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Reason and religious belief in traditional epistemology, reformed epistemology and Wittgenstein: A critical comparative inquiry.

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REASON AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY, REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY, AND WITTGENSTEIN:
A Critical Comparative Inquiry

By
C. P. Harrison-Marchand

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In this thesis the author investigates the rationality of religious belief. In the first chapter he critically discusses the two main strands of classical epistemology (internalism and externalism), while focusing on the internalist view of foundationalism. Foundationalists maintain that certain propositions are basic in a rational belief system. These are rationally justified when apprehended, thus they serve as a foundation for knowledge. Formulating a criterion to determine what basic beliefs are has proven to be an insurmountable difficulty for foundationalism, however. The author argues that there is no rationale for strict criteria of basic beliefs. In the second chapter, he considers a group of philosophers (the reformed epistemologists) who recognize this problem of the criterion of foundational beliefs, yet still hold that it is correct to think that religious belief has foundations. They appeal to a descriptive sense of basicality, and not one that is supported by strict logical criteria. If one can see that a belief acts as a ground of his belief system in a moment when it is apprehended, the reformists argue, one can claim that it is *de facto* foundational. In the third chapter the author considers uncanny similarities in investigative style between the reformed epistemologist and Ludwig Wittgenstein, though he eventually focuses upon two differentiating features. He argues that Wittgenstein is right to claim that basic beliefs ought not be a focus of rationality. Basic beliefs, like "God exists", are held in place by non-basic beliefs which determine what God's existence amounts to. Taken as it is, "God exists" expresses nothing. It is not a foundation for belief in God, but like an axis around which non-basic beliefs revolve. The second difficulty that the reformist faces, the author argues, is that if one need only describe how a belief acts as a foundation of knowledge in a particular circumstance, then it seems that nearly any belief could conceivably be a foundation of knowledge. One need only appeal to justifying circumstances in which a belief could be described as acting foundationally. Conversely, he shows that Wittgenstein can argue against this charge, but it stands in the way of fully accepting reformed epistemology as an epistemology of religious belief.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to critically investigate the views about the rationality of religious belief from within the work of traditional epistemology to reformed epistemology, on to the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The reader will be guided through evaluative discussions concerning the common conceptions of knowledge that are held by traditional epistemologists. At the end of that journey the work of the reformed epistemologists[1] will be isolated and considered. The reformists have their epistemological roots steeped in traditional soil, yet even though their method of inquiry stems from the tradition, their views about the rationality of theistic belief are foreign to it. The reformists consideration of epistemogical principles, and use of language are reflective of the tradition, but their rigorous inquisitive focus on religious belief is not. My reason to isolate their work is motivated by the thought that their views are reminiscent of the philosopher who I believe has the best position concerning reason and religious belief, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's thoughts on religious belief are considered non-canonical. I intend to segregate the few points that keep the reformists from indorsing Wittgenstein's view, and by implication, severing themselves completely from traditional epistemology.

Recent forms of critical philosophical projects ranging from the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, to the linguistics of Paul de Man, to the "laissez-faire" pragmatism of Richard Rorty, partly surround the view that traditional epistemology has a conception of knowledge which is far too limiting. The tradition assumes that there must be necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. To argue for particular conditions of knowledge is necessarily a path which leads to isolating particular kinds of beliefs that conform to those conditions, and excluding the beliefs which do not. Many contemporary philosophers have argued that the beliefs which are excluded from the domain of propositions of knowledge have been unjustifiably dismissed. The search to find necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge is possible for traditional philosophers because their conception of philosophy involves the assumption that we can discover what

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[1] I will refer to the philosophers that affirm the project of reformed epistemology by using the terms reformed epistemologists, reformed philosophers, reformed thinkers, or reformists (this last term ought not be confused with those who are considered theologians of the reformation). The philosophers I principally have in mind are George I. Mavrodes, William P. Alston, George Marsden, D. Holwerda, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Alvin Plantinga.

all knowledge must entail through one kind of investigation. This view suggests that we can discover the conditions of knowledge which govern all contexts in which a proposition of belief may be held. This is the post-enlightenment conception of philosophy.

In the first chapter a description will be given of the core of traditional epistemology as a debate between the internalists and the externalists. The internalists (which include the coherence and foundations theorists) maintain that all knowledge comes from our sensations of the empirical world. Propositions of knowledge are analyzed in terms of our mental processes about that sensory input. What this implies is that necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge are internal to the mental state of knowing. Therefore, knowledge is a state of mind. By their style of investigation we can distinguish the mental state of believing from the mental state of knowing. With the aid of the Wittgensteinian Norman Malcolm, I will reject this view because knowledge is not a mental condition but a steadfast reaction to undeniable truths that are expressed in our activity. Knowing proposition S means that it cannot be doubted, and the concept of doubt has no weight, currency, or role in relation to proposition S. Knowing does not involve an analysis of our states of mind. We know proposition S if it cannot be doubted in the particular context in which proposition S is apprehended.

