semantic epiphenomenalism, an organism's behavior is caused by that organism's belief. However it is not in virtue of the content of the belief that this relationship obtains. According to epiphenomenalism, behavior is determined by specific brain states and other neural properties. These Plantinga refers to as the syntax of a belief. A belief's proposition, the semantic property of a belief, however is what Plantinga refers to as the content of a belief. My belief 'I have five fingers' is an example of a belief's content. Truth and falsehood are a part of a belief's semantic properties and not its syntactical ones. Therefore if behavior is determined by the syntactical properties of beliefs, and truth or falsehood apply to a belief's semantical but not its syntactical properties, then our behavior is not a result of truth and falsehood and as a result, evolution would not select for cognitive faculties that generate true beliefs. As a result, this second option is also suspect.

(iii) A third option for the relationship between belief and behavior is that while belief causes behavior semantically and syntactically, the behavior which results is maladaptive. Any behaviors that are derivative of a semantic/syntactic relation between belief and be-

havior have the negative consequence of non-adaptability in regards to evolutionary fitness. It it were the case that (iii) did in fact obtain, we as human beings more than likely would not be around to care.

(iv) The last option is arguably the most plausible argues Plantinga. It is the thesis that beliefs, and their semantic properties, are causally connected with behavior and that this construction is also adaptive. However, Plantinga argues that the probability of (R) on (iv) is also low because if behavior is caused by belief, then it is also caused by other factors which could have problematic bearing on belief, such as desire or suspicion. My desires can be misplaced such that I desire the wrong things. I might be suspicious of another individual and acting on these misplaced suspicions will cause me to do actions that I will regret later on. I might often have desires as a young man which when older I regard as foolish. Many times I might find my suspicions unwarranted as well. While it might seem indubitable that belief effects behavior, how it effects behavior will be influenced by such things as desires and suspicions; and while the adaptability of the belief might be related in this way to behavior, it is also often the case that our suspicions are unfounded, our desires are culpable, and our approval is misplaced. Given this, our behavior then is founded on factors which have no bearing on truth and therefore $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ gives us little reason to hold (R) . Further, though often times we can argue that behavior is grounded on such things as suspicion and desire; the cheating spouse for instance, one could very plausibly make the argument that Plantinga here is wrong. What if behavior just might be grounded on belief, desire and suspicion as well as other states and what if this, on $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ is an unavoidable consequence? Though this might seem problematic, this does not affect Plantinga's argument. If we accepted without qualification the prospect that belief is related to such emotional states as desire and suspicion, then we could never hope to have a theory of knowledge, and outcome which Plantinga argues is already a consequence of $(N\mathcal{E}E)$.

2.2 The Intersection of Belief and Fitness

2.2.1 Survival, Adaptation and Truth

Plantinga further argues that survivability does not require that any of our beliefs need be true. Survival can correlate with the ability to obtain true beliefs, but it does not necessitate it. False belief can be just as adaptive as true belief. Perhaps another way to articulate his argument is to say that survival is not dependent on the ability to generate true beliefs. An example of this might be that of a very skittish bunny. This bunny might have many false beliefs, for instance, about whether a potential predator is lurking in the shadows. These false beliefs have allowed it to be successful however in that say for every nine false beliefs held by the bunny, there is one true belief that the bunny's life is saved by. Or we can imagine a scenario wherein the rabbit never obtains a true belief about the presence of a predator but because of his skittishness, he avoids predators with amazingly high accuracy.

A less skittish rabbit might be right about the presence or absence of a predator more often, maybe nine times out of ten, but wrong when it counts. It is more likely that the less skittish rabbit miss an actual predator and therefore become lunch. This is the most likely outcome even though the bunny has a higher probability of having true beliefs.

Furthermore, given this last possibility, if true belief is related to survival, it would be hard to determine how. One possibility is that of semantic epiphenomenalism, the idea that the semantic dimension of a belief reduces to the neural structure in place which happens to correlate with that belief. However there are two problems with this proposal. One problem is that there is no way to correlate a specific belief (the content of the belief) with a particular neural structure.

The second difficulty concerns whether instead of a particular neural structure entailing a particular belief's content, we were to instead see the content of the belief supervening on the neural structure. However in theories about supervenience and emergence, it is the

case that we would need to attribute behavior to a belief's content rather than its syntax. While we have a fairly good understanding of the relationship between syntactic belief properties and behavior, the correlation between semantic belief properties and behavior and by consequence, evolution, given that evolution selects for behavior, and semantic properties (those needed for the application of a truth value) is quite obscure.

Reliable Cognitive Faculties

Unlike the bunny, humans may have higher order beliefs about the true state of nature and whether there are such things as non-physical entities and so forth. Arguably a rabbit has never wondered what happens to it when it dies. Plantinga's argument is one that is supposed to call into question the necessity of truth given our cognitive faculties, whether the shadow in the corner of our bedroom belongs to an evil demon intent on deceiving us for instance. He does this by questioning whether (i) through (iv) give us any reason to suspect that our cognitive faculties are reliable.

Plantinga gives various examples of this in a paper entitled *Games Scientists Play*.¹³

¹⁴ Quoting Rodney Stark, Plantinga considers whether it is possible that rational thought comes about in a way via evolution in that it allows believers to pursue even made up goals as a way of encouraging 'cost-benefit thinking'. I may have evolved with higher than average self-confidence for instance, which may advance my reproductive success even if the self-confidence is often times unwarranted. The belief that I will go to heaven when I die might give me an extra boost of courage so that I fight with more intensity than my opponent, given that maybe the prospect of death does not cause me as much pause as it does my opponent.

But any questions about my behavior will not be linked to semantic properties of beliefs

13. Alvin Plantinga, "Games Scientists Play," in **The Believing Primate: Scientific, philosophical, and theological reflections on the origin of religion**, ed. Michael Murray and Jeffrey Schloss (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 141.

14. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, **Acts of Faith: Explaining the human side of religion** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

about my self-confidence. Rather, we can only attribute my behavior to particular neural structures of my brain if you are an ontological naturalist. If you are an emergentist, then possibly you might attribute behavior to a belief's content, but I am not aware of any widely accepted theories in this regard.

Furthermore, it is only behavior that evolution and natural selection is concerned with. If I am not successful from an evolutionary standpoint, then it is because the neural structure of my brain was not composed in such a way as to be successful in giving rise to adaptive behaviors. Therefore, given the genetic criticism against naturalism, my cognitive environment could be adaptively constructed to preclude true beliefs as much as it could be constructed to preclude false ones.

The Importance of True Beliefs?

We might defend naturalism from Plantinga based on the following account. Consider some animal c and based on the deliverance of the perceptual faculties of c , c believes that there is prey 200 yards from its current position. c makes a dash to catch said prey. Assuming the correctness of c 's beliefs, there is a strong likelihood that c will be successful. Assuming the falsity of c 's beliefs however, imagining that c has a genetic disease which overcompensates the distances represented by its visual cortex apparatus, resulting in the grotesquely underestimation of the distance between c and its prey, c will be unable to catch its prey. If this occurs often enough, c will starve to death assuming no intervention or further adaptation. At least these would be required if c is to be considered fit for survival. One therefore might argue that true belief is necessitated by a survivability index dictated by the evolutionary theory articulated above.¹⁵

However, considering that it is not the belief's content that correlates with the hunting success of the predator, but rather a particular neural structure; we can imagine an alterna-

15. Here I am imagining a number which represents the probability that an organism is slated to be competitive according to current theories of natural selection.

tive consequence of the predator's disease. For instance, we can imagine that the predator does underestimate distances that it perceives, but at the same time has a particular neural structure that often correlates with a tendency of always aiming for distances just beyond what it perceives as adequate. It then successfully achieves whichever aims it intends as a result of this double cognitive malfunction. Here the predator with one cognitive disability and another disability of another type has behavior just as adaptive as that of a predator with no cognitive disabilities.

Often traits which are maladaptive can become adaptive, either because of some internal structure which just happens to compensate for the maladaptive trait, or because of some change in its external environment. It is possible for the trait to find a new context in which the previously considered maladaptive trait now becomes adaptive. Individuals with larger head sizes and small physical stature might be considered ill-suited for manual labor in an agrarian or hunter gatherer society. However, when humans begin to specialize their labor as necessitated by more complex societies, physical prowess is no longer as valuable. These individuals then might find themselves, for instance, better suited at sitting for long periods of time in one position because of their smaller stature. Doing so can facilitate one's ability to consume information in that they are not distracted by the lack of comfort experienced from sitting for long periods of time.

Another example might be the ease at which an individual is distracted. In a hunter gatherer society, distraction might be a very valuable trait, such that the individual notices every slight noise and change in environment. An individual with such a great focus that he does not notice sound coming from the bushes behind him will easily become prey. However, in more developed societies, where errant noises do not usually signal danger, an individual with a more intent focus would be able to allocate more brain processing power to tasks at hand. Rather than dividing their attention between every noise heard and the task at hand, they can ascribe more focus to the tasks at hand.

A trait which might have been maladaptive in one environment turns out to be one

that is better suited to flourishing as various other environmental and internal factors come into play and these on a changing basis. Therefore it is not necessarily the case that a trait which mitigates an animal's capacity for the truth will always be maladaptive. It is possible that this mitigated ability for truth perception which in some cases is maladaptive, may not always be so. Furthermore, it is not always the case that some adaptive trait always remains to be so. The genetic criticism of religion - according to which religious beliefs are adaptive for reasons having nothing to do with their truth - is just one case which seems to support this notion.

Here, I should note that it is important to distinguish between beliefs regarding our immediate physical surroundings and those metaphysical beliefs regarding the true nature of reality. One might argue that the former necessitate the having of true beliefs more so than the latter. However, I think that I have shown how it is the case that even those beliefs regarding our immediate physical environments are subject to the genetic criticism given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. The genetic criticism against religious belief is purported to explain how religious beliefs regardless of their truth or falsity facilitate adaptation given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$.

Assuming that there is a correlation between one's beliefs and one's behaviors, and considering that behaviors are associated with an organism's evolutionary fitness, given the stated goals of evolution, one's beliefs are generated in response to the requirements of fitness and adaptation. What the genetic criticism hopes to show is that the goal of true belief formation is subservient to that of fitness and adaptation. This is not to say that true beliefs are not sometimes necessary, but rather that true beliefs are not as necessary as adaptive ones.

2.2.2 The Genetic Criticism Against $(N\mathcal{E}E)$

As I have noted, there is a criticism against religious belief that holds that religious beliefs are the result of cognitive faculties deriving from evolutionary design structures intended to support fitness and adaptation but with an indifference to truth. Truth falls in

importance to these two goals. Further, as argued by Plantinga, the genetic criticism argues that in light of the problematic outcome of the tenuousness of religious beliefs, we have reason to be skeptical of our cognitive faculties whenever we consider the implications of naturalism coupled with evolution. The genetic criticism, on the basis of naturalism and evolution having given rise to the design of our cognitive faculties, gives us reason to doubt *all* of our beliefs. I have been characterizing the premise that our cognitive faculties are reliable using the schema utilized by Plantinga (R) where (R) stands for the thesis that our cognitive faculties are reliable methods for obtaining true beliefs, and its negation $\neg(R)$, to reject this thesis.

Further, I have argued that Plantinga provides a way out for those that would not accept the radical skepticism implied by $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. He argues that the conjunction of theism and evolution $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ is not subject to these same problems. Given theism, there is one God who possesses a number of various character perfections and further that God is the only possessor of these character perfections. Accordingly, God is perfectly morally good, almighty, exists of necessity and explains the existence of all other things. Additionally, Plantinga's theism also holds that God wants human beings to have a relationship with him. The purpose behind our creation then for Plantinga is so that we could have a relationship with God and to live in communion with Him.