The externalists (which include the reliabilists and the probabilists) hold that we must investigate our mental processes along with aspects of the environmental conditions of our sensing which may not be mentally accessible to us, yet are relevant to making claims of knowledge. The reliabilists assert that knowing involves acquiring a belief by a trustworthy belief forming mechanism that consistently yields true beliefs. The probabilists hold that probabilities can determine what one can justifiably believe. If a belief is not at least probably true, then it is not justified. I will argue that reliabilism is much preferable than probabilism, but only in terms of justifying propositions of empirical belief.

Confusion arises if one applies the externalist theories to analyze religious propositions. The theories provide no place for the concept of certainty. If we examine the sense of religious propositions in the life of St. Paul or St. Peter (who suffered greatly for their beliefs, yet endured because of their conviction), we see that the proper characterization of their beliefs must be in terms of certainty. Externalist theory is too constrained to accommodate the natural sense that religious beliefs often have in the life of a devotee. The first chapter will be

comprised of detailed discussions and critical analyses concerning the major issues which surround the internalist and externalist positions.

The internalist theory of foundationalism is most dominant in traditional epistemology and will receive the majority of attention in the first chapter. Foundationalists hold that there are two kinds of propositions. One kind are foundational propositions which are rationally justified the moment that a person attains one, and simultaneously, understands its truth. They are the foundations of our knowledge. Foundationalists normally assert that these propositions are ones of immediate sense impression. We will see that they have a very narrow view of what are foundational propositions. The other kind of proposition is non-foundational. Propositions of this sort are not immediately known when they are apprehended. They need to be logically connected to foundational beliefs in order to attain any rational standing. What follows from this is that propositions of aesthetic and moral judgement, or religious belief are never considered to be foundational. They are in need of rational support. These propositions are (at most) reliant upon some logical connection to a foundational proposition, or they are (at least) mere expressions of sentiment or attitude.

The analysis of these propositions leave no room for objectivity or truth. The tradition argues that one can never hold them as propositions which issue certainty. These propositions are judged as having a degree of certainty in as much as they are logically connected to a foundational proposition. Wittgenstein and the reformed philosophers recognize, however, that this philosophical project cannot be justified as the tribunal to which all propositions of belief come to be judged. They argue that what may be a foundational proposition in one context may not be in another. To put it another way, all beliefs cannot be reduced to a single kind; as if all propositions of knowledge, in some way, stem from sense perception.

In the second chapter I will consider the reformist's view of the rationality of religious belief and investigate their claim that religious propositions can issue knowledge. We will see that they come out of the internalist strand of foundationalism. Reformed philosophers also consider a rational belief system to be a kind of upward-reaching logical structure with self-justified beliefs in its foundation. Traditional foundationalists assert that propositions which are self-evident, incorrigible or evident to the senses are the only ones that qualify as self-justified. If a subject has one of those three propositions in the foundation of her belief system, then she can build a rational belief structure. I will investigate the

reformist's argument that traditional foundationalists cannot rationally support their claim of what kind of proposition must be a self-justified one. In seeing that it is rationally irredeemable to assert that there are particular criteria to determine what kind of proposition must be a self-justifying one, I will show that the reformed epistemologists affirm an immanently relented sense of basicality. A belief that can be described as basic for a person's belief system in the moment and circumstance in which it is apprehended, they argue, forces us to concede that the belief is *de facto* a basic one. It is by this argument that they feel justified in submitting certain kinds of basic religious propositions in the foundations of a belief system, and claim that religious belief is rational.

In the third chapter the later work of Wittgenstein will be discussed and the reformist's project will be reflected upon by its light. We will see that for Wittgenstein what counts as a proposition of knowledge is contingent upon a context of believing, thus all propositions of knowledge cannot be reduced to a single kind, e. g. aesthetic, moral, religious, or empirical. He comes to this conclusion by inquiring into the use of concepts in our language and showing how sense and nonsense is distinguished within a form of discourse. He does not enter a philosophical investigation in terms of what can and cannot be rationally justified before investigating a particular instance of believing. There is no Archimedean concept of rationality to discover, and then apply to all forms of propositions. This is because the very concept of what is rational, or what are propositions of knowledge, is determined from within a context and not from an abstract conception of reasonableness. Traditional epistemologists are bound to a generalized form of investigation because they seek necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. They inevitably lack an understanding about how different, and often incommensurable, conceptual uses can be. They cannot appreciate the different uses of the concept of knowledge. We cannot assert, Wittgenstein argues, that there is one form of rationality, nor one particular set of propositions which can be rationally justified.