Considering Plantinga's theism, a preliminary argument would show that we have cognitive faculties with the capacity to obtain true beliefs. In order to have a relationship with God such as Plantinga articulates, it would seem to be the case that we have reliable faculties. This entails that human faculties have a proper function, which is to obtain true beliefs and given God's omnipotence, it would seem that God could do anything which he cares to. Therefore, as the genetic criticism shows, according to Plantinga, (R) is more certain for the theist given the conclusion that God designed us to have truth oriented faculties in order for us to know him, than it is for the atheist given naturalism and evolution. Further, evolutionary fitness does not require truth-oriented faculties because adaptation can

be facilitated by cognitive faculties which produce high degrees of false belief. The probability then that (R) given $(T\mathcal{E}E)$, $P(R/T\mathcal{E}E)$, according to Plantinga is high, while the probability that (R) given naturalism and evolution, $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$, is low or inscrutable.

There have been many responses to Plantinga; for instance, some have argued that faculties which evolve to deliver more true beliefs than those that do not are said to more reliably facilitate fitness than those that do not deliver as many true beliefs. Organisms which have these advanced capacities will be more successful from an evolutionary point of view than organisms that do not. However, I have argued that the case of the bunny shows that all that is important for an organism is that the organism gets the truth right when it counts. If to do so requires many false positives, for instance, than this is not problematic as it was shown that it is possible that a faculty structure that delivers more false positives can have a greater chance of getting it right when it counts.

2.2.3 Truth vs. The World

It is not truth that counts but truth when it is important for survival or reproductive success; even if this requires many instances of false beliefs. The question then becomes which is truly more important. Often it can be the case that false belief facilitates survival and reproductive success in the same way that true belief does so. Rather than true beliefs being necessary for survival, or even survival being related to one's capacity to obtain true beliefs, survival is shown to be of utmost importance, and whatever states of affairs facilitate this, is of primary importance.

This argument I admit is a contentious one. On one hand, there is considerable agreement on the premise that evolution does not preclude deception, that given evolution, our imperfect cognitive faculties are unreliable methods for obtaining true beliefs. However, a large part of this disagreement lies in the fact that sometimes the overall argument is misconstrued. I believe that an important aspect of the argument, and one that is often misrepresented, is that given naturalism, the correlation between one's ability to obtain true

beliefs and evolutionary fitness warrants a closer look. It is very plausible that an organism, even a human one might be successful from an evolutionary standpoint, and yet have a large capacity for holding false beliefs. If the argument against religious belief shows anything, it is that if we consider religious beliefs to largely be false but adaptive, by facilitating our abilities to live in multifaceted and complex social organizations, our ability to hold false belief persists primarily because of its success. For instance, prohibition against murder can be enforced only when provided evidence of; however, belief in supernatural justice might be enough of a deterrent to discourage murder when its prohibitions are unenforceable.

2.3 Theism vs. Naturalism

As I have mentioned, theism is the proposition that there is exactly one entity who is perfectly morally good, almighty, exists of necessity and explains the existence of all other things. Plantingian theism adds a consideration for the purpose of our own creation, which to Plantinga is so that we could come to know God. God created human beings in order to have a relationship with them. Relationship with God requires that we know Him which in itself requires that we have cognitive faculties with the capacity for true belief. Plantinga argues that a description of knowledge first requires that the belief that one holds is true. He then gives a number of various other criteria required for knowledge, one of which is warrant. To show what I mean by this, it will be helpful to clarify what I mean by warrant.

2.3.1 Theistic Warrant

Warr 1

Warrant is conferred when:

- (a) *The cognitive faculty responsible for the belief is properly functioning in an environment for which it was designed to function.*

- (b) *The design plan governing the cognitive faculty in question (i) has truth as its primary aim and (ii) the design plan governing the production of the belief possesses a statistically high probability that its aims will be achieved. (There are various factors which might lead to a design plan being a good one.)*
- (c) *The degree to which the agent holds the belief corresponds with the degree of warrant that the belief has for the agent.*

According to naturalism, there are no non-physical entities and all of reality owes its existence to solely physical properties and laws. Theism differs from naturalism in that all physical, natural entities, properties of being and in addition all of existence is owing to this necessarily existent non-physical entity. Furthermore, that the theistic God is perfectly morally good means that God is perfectly wise, loving, and just, and that this is usually taken to imply that God is personal in the sense of being a conscious agent. These are personal attributes that we can ascribe to the thesis of a necessarily existent creator God. Additionally, God's almighty nature implies that God is non-physical, all-knowing and all-powerful and therefore whichever aims He intends, the probability that those aims will be achieved is very high satisfying (i).

Theism 1

(T&E) confers warrant.

- (a) *There is an omnibenevolent, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God. God*
- (b) *God is non-physical, exists of necessity i.e. eternal, and explains the existence of all other things.*
- (c) *God guides evolutionary processes, Theism 1(b), and does so reliably, Theism 1(a).*
- (d) *God Desired that human beings would come to know and love Him.*

∴ We could only be such creatures which fulfill, Theism 1(d), if our cognitive faculties are reliable.

Theism and naturalism are two opposing and incompatible view points. Theism negates naturalism on the grounds that according to theism, there is not a way in which naturalism might be brought about. To posit the existence of spiritual entities necessitated by theism would be to deny the primary clause in naturalism. Furthermore, for Plantinga, the conjunction of theism and evolution ($T\&E$) is not problematic, Theism 1(c), but rather it is the conjunction of evolution and naturalism only that is problematic.

2.3.2 Naturalism and Design

A large problem that Plantinga sees with ($N\&E$) is that given naturalism, there is no one overseeing our development. This means that there is nothing to ensure that our cognitive faculties are developing in such a way to deliver truth rather than false beliefs. Given this, Warr 1(b) is not satisfied. Furthermore, given evolution, without the proper truth aims provided by a virtuous entity, the only principles “overseeing” development are mindless and focused solely on adaptation and fitness. Adaptation, given ($N\&E$) does not necessitate true belief because the aims of adaptation can be realized by a cognitive faculty which produces massively false beliefs, they are not directed at truth as their primary aim.

Some potential considerations regard reliability in relation to our cognitive faculties.¹⁶

We might argue that to say that our cognitive faculties are reliable (R), is to say that, if in the proper environment for their proper functioning, the bulk of their deliverances are true. It is also plausible that our cognitive faculties are reliable only if they reliably facilitate our survival.

A good design plan is one wherein it will be the case that there is a high degree of probability that a thing will achieve the function for which it was designed.¹⁷ Given that

16. For a concise overview of Plantinga’s warrant; see Alvin Plantinga, “Warrant and Proper Function,” in **Epistemology: An Anthology**, 2nd (Blackwell Pub., 2008), pp. 429-440.

17. It has been pointed out to me that one might not be able to consider that the design plan behind an

God is omniscient and omnipotent, it is highly likely, that any endeavor which God embarks on will have this characteristic. However, a good design plan could also be one wherein the design is oriented towards survival. Therefore our perceptions, memory, and reason; if (R) , reliably deliver us to the truth when in their proper environment or, if in the proper environment, facilitate survival.¹⁸ The primary concern that Plantinga has, is that if (NE) is true, then we have no reason to suppose that our cognitive faculties are reliable in regards to truth.

The problem with (NE) is that it does not initially explain how we might conclude (R) in regards to truth rather than $\neg(R)$. The genetic criticism against religion is just one example of the myriad of ways in which our cognitive faculties may unreliably orient us towards the truth given the thesis that our cognitive faculties are the result of naturalism and evolution. Consider the following argument below:

Evol 1

The theory of evolution. Plantinga, "EAAN," p. 2

EvL(a) According to current evolutionary theory, we human beings, like other forms of life, have developed from aboriginal unicellular life by way of such mechanisms as natural selection and genetic drift working on sources of genetic variation: the most popular is random genetic mutation.

EvL(b) Natural selection discards most of these mutations, but some of the remainder turn out to have adaptive value and to enhance fitness; they spread through the population and thus persist.

EvL(c) Natural selection selects for adaptive rather than truth value.

acorn is not a very good one owing to the many acorns that do not correlate with adult oak trees. However, if we consider that even though the acorns chances at becoming a tree are very low, because the acorn has a high enough degree of probability at growing into a acorn tree as evidenced by the number of adult oak trees, then a part of its design plan would include a high enough chance of survival.

18. The environment must be one in which the product of the design was made to function in. Plantinga, "Warrant," p. 432.

EvL(d) According to this story, it is by way of these mechanisms, or mechanisms very much like them, that all the vast variety of contemporary organic life has developed; and it is by way of these same mechanisms that our cognitive faculties have arisen.

2.3.3 No Unguided Warrant

Natural selection may reward many mutations with persistence whether or not these have anything to do with truth or an organism's ability to generate true beliefs. For instance, Evol 1, initially does not, nor does it need to, say anything about our faculties having to be reliable in order to support (R) in regards to truth in the same way that Theism 1, does. What is of utmost importance according to natural selection, is that a trait can reliably orient an organism to reproductive and other methods of adaptive success.

Plantinga imagines as an example, a tribe whose faculties evolved in such a way that they believe that everything is a witch. Their beliefs then look like the following: those witches are good to eat, those witches over there I should run away from and so on. Plantinga, "EAAN" However, given the aim of adaptation over truth, it is not necessarily the case that the evolutionary processes spoke of in Evol 1 can produce the sorts of faculties that would entail outcomes similar to those entailed in Theism 1(d). Further, given that God precludes such problematic instances such as fallibility, God is infallible, or $\neg R$ (Theism 1(d) entails R). Theism 1 gives us more reason to affirm that R than does Evol 1.

While it is plausible that we could just focus on those beliefs which facilitate evolutionary fitness through the obtainment of true beliefs, what is problematic with (NE) is not the idea that some adaptations may or may not be relevant to some notion of 'Truth', but rather that adaptation is of primary importance over and above 'Truth'. So while some adaptations may be facilitated by one's ability to obtain true belief, if one's ability to obtain true beliefs were to somehow hinder evolutionary fitness, then one's ability to obtain truth would be discarded in favor of more adaptive behaviors.

In order to get a better understanding of the relationship between our cognitive faculties

and any potential origin story, we can compare both versions of the origin story to one another. The first, Evol 1, shows that our cognitive faculties are guided by blind, non-truth oriented processes. Some organisms evolve in such a way in which they are better suited to adapt to the natural environment whereas others are not suited in a similar fashion. Those that are, have greater and more opportunities to pass along their genes while those that are not do not.

According to Plantinga's evolutionary version of theism however, the process of evolution is guided by God towards the ends that suit divine purposes. Of these purposes, included is God's desire for humans to obtain true beliefs as evidenced by His desire that we know Him. The process itself is overseen, or possibly constructed in such a way wherein evolution, rather than being strictly guided by adaptability and suitability, can be guided with such ends in mind as knowledge of God which once again, requires true belief. This would entail, given Theism 1, that humans do have reliable cognitive faculties. In the next section, I will explore some objections to Plantinga's fix.

GC 1

Plantinga's Reductio, $P(R/T\mathcal{E}E) \vee P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$.

- (a) *Given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ our cognitive faculties are reliable methods of obtaining true beliefs $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$.*
- (b) *According to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ and the genetic criticism of religion, the ability to hold religious belief, even if religious belief is false, is a trait which facilitates evolutionary fitness.*
- (c) *Natural selection can either select a trait for its ability to generate true beliefs or adaptive beliefs. [From Evol 1(b)]*
- (d) *Any design feature produced according to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ holds the aim of generating adaptive beliefs over and above that of generating true beliefs. [From Evol 1(b) \wedge Evol 1(c)]*
- (e) *(R) may give way to evolutionary fitness if necessary. [From GC 1(d)]*
- (f) *The relationship between (R) and adaptation is inscrutable. [From GC 1(e)]*
- (g) *Therefore if $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ is true, then we do not have reason to believe that our beliefs are mostly true rather than false. [From GC 1(f)]*
- (h) *Therefore, given GC 1(g), we have no reason to hold GC 1(a). [From GC 1(c) \rightarrow GC 1(g)]*
- (i) *According to $(T\mathcal{E}E)$, God created us via evolution in order that we come to know Him.*
- (j) *Knowledge is warranted belief. [From Warr 1]*
- (k) *Warrant requires that our beliefs are true. [From Warr 1(b)]*
- (l) *Knowing God requires (R) . [From Warr 1]*
- (m) *$P(R/T\mathcal{E}E) \vee P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$. [From GC 1(h) \wedge GC 1(l)]*

Chapter 3

Skeptical Theism

3.1 The Evidence

In a old and well cited paper, William Rowe¹ argues that the persuasiveness of the evidences in support of theism are diminished when compared to the enormous amount of evil that exists. Further, these evils do not seem to have any justification. The only way in which *O* would allow evil is if it were the only way in which to prevent a greater evil or bring about a greater good. Rowe argues however that the world is full of apparently pointless evils, evils which do not mitigate greater evil or bring about greater goods.

3.1.1 The Argument from Evil

Suffering can often mean various different things to different individuals. For instance, if one individual who has grown accustomed to a particular level of comfort suddenly experiences a comparatively extreme lack of these same comforts, given the sort of character this individual has, it is possible that this change in circumstance might appear as a form of suffering for this individual. We can imagine the lives of some individuals possibly in developing nations, or countries in the midst of a civil war, or even European cultures in the middle ages and compare what might have constituted suffering for these individuals. Often when hearing of the stories of their experiences, I at least, often think to myself just where

1. William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," **American Philosophical Quarterly** 16, no. 4 (1979): 335–341.

one would find the fortitude to continue living knowing that a small ratio of your children are expected to survive until adulthood.

Other suffering we might be aware of includes the suffering that we merely hear about on the nightly news. The animal taken away from its herd to perform tricks against the threat of beatings, the child kidnapped from her family and sold in order to fund further terrorist activities, the individual suffering from a rare disease that causes pain and discomfort for which there is no known cure. Suffering occurs on a daily basis and often we might attempt to justify it on various grounds such as the building up of an admirable character, or the consequences of being creatures possessing the freedom of will.

Considering these later attempts at justification, Rowe argues that the justification for suffering should first be considered apart from the suffering itself. To clarify this, consider a quote from Rowe;

For we must not confuse the intense suffering in and of itself with the good things to which it sometimes leads or of which it may be a necessary part.²

Consider some instance of suffering wherein agent *A* is fired from her job of nineteen years, one year shy of retirement and because of a strange law that recently passed, has lost all of her benefits. Further imagine that *A* becomes estranged from her religious family and friends as a result of her loss of faith owing to her recent misfortunes. Further consider that five years later, *A*, as a result of having been reduced to living in her car for the last two years, discovers an algorithm for predicting fluctuations in the stock market out of the boredom experienced while having nothing to do for hours on end. *A* predicts several large scale stock fluctuations and creates a program that can represent these predictions and sells this for millions of dollars.

Though these good circumstances would not have come about if not for the misfortune of losing his job and becoming estranged from her family, the negative experiences she's had

2. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," p. 335.

are still just that; negative experiences.³ So although suffering might lead to some greater good, the suffering is still suffering and there does not seem to be anything that might change *that* fact. Therefore we should distinguish suffering from the good things that come about as a result of suffering. Now that we have gotten that out of the way, we may continue onto Rowe's articulation of the argument from evil.⁴

No Justifying Reasons

EviL 1

Argument from Evil

EviL(a) There appear to exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.

EviL(b) An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.

Therefore,

EviL(c) There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

There exist instances of extreme suffering as we noted above. Further, EviL 1(b) holds that God would prevent such instances of suffering, unless, there are some prevailing conditions which would preclude Him from preventing these instances of suffering.⁵ Some of the prevailing conditions that would preclude God from preventing *e* include possibilities such as God is unable to prevent *e* without either (a greater instance of *e*), (here after,

3. It is plausible to assume that they could have come about some other way, it is not very likely that they would have done so.

4. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," p. 336.

5. From here on, I will refer to these instances of suffering as evil *e*

E), occurring, or that God is unable to prevent (e or E) without also preventing greater instances of good, (here after, G), from obtaining.

Theism 2

The justifying conditions for the allowance of e

- (a) *There is either some greater good G that is obtainable by God only if God permits some lesser evil e or mitigates some lesser good g .*
- (b) *A greater instance of evil, E , is only preventable by God iff God allows (e) to occur*
- (c) *(e or E) can only be prevented by God if God prevents some good g , or allows $\neg g$ to obtain*

Each of the affairs listed above involve the allowing of e that is of a lesser consequence than the eventual G that obtains as a result of e ; or the prevention of some g , such that this good that is prevented would have been outweighed were either e or E to occur. As mentioned earlier, though we might argue that some G has come about because of an initial instance of e , this does not lead to it being the case that ($e \mathcal{E} G$ entail $\neg e$).

It might appear that Theism 2(b) and Theism 2(c) are entirely similar but Rowe argues that they are not for the reason that ‘losing some G rather than some e is not the same as permitting an E greater than e ’.⁶ The negation of some particular good is not the same as the allowing of some greater evil. On the one hand, we might argue that a particular action or non-action, allowing e or mitigating g , in this case is justified because of the fact that not doing something entails either preventing E that would occur had the action been initiated or that by not doing something, entails the allowance of some greater good G . If God prevents e , by not allowing a particular subject to exercise freewill for instance, then in this case, this might equate to the prevention of a particular greater good such as the

6. Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism,” p. 336.

exercise of free will; while the prevention of e merely correlates with a lesser good g ; the absence of some particular $e \vee E$.

However, Rowe argues that Theism 2(b) and Theism 2(c) both reduce to *EviL* 1(b) because according to Theism 2(b), permitting an evil is not the same as Theism 2(c), missing out on some particular good. It is still not necessarily the case that the loss of a potential good state of affairs in itself equates to some perceived state of suffering. My missing out on a job opportunity does not necessarily result in an instance of suffering. Therefore, neither state, e or E entails the negation of g or G or vice versa. Therefore, we must think of e or E as being distinct from any states of affairs of either g or G and vice versa.

3.1.2 Wykstra

Premise *EviL* 1(b) in Rowe's argument appears to be the most important premise in his argument. On the one hand, it appears to be intuitive in that we might think that in order for someone who is ultimately good, to allow such evils to occur, they must either be powerless to stop those evils, or they have another equally good reason to not do so. Granting that God is all powerful, we then conclude that there is a very good reason which prevents God from stopping evil. We might ask whether, concerning Theism 2(b), there are any potential goods which were they to obtain would justify some of the evils that we experience for instance.

Indirect Justification

A manner of response available to the theist and considered by Stephen Wykstra, is to argue that the atheist has not first considered all of the arguments and future arguments made in support of theistic belief.⁷ It is possible that all of these arguments for reasons supporting theistic belief outweigh the evidences provided by our perceptions of evil. Given

7. Stephen J. Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of Appearance," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 16, no. 2 (1984): 73–93, accessed May 24, 2017.

this, if we were to consider all the potential reasons in favor of support for theism, it is possible that the ‘overwhelming number’ of reasons for theism far outweigh the evidences from evil in support of atheism. However according to Wykstra, Rowe does not consider any arguments in favor of theism so there is no reason to suppose that he is attempting to show rational support for atheism.⁸ He must be doing something else then.

As mentioned, the conclusion Rowe presents to us, is that there does not seem to be any potentially justifying goods for all of the evils which we experience. Therefore there is at least one pointless evil. Instead of arguing in favor for atheism by directly rebutting all of the claims that are made in favor of theism, the atheist might respond through what Rowe calls indirect methods.

Moore’s shift was first suggested as a response to extreme skepticism. It was initially used against skeptical arguments bringing into doubt one’s knowledge of material objects. Though I perceive an object that is directly in front of me, I might be presented with a skeptical argument bringing into question whether my perceptions can be trusted. G.E. Moore argued that we have reason to accept the deliverances of our perception faculties. He argued contrary to the skeptical argument, that if something is being perceived to him, then he has good reason to presume that it exists. Therefore, it seems that the skeptical arguments are faulty. Moore held that it is more rational to believe what he is perceiving, than it is those skeptical arguments.

Rather than defending one’s knowledge of these material objects by responding directly to skeptical arguments to the contrary, G.E. Moore argued that one might instead be justified in their knowledge of the existence of material objects given one’s knowledge via direct perception of the objects in question. The evidence of direct perception holds more justification for acceptance than do skeptical arguments. While one might offer various skeptical arguments doubting the existence of material objects, another could respond by contradicting the conclusions of these arguments, stating that they can know for a fact that

8. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering,” p. 144.

a particular item exists given their direct perceptions of that object and from this concluding that the skeptical arguments do not hold.

The problem that Rowe attributes to the direct method is that even the theist must admit that we would not know what these reasons are or whether there are any that have not yet been considered. It is impossible to know whether there will not be any more convincing arguments brought forth about a given topic. This only leaves what Rowe calls the indirect method. The indirect method disconfirms first the conclusion of the argument from evil. If the theist knows that God exists, then skeptical arguments to the contrary must be false. This is justified for the theist because he would argue, an argument put forth by Descartes and later G.E. Moore, that what one directly perceives to be the case, is justified for that individual by the direct perception of what they perceive to be the case. Therefore the indirect case that Rowe considers is based on the direct perception which an individual might have of some existent thing, the existence of God or evil for instance.

The Shift

Recall *EviL* 1(a), that there appears to be instances of suffering which God could have prevented without bringing about more evil or mitigating some potential good. Further recall *EviL* 1(b), that God would prevent e unless by doing so a greater instance of evil, E were to obtain. However, I know that *EviL* 1(c) because I perceive that God exists. In order to know that premise *EviL* 1(c) is false, I must first know that what I perceive as true. In this case, I directly perceive the negation of *EviL* 1(c), that God exists and I am therefore justified in my belief that \neg *EviL* 1(c) owing to my direct perceptions of God. Therefore, it must be the case that the instances of evil that appear to be pointless must actually have a point that I cannot discern.

In the same way, while one might present skeptical arguments against the existence of material objects, the non-skeptic might respond by arguing that they are directly aware of material objects, and if the skeptics were correct then they would not be directly aware of

the existence of material objects and therefore the skeptic would be incorrect.

G.E. Moore Shift

1	$\neg 3$
2	2
Therefore...	
3	$\neg 1$

□

A problem with this method of defending the theist, is that while the theist could very well convincingly argue that his perceptions of God are enough to justify his belief in God, the atheist could just as well argue that his perceptions of evil are enough to justify his disbelief in God. This is the method that Stephen Wykstra suggests that Rowe uses. According to Wykstra, Rowe argues that based on his direct perceptions of seemingly pointless evil, his belief that God does not exist is justified. Furthermore, considering the genetic criticism, it is plausible that the theist's own beliefs are merely a evolutionary or cultural construct designed not for the procurement of true beliefs, but rather evolutionary adaptation rendering any beliefs generated via this method questionable, this includes beliefs derived from direct perceptions and additionally even more abstract beliefs. The atheist is also subjected to the genetic criticism as well in that we might argue that his beliefs are also rendered questionable owing to their reliance on evolutionary adaptation rather than the generation of true beliefs. What we end up with is a sort of holding truce wherein neither the atheist nor the theist can trust their beliefs.

Not in My Purview

A response to the logical argument from evil proposed by Rowe shows that there is no way that we can know with certainty that there are or are not existences of evil which God

could prevent without entailing e or E . However Rowe's argument is the evidential problem of evil. If it is right, our direct perceptions give us evidence to the contrary, that there are many evils which God could prevent without entailing e or E . A response to the evidential argument from evil was proposed by Wykstra and in the preceding section, I have given it. Further, it is this argument, that 'we cannot know with certainty that there are or are no existences of evils of which God is not justified in His allowance of evil', that has been used in order to defeat Plantinga's use of the genetic criticism. In the section that follows, I will first lay out this argument and having completed this task, show the manner in which Wykstra uses this argument as a response to Rowe.