Throughout my detailed discussion of Wittgenstein's general points about knowledge and belief, we will see that many of his views are in agreement with the work of the reformists. Towards the end of the third chapter I will focus upon two points of divergence, however. I take these two points to be that which leads an epistemologist of religion to fully appreciate the work of Wittgenstein, while recognizing the weaknesses of reformed epistemology. Firstly, the reformed

epistemologist's understanding of what basic beliefs are, and how they function in our belief systems, is problematic and leads to serious consequences. For the reformists basic beliefs are what the philosopher must focus upon in order to evaluate the rationality of belief. They focus on moments of belief acquisition which involve the apprehension of an exclusively particular proposition that can be described as the basis of one's belief system. Their discussions revolve around circumstances of forming the belief that "God is to be thanked and praised" or "God disapproves of what I have done" for instance, while never considering the simple, and in my mind truly fundamental (basic) proposition, "God exists". I will argue that "God exists" must be fundamental because if one does not firstly believe in a God, then it is nonsensical for one to offer Him praise. The reason that the reformists do not discus "God exists" in terms of acquiring basic beliefs seems obvious. It is truly difficult to think of a particular contextual circumstance when one would apprehend that belief alone.

Wittgenstein teaches us to look at the logic which is embedded in our ordinary conceptual and linguistic use. When we take his advice we can see that truly basic religious beliefs (like "God exists") are never, or rarely if ever, considered on the level of consciousness. He asks us to describe the sense that concepts have in our language. The proposition "God exists", as a basic belief, says very little if anything at all. We cannot determine what the existence of God amounts to, or means. The sense and nonsense in our language is determined by the clarity or obscurity in our expressions of meaning. The role of the concept of the existence of God takes shape and is enmeshed within our beliefs about what it means to serve God, love God, treat others in God, to feel guilt before God, to know that God is to be praised, and so on. When we investigate our behavior in the world and see how it reveals what we believe and the logic of it, the truly basic proposition "God exists" is not secured in a belief system because it is self-evident, or for any other reason. It is not held in isolation from how a believer in God behaves. This basic proposition is held fast by non-basic beliefs. It is not the ground of a religious belief system, but like an axis or nexus of meaningfulness. If the proposition "God exists" says very little by itself, then there is very little that it can mean epistemologically. The foundationalist and Wittgenstein agree about what basic religious beliefs are, but they have opposing views about their epistemological significance . Basic beliefs are the origin of the rationality of a belief system for the foundationalist. For Wittgenstein they are implicit in our

belief systems, and reveal nothing about the rationality of our beliefs. I will argue that basic propositions ought not be the focus of an epistemological inquiry. We ought to focus on the clarity of the logic in our language. The reformist's view of basic beliefs is a mischaracterization of the role that our truly fundamental beliefs have.

The above reason to argue against reformed epistemology applies *a fortiori* to my second argument for rejecting their work in light of Wittgenstein. Because the sole focus of rationality is on how a belief can be described as the basis of a belief system in a particular kind of experience, they have great difficulty claiming that not just any belief can be held rationally. I will show that we can imagine many obscure and superstitious beliefs being held rationally from within their style of investigation. Conversely, it is Wittgenstein who successfully argues that not just any beliefs can be held rationally.

In focusing on the sense and nonsense of our conceptual use, Wittgenstein shows that many beliefs that we have about the empirical world or historical facts, for instance, dramatically clash with some religious beliefs. A very obscure, or muddled, understanding of the concepts being used in conjunction with each other is revealed in these cases. Wittgenstein shows that we can criticize such beliefs as the apocalyptic book of *Revelation* was written to predict a certain historical event that will take place exactly as it is said in the last book of the New Testament. If we investigate the research of eschatologists and the evidence that they have for their understanding of that book, we will see that it is one of many books of that kind which was written as devotional literature in support of communities who endured (or anticipated enduring) persecution. To believe that it is predictive, or an oracle depicting historical inevitability, is to ignore historical developments and the attitudes of the first Christians who wrote it. It is to ignore historical facticity. This historical fact, and believing the book of revelation predicts historical affairs, mutually exclude each other. This kind of observation cannot be sustained in the work of the reformists. We can imagine a person being struck by the belief that *Revelation* is literally true while he is reading it, and seeing that belief as descriptively basic for him. Wittgenstein shows that historical truths surrounding the purpose of the book inform us about what can be religiously believed about it. Not just any belief about the book can be rationally held.