3.1.3 Epistemic Access

Roeber's response to Plantinga involves what is referred to as the inscrutability maxim. The inscrutability maxim was initially a response to probabilistic or inductive arguments from evil. These arguments acquiesce the theist's point that there is not a way to know with absolute certainty that there exist instances of suffering which O could have prevented without causing greater occurrences of suffering, or the prevention of a greater good that would occur were the initial evil prevented.

However, the atheist holds that given all of the seemingly pointless instances of suffering which occur in our world, it is rational to believe that there is *at least one* instance of suffering which does not serve a greater good, either by preventing the occurrence of a greater evil or bringing about some good which overshadows the good that would obtain without the initial instance of suffering. I might concede the point that it is not possible for me to consider each individual case of suffering and show that *this* case of suffering does not lead to a greater instance of good. However, I can take a sum total of all of the instances of suffering that I know about, and given these, also consider that it is extremely likely that there are a great many other instances of suffering that I do not know about. I then might be justified in concluding that it is very unlikely that for all of these instances of suffering, there is a greater

instance of evil that were this particular instance to be prevented, an even greater instance of evil would obtain.

EviL 2

EviL(a) It is possible that apparently pointless evils are not pointless.

EviL(b) However, it at least appears to me that there are some evils e which do not seem to correlate with some greater evils E such that were e not to occur, then E would obtain.

EviL(c) Therefore my belief that there are pointless evils, evils that God is not justified in allowing is a rational belief.

EviL(d) Therefore I am justified in my belief that it is likely that God does not exist.

The principle of credulity here is invoked, it is an argument which involves the question of whether or not it is possible to know, or be justified in suspecting, that there is not some greater instance of evil that is prevented through the allowance of the lesser evil. In order to know with certainty that this argument is valid, we would first have to know whether or not it is rational to suspect that there exists at least one evil in the world that God is not justified in allowing. What might justify someone in holding EviL 2(b) for instance? Wykstra will argue that what is needed is a general condition which must be met if one is to be entitled to the claim that ‘it does not appear to be the case that’.⁹ Therefore Wykstra questions whether EviL 2(b) is valid in regards to whether were there a greater evil for instance that is prevented by the mitigation of some evil, or a greater good that would fail to obtain given the prevention of some evil. What entitles an individual in making a ‘does not appear’ claim?

In one particularly famous variant of what I will refer to as the inscrutability maxim, Wykstra offers the argument that in order for the atheist to make the ‘does not appear’

9. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering,” p. 152.

assertion, there is a general condition which must be met if we are to argue that something seems a certain way. This condition is the only way in which we might be justified in making the ‘does not appear’ claim.

For instance, unlike Moore’s direct observation of material objects, to argue that something ‘does not appear’ to be the case requires a condition that goes beyond a direct perception. To say that something appears to be the case infers a use of our faculties in a manner relating to their design. Furthermore, to argue that something appears to be the case is merely an argument that, all things considered, I am justified in virtue of my being the sort of thing that can have a valid direct perceiving of that thing. To say that something appears to be the case, is a different sort of argument than to make a ‘does not appear’ claim.

Wykstra sees in the initial move however a difficulty: arguing that something ‘appears to be the case’, is *not* the same thing as saying ‘something does not appear to be the case’. The problem according to Wykstra, is that to say that something appears ‘void’, or ‘barren’, is a positive seeming, similar to the positive use of seeming used in the original argument. In the same way that I can say that ‘this pencil appears blue’, I can also say that ‘this room appears bare’.

Briefly, one might say that in order for an agent to be justified in his use of the ‘does not appear’ claim, it would have to be shown that were it the case that what is not apparent, were in fact present, then its presence would be made manifest to that agent. In part, this assumes that (i) I am a perceiving thing such that existent objects would be made manifest to me in virtue of the thing that I am. Further, (ii) this assumes that all existent affairs and objects would be made aware to me in virtue of the proper use of my faculties. Wykstra will call it into doubt however, that given the proper orientation of my faculties, all existent things would be made manifest to me.

For instance, blood cells exist, but this does not make it the case that they would be apparent to me in just any fashion. Though I might know that blood cells exist, in order for the existence of a cell to be made manifest unto me, or to be apparent to me, I would

first need to build something, such as a microscope, that would allow me to see blood cells. Someone might say to me that, ‘it does not appear’ that there are blood cells. I might then say that to such a person, ‘this use of appears is not justified because you would need access to a microscope in order to be able to see blood cells’. In this case, given this individual’s lack of access to a microscope, they are not a perceiving thing in the respect of being able to see blood cells.

Wykstra calls the condition that is needed to justify one’s ‘does not appear’ claim, the ‘Condition of Reasonable Epistemic Access’, or CORNEA for short and he argues that one needs to be entitled to the ‘does not appear’ claim in order to be justified in its use. The agent must meet the necessary conditions that were the object of concern present, the agent would then have epistemic access to it. If one cannot say that were something indeed present, they would have access to it, then their ‘does not appear’ claim is not successful in giving evidential support to their argument.

Defeaters

As we have seen, Plantinga argues that knowledge that belief for an agent is warranted when those segments of *S*’s cognitive faculties, relevant to *b* are functioning properly in an environment for which those cognitive faculties were designed and that further, these are aimed at producing true beliefs.¹⁰ Further, it is highly probable that these cognitive faculties will achieve the production of true beliefs. Lastly, the greater degree to which *S* believes *b*, the greater degree of warrant that *b* has for *S*.

A rationality defeater is a defeater that given one who’s faculties are functioning properly, and in the proper environment for which they were designed to function; will defeat a particular belief. Therefore, a rationality defeater is a belief which is warranted for a given agent; and it just so happens that *this* belief defeats a belief previously held by the agent. If

10. Alvin Plantinga, **Warrant and Proper Function** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-30.

an agent holds some particular belief less strongly, if for some reason S holds b less strongly, then the reasons behind S doing so would be a rationality defeater for S 's defeated belief. One way in which this may occur is if the degree of belief for the agent in the defeater is more than the degree of belief held by the agent for the defeated belief. As we saw with Warr 1(b), the degree to which an agent holds a belief correlates with the amount of warrant that a belief has for the agent.

There are two ways in which we could look at the condition for epistemic access required by Wykstra in order to justify someone's 'does not appear' claim. For instance, above we saw that someone is justified given their 'does not appear claim' only if we consider that this individual has cognitive access to the subject of the claim, such that were the object of the claim present, the individual would likely know. Given this, we might say that the reason behind S 's shrinking degree of belief in b , is the presence of apparently pointless evils for instance and for which their cognitive faculties were designed to see. If it were the case that S 's faculties are functioning properly in an environment for which they were designed, and yet S does not see the point of many of the evils around her though were there to be a point then the agent would be made aware of this, then it might be the case that their degree of belief in God would shrink in the presence of the many evils because their degree of belief in that there is at least one unjustified evil, is more warranted for them than their belief that there is a reason which justifies all of the evils.

However, if belief in God gives us more reason to trust our cognitive faculties than does disbelief, then the belief that we would have no reason to trust our cognitive faculties given the possibility that God does not exist becomes a defeater for the belief that God does not exist. However, most people will not accept this conclusion as it would not allow them to carry on with our cognitive lives, and people carry on with their cognitive lives every day. Therefore, according to Roeber, Plantinga has softened his requirements of epistemic function. No longer is he arguing that naturalism leads to skepticism because, as some of Plantinga's critics have pointed out, cognitive faculties that are functioning properly, would

not allow a believer to hold that her cognitive faculties are unreliable. Therefore, $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ could not be a rationality defeater for one's beliefs.

If it were the case that naturalism presented a ordinary rationality defeat for (R) , the believer would not be capable of carrying out her 'cognitive life'. Therefore, it is upon reflection that naturalism would be a defeater for (R) . In *Naturalism Defeated* and *A reply*, Plantinga defines ordinary (rationality) defeat and epistemic defeat at follows:

OrD 1

D is a defeater of (belief) B for agent S at (time) t iff S comes to believe D at t and S's noetic structure N at t includes B and is such that any human being (i) whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly in the relevant respects, (ii) whose noetic structure is N, and (iii) who comes to believe D but nothing else independent of or stronger than D would withhold B (or believe it less strongly).

Plantinga calls OrD 1 a proper function rationality defeater, it is a defeater of belief for the agent. It occurs when in the proper course of action, and according to the design plan for human beings, a human would come to hold the belief less strongly or discard the belief altogether. However, if it is not according to a design plan geared towards survival for the human, but rather towards truth, there was some defeater that would cause the believer to hold the belief less strongly or not at all, then this would be a purely epistemic defeater. Plantinga argues that there are alethic and non-alethic processes and that the alethic processes confer warrant onto a belief for a particular agent. The non-alethic processes work well in accordance with the design plan for human beings given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. Alethic processes however, work in accord with truth as their primary aim, something that is not accounted for given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. They are processes geared solely towards truth and an individual would have a defeater given naturalism upon reflection with a cognitive faculty designed for truth. Therefore, purely epistemic defeaters have stronger alethic requirements than do ordinary epistemic defeaters.

OrD 2

D is a purely epistemic defeater of B for S at t iff

- (a) *S's N at t includes B and S comes to believe D at t*
- (b) *and person S* (i) whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly in the relevant respects, (ii) who is such that the bit of the design plan governing the sustaining of B in her noetic structure is successfully aimed at truth (i.e., at the maximization of true belief and minimization of false belief) and nothing more, (iii) whose noetic structure is N and includes B, and (iv) who comes to believe D but nothing else independent of or stronger than D, would withhold B (or believe it less strongly).*¹¹

Getting back to Freud for the moment, Plantinga argues that Freud subjects the religious believer to alethic scrutiny while he continues to subject the naturalist to purely ordinary scrutiny or non-alethic scrutiny, which happens to also be a point made by Lewis.¹²

While Roeber does argue that Plantinga softens his critique against the naturalist, he says that after some responses to the initial EAAN, Plantinga moves from a criticism about naturalism being an ordinary defeater for *(R)* to being a defeater of the purely epistemic type, that only upon reflection will we question *(R)* but not in the normal course of cognitive functioning. One might think that this distinction absolves the naturalist from any defeaters regarding the ordinary operation of their faculties because it is only in reflection that their situation seems problematic, and it does not disrupt the course of their everyday life. However, I believe that Plantinga's critique against the naturalist remains stronger

11. For both rationality and epistemic defeaters, see (James K. Beilby, ed., **Naturalism defeated?: Essays on Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism** [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002], p. 208-209)

12. Plantinga argues that a good alethic design plan for a human being will have true belief as its aim. A point that I have mentioned elsewhere. Lewis questions why religious beliefs have the stronger alethic requirements than non-religious beliefs. What Freud does not consider argues Plantinga and inferred by Lewis, is that Freud's account religious belief of cognitive faculties are aimed at survival rather than truth but that assumes that non-religious beliefs are aimed at truth, or that he does not consider that truth ought to be an aim for non-religious belief. (Lewis, "Bulverism," p. 272) and (Plantinga, "Warrant," p. 436)

than what Roeber suggests. Because Freud subjects the religious believer to the alethic scrutiny, the stronger epistemic requirement, then he should also subject the naturalist to alethic scrutiny as well. And seeing as how the naturalist, upon reflection and considering that their cognitive faculties are not designed to deliver truth, they will then have a purely epistemic defeater for (R) . This is as problematic for the naturalist as it is for the theist. Further, if science is a quest for the truth, given that purely epistemic defeaters bring truth into question about our ability to obtain true beliefs, concerning faculties that are designed to obtain the truth, then OrD 2 is a strong defeater for the naturalist as well if we have no argument that science seeks to obtain reliable methods for obtaining true rather than useful beliefs. Therefore, I am not of the belief that Plantinga's critique is at all softened in the least respect.

3.2 The Genetic Criticism of Naturalism and its Discontents

There are many good responses to Plantinga's argument against naturalism. Some of the better ones attempt to make correlations between an organism's ability to obtain true beliefs and the evolutionary successes synthesized as a result of these more successful attempts. However, there are many other organisms which exist that do not have cognitive faculties with this ability. These, we could argue, do not produce more true rather than false beliefs. Further, these organisms are highly adaptive given the perspective aims of evolution and we can trace their success, in part, to their ability to hold false but adaptive beliefs. Though one might argue that they may not have the same quality of life as our own, to do so they would also have to provide a strong argument as to why.¹³ According to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$, what is necessary in selecting for a particular trait is that this trait is adaptive from an evolutionary fitness perspective.

13. I should point out that we are primarily here talking about survival. Further I will argue that if a creature meets those criteria necessary for survival from a evolutionary fitness perspective, given that they are meeting the aims as directed by $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ then we can say that that creature is flourishing.

3.2.1 Roeber's Argument from Skeptical Theism

One plausible response, for instance, to the critic of Plantinga's EAAN, has been that science is a method which humans have used in their efforts to account for problematic motivations, or missteps in reasoning. In essence, science then becomes a way in which human beings are able to overcome obstacles to true knowledge such as conflict between adaptive and true beliefs. However, I have shown that beliefs can be generated regardless of their connection to the truth or falsity of an idea, and that these true or false beliefs can be adaptive in a very important sense. I can also show that science in itself is not immune from this problematic feature of human cognition. We can imagine a researcher working for the tobacco industry who might experience internal conflict. Once again, science, though a plausible method of getting us to the truth, does not correct for the problematic consequence of the premise, 'true or false belief when it counts'. Though science is a useful method of obtaining true beliefs, it is only useful when used properly and there has been in the past disagreement of what constituted this proper use. Often times, even premises proven false, in the process of being proven thus, turn out to be useful (such as religion if the genetic criticism is valid) and aid in various successes of the human species thereby supporting the argument that true belief is not necessary for evolutionary success.

However, another manner in which we can respond to Plantinga's EAAN is by questioning whether theism really does or does not give us more reason to hold (R) . Blake Roeber argues that $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ also does not *entail* that we have the ability to obtain true beliefs and therefore is subject to the same concerns as $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. For Roeber, we have as much reason to be skeptical regarding our cognitive faculties under $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ as we do given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. He uses a well known response to the evidentiary argument from evil to prove this point by concluding that the version of theism which survives this argument, a similar version as Plantinga's own does not preclude $\neg R$ as Plantinga purports it to. Therefore, both the naturalist philosopher and theist are in the same boat in determining whether (R) holds.

I believe that a way to respond to this problem is by clarifying the distinction that I will argue exists between Plantinga's version of theism and Roeber's own. Throughout the rest of this section, one of the points that I will bring up is the idea that by loosening the constraints, in part, placed on Plantinga's EAAN by naturalist philosophers, I will show that we are not looking for a way to entail preclusion from deception given God's existence.

The inscrutability maxim, as I will show, is the argument that reasons for which God does what God does largely fall outside of our ken. Roeber argues that this, contrary to what Plantinga says, implies that we cannot know why God created human beings. Therefore Plantinga is wrong in believing that God created human beings to know Him.

As I will show, according to Roeber, if there is a greater good that can be had, or a greater evil avoided in us not knowing God, then it is possible that God would allow us not to know Him in order to bring this about. God's purposes are inscrutable because it is unlikely that we could know whether or not there is some greater good to be had or greater evil to be avoided. Plantinga's version of theism precludes deception (necessarily) but requires that God created us to know Him. What I will argue conversely is that Roeber's use of the inscrutability maxim is misplaced precisely because Plantinga has never said that his version of theism 'necessarily' precludes $\neg(R)$.

3.2.2 Theism and Theism

Plantinga has used the form of the genetic criticism to call into question $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. He then supposes that $(T\mathcal{E}E)$, (Plantingian) theism, escapes the genetic criticism; arguing that God designed human beings to know Him which requires the proper functioning of our faculties. Blake Roeber, relying on a response to the evidential problem of evil, argues that the only successful response to the evidential problem of evil is skeptical theism. Skeptical theism says that we do not know enough about God in order to argue that God would prevent evils of various kinds. Roeber argues that in the same way, we might say that we do not know enough about God to argue that his existence precludes unreliable faculties.

Considering that humans having unreliable faculties, if true, would be a sort of evil, we do not know enough about God to say that God would prevent this evil. It could be that there is some greater good that requires that we do not know God for instance. Therefore, we do not know enough about God to confidently argue that God desires us to know Him which requires (R) . According to Roeber, we do not have the right sort of ‘reasonable epistemic access’ to be able to make this claim.¹⁴

There are many plausible responses to the evidential problem of evil that do not result in skeptical theism. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that skeptical theism is the only way to escape the problem of evil. However, I will not focus on any of these. Instead, I will place my focus on Roeber’s use of skeptical theism and the feature necessary in Plantinga’s version of theism that is missing in it.

3.2.3 Plantinga’s Classical Theism

Some of the concern that we can attribute to Roeber involves successful defenses of theism from the problem of evil. Until this point, I have articulated Plantinga’s criticism of naturalism as a argument about the probability that the conjunction of evolution and of theism can with higher probability of it being true, give us more reason to conclude (R) than can the conjunction of naturalism and evolution. Remember that theism *cum* evolution is the thesis that there is an omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God who has created us and that this does not preclude evolution. Plantingian theism adds the further premise that the purpose for God creating us is so that we would know Him. Therefore we derive the conjunction $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ from these two premises.

The problem with $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ however; is that if theism is highly improbable given the

14. Steven Wykstra argues that in order for one to make a claim about whether some phenomenon ought to be observed, they would need to first have epistemic access of the sort that were it existent, they would be aware of its manifestations. In order for evils to not be pointless, one would need to articulate the point of the evil itself. However, it is possible that we do not have the sort of epistemic access necessary to make this observation of evil. Wykstra, “The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering” I will devote more time to this argument later in this chapter.

available evidence offered by apparently pointless evils, then it is improbable that $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ is true. Even if it were the case that $P(R/T\mathcal{E}E)$ was higher, even to a much larger degree than $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$, if theism is not true, we have very little reason to favor $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ over $(N\mathcal{E}E)$. One way in which T , at least, is not true, is if the existence of evil precludes (T) in some way. If it is true that $\neg(T)$, then the following also holds true $\neg(T\mathcal{E}E)$. This is a very different argument from the truth of the conjunction of theism and evolution. In the section preceding this one, I articulated an argument from evil which is proposed as a method to refute theism. The resultant skeptical theism Roeber argues, while avoiding the argument from evil, does not avoid the genetic criticism in the same way that Plantinga's T was said to.

Roeber argues that Plantinga assumes that we can know that God intends that we know him. This would require (R) . However, if apparently pointless evils leave us with little reason to believe (T) , Plantinga's purported advantage of $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ counts for little. There is a version of theism that escapes the argument from evil, however this version of theism would lead us to question whether we can really know God. Plantinga's version of theism is very similar to the version of theism challenged by the argument from evil. There is a difference however; Plantinga's version holds that in addition to being omni-benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent, God also wants us to know Him, a point that Roeber argues we cannot infer on skeptical theism. However, if this is something that we posit as a feature of Plantinga's theism, then we can avoid the difficulties inferred in skeptical theism. In the chapter that follows, I will present a classical form of theism that aligns with Plantinga's own, and is one which avoids the problem from evil.

3.3 The Inscrutable God

In the previous section, I introduced a criticism that Roeber down plays somewhat Plantinga's analysis of the genetic criticism.¹⁵ However, this is not a point that I think is

15.

particularly important concerning my overall argument. It is more of an aside than anything. However, what I do believe is important from the previous section, is the suggestion that the criteria of alethic scrutiny that Freud places on religious adherents while not subjecting naturalists to the same, is noteworthy to say the least.

C.S. Lewis first suggested this problematic feature of Freud's argument in that he considers that if the religious person's judgment is compromised owing to natural evolutionary forces, then it is possible that the naturalist's judgment is also affected in this manner. If it is the case that the religious adherent upon reflection can obtain a defeater for her beliefs, as suggested by Freud, then it would remain the case that these same forces making difficult the reliability of her beliefs, would also have a hand in the beliefs of the naturalist as well. A further argument would need to be made as to how it might be possible for one to mitigate evolutionary forces, behind scientific beliefs for instance, that are not present in religious ones.

The first and more pressing argument in the previous section had to do with whether or not it is possible to know what God would do concerning the presence of evil. In the conclusion, I showed an argument that held that individuals such as us would not know what God would do concerning evil. For instance, considering that the evil we experience *could* potentially pale in comparison to an evil which could obtain were this evil mitigating in some way, it could be the case that God would then be justified in allowing its occurrence in order to prevent a greater evil.

I have already presented some responses available to the naturalist regarding these questions and more. Therefore, rather than dwelling on that topic, what I will address in this following section is Roeber's use of the inscrutability maxim. I will first articulate what the inscrutability maxim is, upon completing this, I will then articulate what is important in the current context about it. Next, I will show Roeber's specific use of it. In conclusion, I will begin my response to Roeber's use of the inscrutability maxim showing that while given one consideration of religious belief it might apply, concerning another which until now I

have merely suggested but now I will fully show, his response does not apply.

3.3.1 Roeber's use of the inscrutability maxim

A consequence suggested by the inscrutability maxim has to do with whether or not we can know God well enough in order to determine God likely course of action given some particular state of affairs. A point that Roeber makes in regards to this concern, is that much of what we do know come from sources that are conflicting and obscure. For instance, often biblical representations of God present characterizations that show God as desiring what is best for people while also suggesting that our murders are often condoned or even commanded by God. Arguably, one's murder is not a desirable state of affairs.¹⁶

Therefore, if one were to attempt to argue that God's existence precludes evil, they would have to contend with biblical characterizations of God that suggests otherwise. Furthermore, there are further complications that arise from the fact that our own understanding of what is good and what is evil is limited. There have been concerns to this affect that state that similarly to a child's understanding of the prick of a needle in its relation to her health, our own understanding of what constitutes evil might similarly pale in regards to consequences deriving from this necessary assortment of evil experienced by us.

There are many potential replies to the argument presented here. However, what I want to make use of most importantly given this argument is the fact that we do not know what would await us if the evils presented to us did not occur. For instance, the mitigation of free will necessary to preclude many of the evils that we experience, might in fact be a worse sort of evil than all of these combined. Therefore, we do not know enough about the true natures of good and evil in order to have access to the 'does not appear' claim.

16. Yes, I recognize that possibly in some situations, some might argue that an individual's murder is the best possible state of affairs. There even have been arguments to the effect that an innocent's murder is the best state of affairs given the situation. On one hand, we can defend this line of thought both from a theistic perspective assuming that the genetic criticism of religion holds. On the other, we might defend these assertions from a naturalist perspective, however this line of inquiry might also open us up to the genetic criticism of naturalism.

Inscrutable 1

Roeber's Inscrutability Maxim

(a) *For every possible world W and possible evil E - where the actualization of E isn't ruled out by the truth of the Scriptures-the occurrence of E in W does not give us reason to think that God probably does not exist in W . Similarly, God's existence in W does not give us reason to think that E probably does not occur in W .*¹⁷

Inscrutable Descartes

What might the connection be between the inscrutability maxim and Plantinga's defeaters? For one, Roeber seems to want to suggest that the inscrutability maxim can be used as a defeater to the theist's admission that the existence of God would preclude this or that evil. In the same way, the theist that Plantinga characterizes would use the existence of God to preclude the possibility that our cognitive faculties become unreliable. However for the sake of argument, Roeber view the inscrutability maxim as a defeater for Plantingian theism. We conclude (R) only on the account that theism includes the account that God wants us to know Him.

However, consider our not knowing God as a sort of evil. It might be the case that God has some reason to allow our deception, possibly through our cognitive faculties (rather than our environment). Given this, there is a possible justifying reason that to us is inscrutable.