Through this comparative philosophical journey I hope to show that Wittgenstein's work concerning the rationality of religious belief is much

preferable than traditional epistemology. I will argue that it is better than the most discussed contemporary analytic philosophical view about reason and religious belief: reformed epistemology. The reformist faces grave and insurmountable problems, because his view of the rationality of religious belief paradoxically provides room for irrational beliefs.

CHAPTER ONE

Traditional Epistemology and Foundationalism :
a Preface for Reformed Epistemology

I. Introduction

The post-enlightenment conception of rationality is the over-arching, or enveloping attitude, of traditional epistemology. This conception suggests that we can make general declarations about what knowledge is by discovering what is justifiably believed through an investigation into rationality. This attitude embraces the assertion that there are necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. In this chapter I will describe the typical aspects and areas of traditional epistemology; the field of philosophy which produces such theories of knowledge. I will limit my description to aspects of epistemology that are what I take to lie at its center, and leave unorthodox conceptions, fringe views, nuances, and aspects of the discipline aside. This will involve drawing a stark contrast between the main ways of viewing, and thus analyzing, knowledge. In proceeding this way, I will present the spirit and kind of thinking that this entire area of philosophy is imbued with. The intention of this rather long prelude to reformed epistemology is to provide the reader with some detail of what I take to be the central issues of traditional epistemology. Classical epistemology, generally conceived, will be the background of the object of my critique. It is by this traditional horizon of philosophical investigation into knowledge that we will see reformed epistemology most clearly and forcefully.

The particular focus of this chapter will be on foundationalism because of its overwhelming influence in epistemology. By direct association, the spirit of foundationalism is a major driving force behind the work of reformed epistemology. I will clarify and critically discuss foundationalism by seeing how it fits within the two most dominant conceptions of knowledge. The two most

dominant domains of investigation into knowledge are generally called internalist and externalist perspectives. Throughout my explication and argument against these two domains of inquiry, I will use the influential work of John L. Pollock as a focal point, because he, in my mind, has presented these views forcefully, thus paradigmatically.[1]

I must qualify my initial intention of drawing a stark contrast between internalism and externalism. I recognize that I am flirting with ambiguity in trying to draw a *stark* contrast between these two views. It is a distinction, nonetheless, that I (and many others) take to lie at the center of understanding contemporary epistemology. At least, it is a distinction that helps to understand the nuances concerning the dominant strands of investigative foci in epistemology. Most epistemologists seemingly promote kinds of hybrids between these two ideological poles. Any sort of detailed discussion about these hybrids is to my mind well beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter and thesis, however. Nevertheless, because of the difficulties in characterizing contemporary epistemology in terms of the internalists versus the externalists, Laurence Bonjour writes, "...epistemologists often use the distinction...without offering any very explicit explication."[2] Also, Richard Fumerton writes, "...I am not certain that [the distinction] has been clearly defined." He continues, "...it is probably foolish to insist that there is only one 'correct' way to define the distinction."[3] Understanding that my task at hand would indeed be a foolish one if I suggested that this chapter is definitive, I will nevertheless attempt to highlight these general attitudes toward the contemporary definitions of knowledge and justification even if they are rough characterizations.

The internalist holds that one finds beliefs justified by means of an analysis of one's "internal states". By " internal states" the internalist is understood as solely investigating immediate sense perception or acts of the mind, for instance. These are cognitive processes that we have "direct access" to. Furthermore, internalism only concerns itself with what the subject is mentally aware of, i.e. the beliefs one has about an object. Immediate sense perception as well as acts of the mind are said to be directly accessible because we are not required to have beliefs *about* them

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[1] This exposition of internalism and externalism will primarily be guided by Pollock's book *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986).
[2] Laurence Bonjour, "Externalism/Internalism", in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds) *A Companion to Epistemology* (Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1992), p. 131.
[3] Richard Fumerton, "The Internalism/Externalism Controversy", in Ernest Sosa (ed) *Knowledge and Justification*, Vol. 1 of 2 Vols., (Dartmouth Publishing Company, Brookfield, VT, 1994), p. 584.

before we have knowledge *of* them. For instance, when we perceive a red ball there is no mistake that we perceive, regardless of the external fact of a red ball actually being in our field of vision. Perception is understood, then, as a mental act or event. Conservatively we can say that we perceive a red spheroid in our visual field. It is a pre-reflexive (meaning prior to reflection or reasoning) report of perception. But how can these reports of perception be deemed justified as knowledge?