The first instance of Roeber's use of the inscrutability maxim against the theist concerns Descartes. Descartes argued that his belief in the existence of God gave him a defeater for his belief that his cognitive faculties are unreliable. According to Roeber and given the evidentiary argument from evil, the only version of theism to escape this objection is skeptical theism. However, skeptical theism does not give us reason to assume that God does desire that we know him because it is plausible that there are some greater evils that are

17. D. Blake Roeber, "Does the Theist Have an Epistemic Advantage over the Atheist?," **Journal of Philosophical Research** 34 (2009): p. 314, accessed January 8, 2017.

mitigated by us not knowing God for instance. Therefore Descartes should not have good reason to assume that God would not deceive him as shown through skeptical theism.

Using the same principles of theistic defense from the argument from evil, Roeber argues that if it were the case that there was some greater good to be gained from our deception, then who are we to argue that we know God well enough to allow this?

Consider the possibility that God can actualize some great good by deceiving Descartes, and let '*E*' be God's deceiving Descartes in order to actualize this good. As the inscrutability maxim tells us, God's existence gives us insufficient reason to think that *E* would not occur.¹⁸

Roeber characterizes the proposition that God would deceive us as a kind of evil. However, this proposition is incorrect in that this is a different sort of argument portrayed in the defense of theism from the argument from evil. For one, the inscrutability maxim as used in the argument from evil never once portrays God as himself bringing about some kind of evil. For instance, Roeber's argument is that Descartes himself can be sure that God would not deceive him. Furthermore, Roeber articulates deception as a kind of evil. Further, he suggests that it is possible that God would bring about this evil, a consequence that the inscrutability maxim leads us as articulated by Roeber, if it would bring about a greater good. However, the inscrutability maxim was never about whether or not God himself would bring about *E*, but rather whether it was possible that God could co-exist along with evil. Whether it was possible that God would not preclude evil, were he to exist.

The argument was never about whether or not God would bring about evil himself. As far as I know, there are not any arguments to the contrary, in defense of God for himself authoring evil. However, this is not the point I want to make as I do not think that it is the point being made by Roeber. For one, this argument would only work if we consider Descartes faculties to only be of the sort designed in him by God. For instance, it could very well be the case, a point made by Roeber, that something could have happened to Descartes that would mitigate any design plan God had intended for him.

18. Roeber, "Does the Theist Have an Epistemic Advantage over the Atheist?," p. 316.

We can imagine that during birth, Descartes' midwife dropped Descartes onto his head causing Descartes to have all sorts of false beliefs owing to his injury. In fact, the injury could have been so severe that all of Descartes' beliefs are false as a result. Therefore, though God designed Descartes' faculties to reliably help him to obtain true beliefs, Descartes experiences a sort of evil as he is being born, he is dropped onto his head. As a result, though his faculties were designed with a particular function in mind, because of evil that God permits to exist for inscrutable reasons, his own faculties will not be able to achieve this function.

When Descartes thought that he was playing with wax in front of a fire, he was actually racing a rival down the interstate; a false belief arising from the evil which led to him being dropped on his head. What the inscrutability maxim then tells us in light of Descartes, is that it is possible that God would allow Descartes to believe false beliefs as a result of his falling on his head, a sort of evil. In this way, God's existence does not preclude the fact that it is possible that Descartes would be deceived. Therefore Descartes is not justified in believing that God's existence justifies the confidence that he has in the use of his cognitive faculties.

3.3.2 Plantinga and inscrutability

What is central to Plantinga's EAAN is the allegation that given (*NE*), evolution rather than selecting for true belief, instead selects for adaptability rather than truth. If this is the case, then a world view which holds true beliefs as central to the design of our cognitive faculties, would be one in which (*R*) is more likely to be true. However, as we saw in the response to Descartes' own argument, we are often deceived, a fact which would call into doubt the view that given theism we have reason to hold (*R*). In the same way, though one holds theism to be true, they would still have to contend with the existence of evil. Descartes own argument aligns nicely with the inscrutability thesis but not in that God precludes evil or deception, but rather that God's existence is not incompatible with the existence of evil nor deception.

In a similar fashion, it is not the case that Plantinga's argument is that God's existence is not compatible with that of evil or deception. Evil comes in many forms, such as deception. The inscrutability maxim can be useful for Descartes as well as Plantinga, but it is also problematic. $P(R/T\mathcal{E}E)$ does not mean that God's existence precludes our deception. As we saw with Descartes, evil does happen and if we consider deception to be a sort of evil, then there is little in the way of theism to confront this feature of evil and argue that God's existence precludes this.

However, a central feature of the argument from evil, which the inscrutability maxim does address, is that God allows evil rather than that God is the cause of evil. Because God allows evil rather than causes it, His existence or non-existence would not have a necessary correlation with the existence or non-existence of evil. In similar fashion, I argue that while God might allow our deception if it leads to a better outcome, this is not the same thing as God authoring our deception even if in order to bring about a greater good.

Further, I will argue that our deception is not the evil Roeber intends to make it out to be. What I mean is that evil, like cognitive deception, does not affect the purposes for which God has designed us. I will argue that though deception can often happen to us, this fact does not affect the purpose for which God created us. It could be the case, that though we are deceived at times, we may still come to know God eventually through the proper exercise of the requisite moral virtues with motivation at their core.

Though God may create us with the intention of us getting to know Him, it is possible that God knows, or intends that this comes about only through the proper disposition of the right character virtues. So though we are often times deceived, with the right character, we may still fulfill God's design for our lives. Therefore, Plantinga's argument still holds.

3.3.3 Theism and Virtue

A large part of my argument will involve the consideration that there is something more important to God than the actions of a given agent. For this further argument, I will

rely on a classical notion of not only Christian belief, but teleology in the classical Greek sense. However, the topic that I suggest is much larger than the space in which I have to present these arguments. Therefore rather than attempting to present a full argument, I merely hope to begin by making a suggestion that will spur discussion for some time to come.

I will argue that a classical conception of Christianity escapes Roeber's use of skepticism because it argues that for us to get to know God, we must exercise various virtues. First and foremost this requires us to first have the proper motivation. For instance we might be motivated towards truth, God would be the ultimate truth and given this, God then helps us to obtain truth which is knowledge of him. Roeber merely argues that skepticism gives us reason to doubt the thesis that God's existence precludes deception.

God's existence does not mean that deception is impossible, but that the capacity for holding true belief is there. But this requires much from us to bring about. Therefore, if it were to be the case that God wants us to know Him, it would require more agent based virtues than Roeber realizes, with proper motivation being a central element in the design to which God has created us. Furthermore, according to this version of agent-based virtue theism, God would have designed us to have a capacity similar to His. This would require faculties oriented towards the truth, but that the only way in which the cognitive faculties would be able to achieve their function is based in large part on effort and proper motivation somehow deriving from the agent; an effort which includes motivation at its core.

Chapter 4

Warrant Conferred Through Virtue

4.1 Warranted True Belief

In *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga gives an account of knowledge that involves warrant. According to Plantinga, warrant is a property of belief that for a believing agent is what makes their true belief knowledge. Plantinga's account of warrant has four premises:

4.1.1 Properly Functioning Cognitive Faculties

First the belief must derive from a set of properly functioning cognitive faculties maintaining proper function in an environment for which they were designed. The current state of those faculties must be sufficiently close to the design intended for those faculties. We would not expect an individual to be able to see a blood cell with her naked eye because her eyes were not designed to function in this fashion.

Environments

The second criterion for warrant requires that the environment wherein these cognitive faculties are currently functioning is one in which they were designed to function. If S were on a particular planet that allowed him just enough oxygen to survive, but not enough oxygen to allow the proper functioning of his faculties, we again would have no reason to believe that his perceptions amount to anything. In this case, though we might argue that the cognitive faculties belonging to S are in a sufficient state in which they would provide

warrant, the environment they are in is not one in which they were designed to function optimally. Warrant cannot be conferred onto a belief which arises from cognitive faculties operating in a environment for which they are not intended.

A design plan does not necessarily involve the idea of a intelligent designer such as God. The theory of evolution can be thought of as producing a optimal design plan for human beings and other organisms as well. Typically, design plans have various functions which help one to consider a relevant evaluation of them. For instance, a pot for cooking which is designed to have a hole in the bottom of it for aesthetic purposes would not to be considered a *good* design plan, at least not one with the purpose of cooking in mind. It might be considered a *good* design plan if the purpose it was intended was purely aesthetic. Organs function properly in a specific way in accordance with the design plan of that organism. ‘We take it that when the organs (or organic systems) function properly, they function in a particular way. Such organs have a function or purpose....’¹

Alethic and Practical Pursuits

This leads us to the third criterion required for conferring warrant onto a belief. The design plan of our cognitive faculties governing the production of belief must be aimed at truth. Plantinga argues that when we consider the design plan for human beings, it is not necessarily the case that it is solely aimed at truth given (*NEE*). If our prehistoric ancestors for instance came upon a particular fruit tree overladen with juicy delicious fruit, he would likely form the belief that “this is a good area for foraging”. We might say that those cognitive faculties which facilitated his formation of this belief *are* aimed at truth in the way in which he develops the true belief about the fruit tree. However, there is another goal which runs concurrent with that of true belief and that is adaptability. The agent who holds the true belief about the tree, also holds the adaptive belief regarding the tree. Initially, it is difficult to say which end is more important according to the design plan conferred by

1. Plantinga, “Warrant,” p. 436.

(\mathcal{NE}). As we saw with the rabbit example, its adaptation was facilitated by a faculty that generated many false beliefs. These would have been diminished by at least some alternative design plans that tracked the truth more closely. However, one might argue that these could only occur at the potential expense of more often getting it wrong in a way that compromised survival. In the case of the bunny rabbit, it would take only one false belief about whether or not there is a predator to severely compromise any directive regarding the rabbit's chances at survival. Even though the rabbit may have more true rather than false beliefs, having more true beliefs would be too risky for the rabbit. Having many false beliefs and thereby cognitive faculties that are unreliable in obtaining true beliefs on the other hand, has allowed the bunny to survive by increasing the chances that its beliefs may be right.

Good Designs and Degree

The last two points which Plantinga makes I will not spend a great deal of time on. The first concerns the reliability that the faculty in question will obtain the ends designated for its design plan aimed at truth. If that faculty has a statistically high probability of achieving true belief, then, assuming that all of the other criteria are met, beliefs which it produces are warranted. For the sake of ease, I will assume that the design plans conferred both by theism and naturalism have a statistically high probability of achieving their objectives.² Lastly, the greater degree to which an agent holds a belief as delivered by these faculties, the more the belief for that agent is warranted.

The first considers whether or not the design of cognitive faculty in question is one suitable for producing true beliefs in a statistically reliable manner. Plantinga calls a design plan which accomplishes the aims which the design intends a good one. We would say that the design for a faculty which results in achieving those aims which it is designed to achieve a good design. Yet warrant is still only conferred on beliefs deriving from design plans oriented

2. This is debatable. For one such treatment, see (McKay and Dennett, "The evolution of misbelief," p. 496-498)

towards true beliefs.

Our concern until now does not have to do with the statistical probabilities wherein a design achieves its intended aim. Rather, our concern is largely what those intended aims are. According to Plantinga given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$, the aim to which the design for our cognitive faculties is directed is not one towards truth but rather towards adaptation. Therefore, a good design plan for human cognitive faculties according to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ is one wherein $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$ is high for adaptive rather than true beliefs.

The proposition that (R) is that our cognitive faculties are reliable, but there is a distinction which needs to be considered. First, we might say that (R) given the aim of adaptation, that $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$ is high. If $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$ is high on the aim of adaptation, beliefs that arise from this method are not beliefs which are necessarily warranted for that particular agent. However, beliefs that are warranted are those wherein their design is one that is oriented towards truth. $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$ given the aim of true belief although potentially high, would not be warranted precisely because the aims of this design plan are not oriented towards truth, but rather adaptation. Because the belief is not warranted in this manner, the probability that (R) and knowledge is low or at the very least inscrutable.