The thrust of internalism is, as John Pollock writes, "...that the justifiedness of a belief is determined by whether it was arrived at or is currently sustained by 'correct cognitive processes'."[4] It can be said generally that internalism affirms *cognitive essentialism*. This means that the justifiability of a belief is a function of one's internal states, or cognitive processes. Furthermore, anything other than the mental process can be altered, but that will not affect the conclusion of which beliefs are justified. Epistemic correctness is a part of a mental process and cannot be found wanting by the reliability of it outside the mind. By the "reliability of the process outside the mind" I mean to suggest the determination of causal relationships between objects in the world and our ideas about them. For the internalist all that can be considered in the analysis of knowledge is our stock of beliefs, which include correct and incorrect cognitive processes. The correctness of a cognitive process is not caused by events outside the mind. Mental processes, whether correct or incorrect, are embedded in, or internal to, our stock of beliefs. So, because the determination of epistemic correctness is the path to justifying beliefs, and that involves analyzing the correctness of mental processes which are part of the stock of beliefs that we already have about the world, justifying beliefs is an internal affair. Ultimately, knowledge for the internalist is a state of mind. In the section on internalism I will describe their position and critically discuss why they proceed in this way, how they understand "correct cognitive processes", and how the domain of justified beliefs is limited by this evaluative procedure.

I will argue against the internalist view of knowledge mainly because of its insistence on cognitive essentialism. For us to make a claim of knowledge of external objects there must be some manner in which we can justify their existence in the actual world, which is apprehended *via* perception. This general intuition suggests that to know an object at least involves a belief that one can trust that there is a reality *of* the object outside of the mind; that for knowledge, acts of the mind

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[4]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 22.

involving belief of objects must connect logically with an actuality, facticity, of the existence of an object in the world. It is this place for the facticity of objects of knowledge that is indispensable when considering empirical propositions.

It is true that some internalists have made a distinction between an object and the properties of the object. They intuit that the beliefs stemming from the sensations of an object are distinct from knowing its facticity. The properties of an object (smell, taste, color and so on) need not be associated, in terms of representation, with the object itself. This was put forward by John Locke who drew a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. For Locke the facticity of an object is tied to its primary qualities, such as extension. He suggests that the secondary qualities of an object are somehow separate from its primary qualities. To concretely distinguish between the two we could imagine, for example, the myriad of kinds of yogurt that exist. Given that there are many differences in kinds of yogurt, there seems to be something primary, or essential to them. The secondary qualities (flavor, color, and smell) are not integral for yogurt to be yogurt. If one changes its primary qualities, then one no longer has yogurt, but another object. One can change its flavor, color and smell however without altering its essence. So, with this in mind, secondary qualities *alone* cannot issue knowledge of an object; to know an object involves apprehending the primary qualities. There is a crucial relation between primary and secondary qualities of course; in some sense one influences the other. Locke's intuition is that what an object *is* in some sense affects our sensations of the object. Conversely, the secondary qualities of an object stem from the primary ones. Nevertheless, given this qualification, the distinction between secondary and primary qualities in the yogurt example still stand. Therefore, for Locke, objectivity is linked to our sensibility. Knowing an object, at least in part, involves being aware of the distinction and relation between its primary and secondary qualities. This distinction is not satisfying because it is confusing to consider the knowledge of objects in the world as being, in some sense, a matter of duality.[5] This duality is operative, in a way, when distinguishing between whatever is an object's primary qualities and the representation of the object (secondary qualities).

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[5]This form of objection to Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities is well known. George Berkeley's work is considered the *locus classicus* of these objections. See his *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999).

When we speak of an object in the world we do so in its entirety, a distinction between primary and secondary qualities do not assist us, nor clarify the condition, of knowing. The representation of an object is the object as a whole. Within the representation of an object is the presupposition of its primary qualities also. The representation of an object is nothing like a fine sheen or veil that can conceal the ontological reality underneath. It is asserted that knowing the taste, smell, and color of an object is analytically distinct from the "object itself". My objection is not to say that that is logically negligent, but what could that "object-in-itself" be? We eat strawberry yogurt, throw red cricket balls, and smell the aroma of espresso. The identification of objects is intimately bound to what Locke calls the secondary qualities. We know the primary qualities of an object by virtue of its secondary qualities. Ultimately, when we make claims of knowledge such a distinction does not assist us, but confuses what it means to know objects in our ordinary experiences.