4.1.2 Warrant and Knowledge

According to Plantinga, knowledge requires warranted belief. Warrant requires that the belief derives from a well-designed cognitive faculty aimed at truth, and that this faculty is properly functioning in a suitable environment. The design posited by $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ is one aimed at adaptation and is at best only incidentally or conditionally oriented towards truth - if and when truth orientation serves adaptation. Although, this design may be one wherein true beliefs are obtained regularly by the agent, these true beliefs do not correlate with knowledge since knowledge requires that beliefs are warranted and that these beliefs are warranted when deriving from a design plan with truth as its primary purpose rather than adaptation.

Warr 2

Belief b has warrant for S iff

- (a) the segments of our cognitive faculties involved in the production of b are functioning properly in a cognitive environment similar to which they were designed.*
- (b) the modules of the design plan governing the production of b are: (i) aimed at truth (ii) and that there is a high objective probability that if they form a belief that these modules will obtain true beliefs.*
- (c) Finally, the greater the degree to which S accepts b, the greater degree of warrant b has for S.³*

Plantinga argues that (NE) does not confer warrant because it does not meet the criteria set by Warr 2(b). Roeber argues that (TE) , the version of theism which survives the evidential argument from evil and which he takes to be the version of theism that Plantinga also holds, also does not provide warrant for beliefs. Roeber argues that the aim of our cognitive faculties as deriving from this version of theism is not necessarily oriented towards the truth. We cannot argue that the design is oriented towards true belief because given skeptical theism, it is possible that we do not know what God's aims are. According to skeptical theism as posited by Roeber, there are possibly greater evils avoided or greater goods which are obtained were our cognitive faculties designed in such a way as to preclude true beliefs. A consequence which he articulates as a sort of evil. On skeptical theism, Roeber claims, for all we know our cognitive faculties could routinely obtain false beliefs as a part of our design plan because that could be the lesser evil, mitigating some even greater evil. Therefore, arguably, the version of theism that survives the argument from evil, skeptical theism, does not provide warrant for our beliefs (even if a naive version of theism might).

3. Plantinga, "Warrant," p. 439.

4.1.3 (T&E) Does not Confer Warrant

At center of the discussion thus far, I argue, is the question of whether or not one can hold a theism that is skeptical enough to avoid the argument from evil while at the same time meeting the criteria posited by Plantinga's theory of warrant and its correlation with knowledge. Because the thesis of skeptical theism concerns a particular design plan aimed at the question of whether or not our cognitive faculties are designed with the aim of obtaining true beliefs, I will present a design plan that fits that of skeptical theism and which meets the criteria necessary for warrant. A precept of skeptical theism is that God's justifying reasons for evil fall largely outside of our ken. However, this is not the same thing as saying that *all* of God's aims fall outside of our ken.

In other words, the degree and kind of skepticism about God's purposes required to address the argument from evil do not justify the level of skepticism that would undermine Plantinga's argument. Furthermore, because Plantinga himself does not articulate a particular design plan which meets the criteria necessary for his defense, I will argue that all one need do in response to Roeber, is fill in the void left by Plantinga to meet Roeber's objection. Further, I will argue that Plantinga hints at but does not definitively articulate the design plan which I present.⁴ Because of this, I do not see my own account as modifying Plantinga's own to any significant degree, rather, I merely fill an area which for me, is left unstated - I present an option available to Plantinga which should he chose, would complete a theory in which beliefs, including theistic belief, can be warranted given $(T\&E)$, even granting the insights of skeptical theism.

4. I have not read Warranted Christian belief and I therefore acknowledge that Plantinga could potentially have articulated a design plan which meets the criteria that I state while at the same time being wholly distinct from my own.

4.2 Agency and Faculty

Ernest Sosa in the second chapter of his book *Judgment and Agency*, argues that a true account of epistemology will include intellectual virtues which are agent-based as well as those which are competence based.⁵ Competence-based intellectual virtues are those which Sosa often refers to as animal knowledge. He argues that they have often been mischaracterized as reliabilist and as such devoid of any connection with agential character traits which bear on the personal worth of the individual.

Animal knowledge often derives solely from perceptual faculties which themselves respond directly to external sensory stimuli. He speaks of these as mechanisms of belief formation which go beyond simple characterizations of processes. These do not involve high-level processes at the center of one's ability of accessing data sets, or the ability to ponder what the data derived from these same sets might mean. The dichotomy here is between reflexive mechanisms similar to one's reflexive reactions to an emitted flash of lightning in producing the belief that "I just saw a bright light", and those necessary for deducing the complex voting habits of military veterans, which arguably require higher level processes of the central nervous system. While it is plausible that an individual may look at a subset of data and conclude that the data before her expresses certain truths deliverable to her by her cognitive faculties, resulting in true beliefs as represented to her by that data set; it is not necessarily the case that we may be able to attribute the obtainment of these beliefs to her own epistemic agency.

If she merely concludes the beliefs that she does as a result of glancing through some subject material and from it concluding such beliefs as "this smudge is black" or this object before me consists of black smudges against a white backdrop; then we would not necessarily attribute the beliefs that she obtains as owing to any agential character traits. Rather, these types of beliefs would represent animal traits of belief formation. For instance, it would

5. Ernest Sosa, **Judgment & Agency** (Oxford University Press Uk, 2015), pp. 34-61.

first need to be the case that those beliefs which she obtains from the considered activity need to be those deriving from her *intentional* agency rather than just her reflexive agency. This might include such practices as staying up late nights in an effort to become the sort of individual who is capable of obtaining true beliefs in such a fashion, being able to read such reports for instance. If she struggled throughout graduate school in a effort to learn how to decipher foreign and ancient texts, then by her obtaining information in this manner, we would maybe say that she is, on one hand, worthy of admiration. The beliefs which she obtains from the deciphering of the reports we attribute to her own agency.

Another way in which we might characterize the traits necessitated by higher level processes of belief formation is reflective. For instance, if the agent in question knows that she wants to be a so and so type of agent, one capable of certain higher level processes of belief formation, we would then say that she is capable of reflecting on being the sort of agent which she desires to be. What is needed in order to be the type of agent, are intentional reflections. This ability gives her the capacity to obtain beliefs of such and such a nature, versus the comparably basic reflexive sorts of belief formation required of lower level processes of belief formation.

4.2.1 Reliabilist *cum* Responsibilist Intellectual Virtue

The virtues involved with animal knowledge on the other hand are competence based as I mentioned before. Additionally, the competences involved with these animal components according to Sosa do not take into consideration the reflective components involved in belief generation. The reflective components concern the ‘agential, responsibilist side of epistemology’⁶. These are intentional, volitional manifesting in the intentional agency of a knower, developed through this agency via repetition, they bear on the personal worth of the possessor and they aid in the success owing to the agent and lastly, concern intentionally

6. Sosa, **Judgment & Agency**, p. 39.

conducted inquiry.⁷

What I will argue is that a design plan for human cognitive faculties which meet those requirements stated as necessary for warranted beliefs can with slight modification derive from a design plan expressed by Sosa. However, the modification I propose will be a drastic one. This design plan requires that there be present in a particular belief, (i) an account of both agential *responsibilist* character intellectual virtues as well as (ii) more *reliabilist* competence non-agency intellectual virtues. The former bears in part on the personal worth of the individual while the latter bears on the worth of the total sum of the individual's cognitive parts. This would be a design plan for human cognitive faculties that includes both non-agential faculties and agential epistemic virtues which operate on and with the non-agential faculties to generate beliefs more reliable than what could be generated absent the agential virtues. Without the modification that I propose, Sosa's account lacks warrant as stressed by Plantinga.

Agency

A conception of the human cognitive design plan fits well with Plantinga's notion of a design plan created in us by a good God who wants us to know Him requires some feature in order to achieve the design for humans which God intended. It is also a design plan consistent with extensive room for error - which itself would be justified by the good of making knowledge of God the outcome of good character as applied to the use of cognitive faculties which themselves have the potential for error, and does this whenever the necessary feature is missing.

Many responsibilist argue that an individual's motivations ought to play a role in their evaluation as a knowing agent. Sosa argues that the responsibilist account of his virtue epistemology does not only include non-agential faculties, and those agential competences which correspond with the personal worth of the agent, but that it also includes what he

7. Sosa, **Judgment & Agency**, p. 39.

calls agential versus *non*-agential virtues. However, Sosa argues that the personal worth of an agent, regarding their motivations towards obtaining knowledge, is not worth considering in an account of knowledge.

Part of the reason for this is that an agent's motivations for knowledge does not need play a role in the evaluation of the agent. In fact, a bare motivation for the obtainment of knowledge might even be grounds for holding the agent culpable for some particular failure. For instance, if while a person drowns, I am engrossed in counting the individual blades of grass growing between the cracks in the sidewalk, in an effort to obtain knowledge about the actual number of blades of grass, then, though I have a motivation for obtaining knowledge, this motivation in me is not praiseworthy. Therefore we can not assess someone's personal worth regarding knowledge solely in consideration of their motivation at obtaining knowledge.

Aims and Motivations

Although Sosa does not think that his agential virtues are necessarily related to the motivations of an agent, he still considers his account as a type of responsibilist account of epistemic virtue. This for the fact that his considerations for knowledge involve more than just those non-agential faculties involved in the production of belief, a theory which is normally associated with reliabilist theories of virtue epistemology. The distinction that Sosa makes, is that between a theoretical quest for knowledge and that of a practical one. He argues that motivations for the pursuit for theoretical knowledge ought to be distinguished from the motivation at obtaining truths about states of affairs useful given a particular practical aim. The motivations towards obtaining those truths useful given a particular aim, is also a useful means of obtaining knowledge; even though it is only for its instrumental value. The traditional responsibilist will argue that knowledge requires an evaluation of the motivation of the agent. Sosa denies this.

Another example; professionals in various areas who are praiseworthy and sought for,

are so for their ability to obtain truths relevant to their professions. These are necessary for their instrumental values in facilitating the various aims of these agents. Therefore, it is not only the motivations towards obtaining knowledge that is praiseworthy, for a particular individual, but rather it is that individual's ability to achieve a certain aim.

Using as an example Plantinga's account of warrant from earlier, someone might argue that Sosa's own does not fit with Plantinga's in the respect that Sosa seems to present an account of knowledge that does not require the aim of true belief. However, I believe that this would be misconstruing Sosa. The aims of those individuals stated by Sosa are towards true beliefs, not just towards certain aims as necessitated by having true beliefs, for the sake of those beliefs. We might say that what is necessary, is purely whatever is instrumental in helping the agent to obtain whatever its intended aim; and an agent has a better chance of reaching this aim when he has mostly true beliefs. What would be most instrumental in helping the agent are mostly true beliefs.

4.2.2 The Instrumental

Any bearing that this instrumental knowledge has on the worth of the agent is merely in regards to their statistical ability to achieve those aims for which their design is appointed. If true beliefs are necessary for the agent to complete its aim, then the agent might be praised in part for having true beliefs. However, it could also be the case that false beliefs are necessary for an agent to complete its aim; if this turns out to be the case, then it is plausible that the agent might be praiseworthy for having false beliefs. 'Nor need they evince any "respect" for the truth, properly so-called. An assassin may even have *no desire whatever* for the truth on the location of his victim *except only* for the fact that it will make his crime possible. Indeed, if he thought a false belief would at that juncture get him more efficiently to his objective he might heartily approve of his so believing, and be glad he did so with no regrets whatever.'⁸

8. Sosa, **Judgment & Agency**, p. 49.

According to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$, we have two competing aims. While it is possible that these aims are not competing aims as suggested by Sosa but complementary, according to Plantinga, it is at the very most inscrutable whether these aims are such. Where these aims come into conflict, which one would win out? It is more likely that under $(N\mathcal{E}E)$, the aim of usefulness would be the victor.