Having reached an understanding of internalism I will turn to externalism. Externalism can briefly be described as a rejection of internalism, because of the internalist insistence on the principle of cognitive essentialism. Quite simply the externalist holds that more than just the internal states of a believer must be involved in finding a belief to be justified. A major point of contention for the externalist is the idea that the conditions of knowledge are internal to cognitive processes; that there are *correct* cognitive processes regardless of circumstance or environment, e.g. external justifying factors. An externalist may hold that the justifiability of a belief is as the internalist claims it is; namely, that the epistemic worth of a belief is determined by the cognitive process from which it comes. However, they would claim that the correctness of a mental process is not exclusively internal or essential to the process, but verifiable by investigating the environmental conditions of an object of knowledge. Ultimately, externalism holds that more than internal states of mind can be included in justifying beliefs. Cognitive processes become subject to circumstantial scrutiny. For example, color vision is thought to be a reliable human faculty. If color vision varied radically we would not have confidence in its reliability. We see that color vision does not vary radically by examining the outside world and recognize great consistency with respect to it. By this example, we can distinguish a correct report of color vision from an incorrect one by an evaluation of the environment. This evaluation would establish if an environment allowed for normal conditions of color representation.

If I wore glasses with red colored lenses the correctness of my perception of objects in the world would be contingent on the external factor of my glasses. The externalist maintains that some cognitive processes are correct in some circumstances and not in others.

The internalist would probably respond by insisting that the externalist misunderstands the phenomenon of knowing and, thus, subordinates it by focusing on irrelevant circumstantial contingencies or external factors. He would claim that knowledge is not determined by an assessment of states of affairs, or environmental circumstances, because knowing is a state of mind. If knowledge is a state of mind, it is uniform in all circumstances of knowing. If knowledge is contingent upon states of affairs, the internalist insists, it loses its rationalist weight as a mental phenomenon and becomes, partly, an issue of fact finding in the world.

For the externalist, however, we must rely on those facts to tell us what mental processes are reliable and in what circumstances. At least to some degree in externalism, knowing is divorced from mental processes alone. The correctness of what affairs are like outside of the mind is not a part of the mental phenomenon of knowing for the internalist. Generally, the externalist wants to say that the justifiability of beliefs is determined by a mental process *and* its connection with the outside world. The two externalist sub theories that I will discuss are reliabilism and probabilism.

I will argue against externalism even though the theory meets my objection with respect to internalism in terms of the justification of empirical knowledge. I agree that beliefs about an external object require an investigation into the environmental states of affairs or conditions in order for a judgement of rationality of the belief to be made. However, isn't that a commonplace assumption? When we make reports about our vision we ordinarily register our environment in which we see the world. This is what I gather epistemologists mean when they talk about beliefs being justified by mental processes *and* their connection with the outside world.

I will not accept internalism or externalism in light of the questions raised by Norman Malcolm. For the most part[6] , I will be referring to his treatment of some of these issues in his essay *Knowledge and Belief.*[7] There he asks, "Can I discover *in*

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[6]I will apply Malcolm's critique to internalism. I will appeal to his general philosophical orientation to critique externalist theories.

[7]Norman Malcolm, *Knowledge and Certainty: Essays and Lectures* (Prentice Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp. 58-72.

myself whether I know something or merely believe it?"[8] Internalists assume that we can distinguish between belief and knowledge by exclusively evaluating our mental activities or processes. This is an assumption that Malcolm convincingly shows to be problematic for the internalist.

Malcolm investigates the character of our ordinary conceptions of "knowledge" and "belief" as a starting point in order to be clear on how to understand what is meant by their use. He distinguishes between knowledge and belief by saying that normally we say we believe P when our grounds for accepting it are far weaker than grounds which are characteristic of knowing P. For instance, I might say, "I believe that it rained yesterday". Here, "belief" is used interchangeably with "I think", or "probably...was the case". If I was shown that in fact it did not rain, I ought not expect great bewilderment and chaos to fill my existence, because my use of "believe" rested upon grounds that were only probably true. I had some confidence in my belief, but I could be easily persuaded that my belief was wrong. Perhaps I was inside my house when I heard what I thought sounded like falling rain, when in fact the sound was caused by leaves being rustled by the wind. If I did not see or feel the falling rain, but believed it because it sounded like it was raining from inside my house, we cannot say that I knew that it rained. These grounds could not support a claim of knowledge that it rained. Because I thought that I heard it rain, I formed the belief that it probably did rain, but I knew that I could easily be mistaken.

Knowledge on the other hand is used in two manners, both in a strong and weak sense. To distinguish weak and strong forms of knowledge we can say that it is measured by the strength of the grounds which support them. A weak knowledge claim may be abandoned if evidence is presented to discount it. This is to say that we may have good grounds to say that one knows P, but it is not *strictly inconceivable* to abandon it if one is forced to do so by discounting evidence. Strong knowledge claims, by contrast, are such that no evidence could possibly be conceived of which would discount them. Malcolm gives an example of a weak knowledge claim when he imagines going to the doctor who informs him, after thorough investigations, that he has no heart. But, he says to the doctor, "I *know* I have a heart! How can my blood circulate, and what accounts for the thumping in my chest?" That he has a heart is a certainty! But eventually, he concedes, he would

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[8] Ibid., p. 58. Malcolm's emphasis.

have to be convinced by the testimony of the doctors, who thoroughly searched his chest cavity and did not find a heart. We can say that he thought he knew that he had a heart, but this evidence would eventually force him to abandon that knowledge claim. This is a weak sense of knowledge, because evidence could *conceivably* be presented which would discount it.