Virtue

The primary distinction that I see between Sosa and Plantinga, is that I believe that Sosa's account is worthy of the genetic criticism, while Plantinga's is not.⁹ The reason that I see Sosa's account as criticizable in this way is that it does not articulate our cognitive faculties as being primarily motivated towards the truth; rather the aims articulated by Sosa are towards the successful attainment of some other aim, and that true beliefs facilitate this other aim. However, when the aims come into conflict, it is possible that the other aim will win out. While one may argue that true belief is necessary for the personal value that we place on such individuals, such as the assassin as a knowing thing, we do not know that for sure. For instance, considering that the assassin's intended victim has a small boy around the same age as the assassin's own. A true belief about the young boy could make it difficult for the assassin to fulfill his mission. Consequently, a false belief that the child holding the potential victim's hand, is really a victim of the assassin's would be victim, would make it easier for the assassin to fulfill his mission.

4.2.3 Agency and Design

The design which oversees the development of our faculties given $(N\mathcal{E}E)$, is not one essentially oriented towards truth. As a result, one's motivations resulting in their attainment of knowledge change depending on whether we are considering the type of individual that

9. As shown elsewhere in the project, the genetic criticism is similar to Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism (*EAA*N). It is the criticism that is not only leveled at the conjunction of the theories of naturalism and evolution, but any theories wherein true belief is not the most foundational aim.

that person is, what we might consider their function to be. However another consideration can be made of one's motivations resulting in the attainment of knowledge for that individual as a knowing thing. This is a consideration of what a person *qua* person is.

One particular account of a person might include virtues in the sense articulated by Sosa. Though these are responsibilist because they go beyond traditional reliabilist virtues, and confer warrant on their possessor in virtue of the fact that true beliefs help to facilitate their possessor's individual aims, knowledge is not guaranteed because the aim of true belief will give way to that of useful belief if necessary. These involve questions regarding the aims of that particular individual, but leaves out an account of what a person is. This sort is more similar to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ but is subject to the problem regarding the inscrutable probability inherent in $P(R/N\mathcal{E}E)$.

In the next section, I detail a position of Aquinas as presented by Eleonore Stump. I argue that this position is sufficiently similar to one needed in defense of Plantinga from Roeber. I will argue that this position of theism meets the evidential argument from evil and at the same time, gives an articulation of theism which is not inscrutable.

4.3 Designed for Virtue

According to Timothy Williams in articulating Aquinas's theory of goodness, a theory of goodness takes into consideration a thing's specific nature. If a thing lives up to standards specified by its nature, then it is good. The closer a thing is in relation to its nature, the better that thing is. William's Aquinas argues that appetites in a thing are directed towards its own 'specific perfection'¹⁰. Elon Musk is someone who is known for creating new technologies. Additionally, he is also known for those passions that he has for technology. In the same way, someone's nature correlates with what we might consider as their passion. Individuals then are oriented towards their specific good and therefore, a human being should also be

10. Thomas et al., **Thomas Aquinas: disputed questions on the virtues**, Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy, bibtext thomas.thomas_2005 bibtext thomas.thomas_2005 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. xiv.

oriented towards its good. However, according to Stump's Aquinas, this for humans requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So whatever the good of a human being is, the human needs the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in order for this good to be made manifest.

Oftentimes, many speak of Aquinian ethics as being ultimately similar to Aristotelian ethics. However, the need for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as we will see in the next section, make it questionable whether or not the two are in any way similar in any real respect. It would help to include a description which would help us to understand what it means to have an indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However I will not be able to pursue that project in this thesis. In the section that follows, I will argue that knowledge of God is a particular aim which is achieved through the exercise of certain epistemic virtues one of which is the motivation to obtain true beliefs.

4.3.1 Plantingian vs. Roberian Design

Eleonore Stump argues that there is a very prevalent distinction that we can make between Aristotelian and Aquinian ethics.¹¹ Although we have been speaking to epistemological theories until now, because of the close relationship that ethics has with epistemology in the classical world, what Stump stipulates to Aquinian ethics can correlate with a view on epistemology as well.¹² For ease, I will argue that those features necessary for an Aquinian ethics, are also necessary for a Plantingian theoretic in epistemology.

According to Stump, a person cannot be in a good state regarding their rational faculties of the intellect without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. With the indwelling of the

11. Eleonore Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas's Ethics: Aquinas on the Passions," *Faith Philos.* 28, no. 1 (2011): 29–43, accessed June 16, 2017.

12. This might seem to be a point that Sosa vehemently disagrees with. Problematic for him is the suggestion that epistemology would be a type of ethics.

He argues that knowledge can be obtained even by someone with a deplorable character. (Sosa, *Judgment & Agency*, p. 48) However, a part of what I am here arguing is that what makes someone have a deplorable character is the degree of their actual character from their intended character. I do not think that Sosa's account can show this as it would be hard for him to give an account of design similar to Plantinga's own. Given Plantingian theism as I have defined it, in order for someone to possess the state intended, she would need to have possession of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, an individual benefits also from various gifts which the Holy Spirit provides. Without these gifts, it is impossible for an individual to be in union with God which is what God intended when creating human beings. According to Plantinga, (*TE*) gives one reason to trust that his cognitive faculties are reliable because God has created us for the purpose of knowing him. Stump and Plantinga's views seem to converge on this point. However, Roeber argues that given the evidential argument from evil, the version of theism which survives this objection does not give us reason to assume that we know whether God would or would not create us with reliable faculties.

My own argument holds that whether or not we can know for what purposes God created us; any beginning locus for the understanding of our design would first require that an individual who would come to some understanding of this point, would need the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What this means is that without the Holy Spirit, we *could* not know the purposes that God intended in creating us. Without the Holy Spirit, human beings cannot live up to their good as stated stipulated in their intended design, a part of which is true belief gained through the use of agential epistemic virtues. Some of the features that would be created according to such a design plan, include such ideas as knowledge of God's design for our lives and other true beliefs.

A version of theism which holds that God designed our cognitive faculties to orient us towards knowledge of Him, is compatible with a version of theism that says that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is necessary for this to be brought about. Furthermore, the necessitation of the Holy Spirit may be built into the design by God; in the same way that a car is designed to work with gasoline. On this theism, we have reason to treat as reliable, an individual who has opened themselves up in the manner indicated. Lastly, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would first require the right agential character.

4.3.2 Aquinian Virtue versus Aristotelian Virtue

As we saw with Sosa, an intellectual virtue does not necessarily need to have truth as its ultimate aim. However, true beliefs in consideration with the aims of an entity can be helpful. When the aim of true belief collides with other aims, it is possible that these other aims become more important.

This is the difficulty for $P(R/N\&E)$. For a cognitive faculty's proper functioning to create the warrant needed for knowledge, it needs to function such that true belief always wins out against other aims. Considering that God created us including our cognitive faculties, $(T\&E)$ could represent such a design plan; while this is the difficulty for (R) on $(N\&E)$.

For a cognitive faculty's proper functioning to create the warrant needed for knowledge, it needs to function such that true belief always wins out against other aims. Commitment to the scientific method might create such a condition in which truth wins out. However, this commitment to truth must win out against all other commitments which is not a necessary outcome.

A point which Roeber misses, is that the design plan which he incorrectly labels as Plantingian Theism, does not represent a theism, which while avoiding the evidentiary problem from evil, also confers warrant on an agent; even though I think that it can be shown that Plantinga's version does do this. What is missing from Roeber's version is the fact that theism, needed to complete Plantinga's account, would require that an agent be filled with the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit requires a particular agency possessed by the agent in question; as the necessary agency entails the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Given that the agent in question possesses this given agency, the Holy Spirit is then capable of residing within the agent. Given this, the agent in question, and God, are then capable of a close and immediate relationship between God and the agent. This relationship further entails the preclusion of other problematic consequences of human nature such as fear, non-virtuous desires, self-deception etc and best of all, concerns related to not being competitive

given evolutionary fitness.¹³

This relationship would then preclude such problematic consequences such as self-deception and other avenues of false belief.¹⁴ One way in which this state of affairs could be facilitated is that fear, possibly aroused in an agent as the result of impending death or evolutionary failure at the prospect of not reproducing offspring; would be mitigated, owing to their relationship with God.

According to the classical version of theism endorsed by Aquinas and possibly by Plantinga, union with God is an important feature of human being's fulfilling the design for which God created them. Because it is impossible for a person to be in union with God without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is necessary for human beings to achieve any design according to which God created us. Furthermore, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God even dwells in the creature whom the Holy Spirit dwells in. Plantinga holds that God created human beings to know him, I agree but what I am disputing is the question of whether or not this feature of Plantinga's theism may be preserved in light of the evidential argument from evil. Roeber does not seem to think it can. Can we avoid the consequence that because God is not known fully by us, we could not know of justifying evils. Considering that we are made for perfect union with God according to a classical version of theism, we would need reliable cognitive faculties. How do we account for our lack of knowledge about justified evils given this requirement for knowledge?

One approach that we could take is to say that we achieve the aim of our design by exercising our cognitive faculties in the right way whatever this way is. We know that it

13. A recurring point of concern in Plantinga's *EAAN*.

14. One might argue that a person filled with the Holy Spirit may also be self-deceived or otherwise fooled regarding the beliefs they hold. However there are three ways around this objection. One, we could say that the individual in question is not really filled with the Holy Spirit. However, in this case then, no one really is filled with the Holy Spirit; seeing as how there is not one individuals who does not hold false beliefs at times. Second, we might say that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit only makes it possible that God's aims are capable of eventually being fulfilled. Only at a particular time will his creation be perfected. This second response is more likely and defensible.

would require communion with the Holy Spirit, but I have not given a theory about what this means. However we do know that there is a requirement on us to achieve knowledge. According to $(N\mathcal{E}E)$ there is also a requirement for us to obtain true beliefs, however this requirement is only at times useful to bring about some other desired aim. We need a design plan to which the obtainment of true beliefs is necessary. With the added feature that God wants union with us, $(T\mathcal{E}E)$ then makes it necessary that we obtain true beliefs which are necessary for knowledge. Furthermore, the obtainment of knowledge must be done in the right way according to the right design plan.

God has created us to know him but that in order for this to be brought about, it requires the indwelling of Holy Spirit which facilitates our perfect union with God. This perfect union is furthered by the indwelling of God within us. The good of a human being *qua* human being for Aquinas is this perfect union with God. Through this perfect union, a human being can experience the presence of God. Through the experience of God's presence, the mind of God 'can be known in a direct and intuitive way that is in some way like the mind-reading between human persons.'¹⁵ According to Williams' and Stump's Aquinas then, the good of God's creations are brought about through his presence, whenever they are infused by his essence and power, necessitating his residing inside of human beings.

Considering the thesis that (O) , if God is all-knowing, then through His presence in us, we have this potential considering that perfect union with Him would seem to suggest that we have a capacity for the obtainment of true belief.¹⁶ This means that given (O) , (R) is plausible. However, as we saw with the inscrutability maxim, it is still possible that we do not know enough about God to know what His aims are. Given $(T\mathcal{E}E)$, we can argue that (T) posits more than (O) owing to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a necessary component in God's design for us. It is this that gives us reason to trust our cognitive faculties.

15. Stump, "The Non-Aristotelian Character of Aquinas," p. 37.

16. An abbreviation for the maxim that God is omnipotent, omni-benevolent, and omniscient.

So the point missing by Roeber is that given (T) , though God's presence in us helps us to bring about God's design, this is brought about through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling as we saw requires a particular agency at the base of which is a certain motivation. Further, this avoids the evidential objection because one without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, would not see the point to the evils inherent in creation, as they do not and could not have the necessary relationship with God. Yet one who does have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit might, as a result of this relationship, see the point in the existence of evil.

4.3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that Roeber's version of theism does not provide an account of the design supposed of human beings. Admittedly neither does Plantinga, that I know of in his EAAN, though it is possible that he could argue something similar to my own suggestion here. I propose that it is possible to input a Christian theory of the design of human beings which necessitates the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill that design function. I argue that this feature of theistic design meets the requirement that true orientation of faculties towards belief, given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a necessary consequence of this design feature. This is because the indwelling of the Holy Spirit facilitates direct union with God, in a way not unlike mind-reading, precluding any deception potentially a consequence of our cognitive faculties.

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