If I say, "I know that 1+1=2", I use "know" in the strong sense. I have no idea of what evidence would count against it. I cannot think of 1+1 being anything other than 2. The usage of the strong sense of know does not only include some basic mathematical propositions. Malcolm has us consider the claim "I know that there is an ink-bottle here". Is it a weak or strong usage of "know"? Traditionally, I imagine, philosophers would answer that it is used in the weak sense. This is because we could discount it by evidence that it may vanish before one's eyes and be revealed as an illusion. Or that one would wake up in a garden and the ink-bottle would be discovered as existing within a dream. We think, says Malcolm, "...that the statement that here is an ink-bottle *must* have the same status as...I have a heart... But this is a *prejudice*."[9] He clarifies the prejudice by writing, "In saying that I should regard nothing as evidence that there is no ink-bottle here now, I am not *predicting* what I should do if various astonishing things happened."[10] He continues by saying:

> But if it is *not* a prediction, what is the meaning of my assertion that I should regard nothing as evidence that there is no ink-bottle here? The assertion describes my *present* attitude towards that statement that here is an ink-bottle.[11]

The logical role of the existence of objects concerning certain empirical propositions is presupposed and fundamental when making knowledge claims. Some internalists, for instance, may want to say that there is still the distinction to deal with between the representation of an object and the object itself. Malcolm says that that distinction would hold if "Here is an ink-bottle" is to be interpreted as "There appears to me to be an ink-bottle here". But, he curtly says , "It would be utterly fantastic for me in my present circumstances to say, 'There appears to me to be an ink-bottle here.'"[12], as if "Here is an ink-bottle" involved some

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[9] Ibid., p. 68. Malcolm's emphases.
[10] Ibid. Malcolm's emphasis.
[11] Ibid. Malcolm's emphases.
[12] Ibid.

acknowledgement of doubt while another asked him if there were one on his desk for her to have. If that is to be the interpretation of this proposition, then the meaningfulness of it only refers to appearances, sense data, and sensations of the ink-bottle. "Here is an ink-bottle" is about the physical object!

Given this line of argumentation about knowledge claims the internalist sheds little light on the issue, because of his claim that we can discover in our minds if we know something or merely believe it. As Malcolm contends our epistemic relation to the world is expressed in the form of having an attitude of certainty, uncertainty, or degrees of certainty about a proposition. To have knowledge of X is partially characterized by how confident one is about the truth of X. One's degree of confidence in a proposition is marked by considering what could possibly count against that confidence in it. Of course it does not follow that one knows X solely because the belief is characterized by a strong confidence in it. There are many examples of one who professes particular beliefs with an unqualified confidence, yet later it was shown that that person was wrong. The point of the ink-bottle proposition is that one must say, if there is no ink-bottle before me now upon seeing it, I do not know what it means to know anything, regardless of any expression of confidence. Confidence, then, is a necessary, and not a sufficient, condition of knowledge.

It is important at the outset that I state what Malcolm's general philosophical point is. His point will carry a lot of weight throughout the theories that I will critique. He insists that some of the propositions that we would naturally classify as empirical (e.g. the ink-bottle proposition) have a logical status that is peculiar. These types of propositions express something fundamental (even foundational) in our thinking. They are fundamental to our thinking because we recognize that if we were to doubt them, or question their truth, then we could not accept any proposition as true. Malcolm rightly states, in this connection, that:

> If you could somehow undermine my confidence in [the ink-bottle proposition] you would not teach me [analytical] *caution*. You would fill my mind with chaos! I could not even make *conjectures* if you took away those fixed points of certainty; just as a man cannot *try* to climb whose body has no support. A conjecture implies an understanding of what certainty would be. If it is not a certainty that 5x5=25 and that here is an ink-bottle, then I do not understand what it is."[13]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 69-70. Malcolm's emphases.

As we will see in the second and third chapters, the position that Malcolm and Wittgenstein begin their philosophical investigations from can be dramatically distinguished from the view of classical foundationalism, because they argue that what may be foundational for us in one context may not be in another. This is to say that making claims of knowledge hinge upon a logic which is internal to a particular activity from which one deduces what is certain. Yet some kinds of propositions may be foundational in only very particular contexts, and another kind, in many. For instance, the ink-bottle proposition is known in the particular context of one asking if an ink-bottle is on another person's desk; the person looks at it and says, "here is an ink-bottle". However, imagine that a person looks for the ink-bottle in his room and doesn't bother to turn on the light, because he thought that he left it on his desk and could find it quickly by merely feeling around for it. Imagine that, while blindly searching for it, he mutters to the person who asked if he had one, "yes, yes, here is an ink-bottle". Suppose, then, that he does not find it, turns on the light, and sees that it is not there. In this context he did not know that "here is an ink-bottle". We can say that he believed it, but he did not know it.

Then we can consider cases which involve the use of mathematics, which have a great breadth of contexts in which those propositions are fundamental (propositions of knowledge) to our thinking. We can think of instances such as, counting out money for the cashier when buying tickets at the cinema, measuring flower when baking a cake, assuring oneself of the age of one's niece, determining if one has enough time to run an errand before a dinner party, or determining the density of a distant star in the cosmos. In fact, at present, I cannot think of a single context where mathematics is used and the truth that 1+1=2 (for instance) is not fundamental to that activity, a fixed point of certainty. Nevertheless, we are not committed to say that mathematical propositions embody necessary and sufficient conditions for all knowledge claims. When one makes calculations the values of numbers, and the relation of one number to another, is a certainty and unchanging regardless of the context in which calculating is employed. Malcolm convincingly shows how internalism is confused about how the concept of knowledge is used and contingent upon human practices.

I will argue against the two externalist theories for separate reasons. The externalist theory of reliabilism, which investigates the reliability of our belief apprehending mechanisms, like vision for instance, will be rejected as a conclusive theory for all knowledge claims. In terms of knowledge claims that are not

empirical, it seems odd to make use of the concept of reliability at all. I will illustrate this in my argument by considering ethical or religious truths that are inscribed by an assiduous conviction. The externalist theory of probability focuses on the likelihood of propositions being true, given environmental conditions and so on. In a sense, they intend to inform us about what beliefs we can "bet" on being true. This will be rejected also because it leaves no room for certainty, or what we could say is characteristic of knowing. In this way I think that it would make no sense at all for Malcolm to look at the ink-bottle on his desk and say "It is *probable* that there is an ink-bottle here." This general domain of criticism (and what is presupposed within it) is one that will be elaborated in chapter three. Even though I will not make those presuppositions and general concerns explicit and elaborate in this chapter, I believe that the sense of my criticisms drawn from them will be conspicuous nonetheless.

By this sketch of the traditional epistemological landscape we will be in a position to examine foundationalism in detail and see what is critically at stake in its relation to the internalist and externalist domains of inquiry. We will see that foundations theories claim that knowledge comes to us by our perception, and therefore posits the existence of logically basic propositions that report that perception. This is a belief that is at the foundations of our knowledge and does not rest on other beliefs. A typical example of a foundational belief is "there is a red circular blob in the center of my visual field." We see by this example that the belief involves basic concepts like color and form that are irreducible. That is what is basic about that belief and not the proposition "There is a red basket-ball on the coffee table" which includes complex conditions and many propositions that rest upon others. This means, justifying that proposition requires other non-basic beliefs to be justified also. We will see how it is clearly an internalist theory and how an externalist may argue against it. Given what I have just said about Malcolm's arguments against cognitive essentialism I think that it is obvious that I cannot accept any foundations theory, traditionally conceived. My main interest in explicating foundationalism is to be clear on their view of a rational structure of knowledge, and then to see how religious belief is considered by them.

I will end this chapter with a brief general description of the problem of the criterion of basic propositions. The ability to set down such criteria is what constitutes the very possibility for the foundationalist project. The reformed challenge to foundationalism surrounds this very issue. Foundationalism has

always maintained a very narrow view of what can be basic beliefs which hinge on their empirical focus. The reformed epistemologists are unique in the sense that they are dedicated to the foundationalist picture of knowledge, but challenge it because of their exclusion of religious propositions from those that can be said to be foundational or basic. Because the details of this challenge will be discussed in the following chapter, I must, in this last section, provide the groundwork which is essential to fully comprehend reformed epistemology.

II. The Presuppositions of Traditional Epistemology

A. Philosophical intentions

As to lead into the main issues concerning internalism and externalism, a few general comments about the intentions of these traditional philosophies may be helpful. All traditional epistemology seeks to show what knowledge is and what knowledge is not. Roderick Chisholm explains it like this:

> Theory of knowledge, when considered as a part of philosophy, is concerned with such questions as, 'What can I know?' 'How can I distinguish those things I am justified in believing from those things that I am not justified in believing?' 'And how can I decide whether I am more justified in believing one thing than in believing another?'[14]

What exactly is the epistemologist hoping to accomplish with an analysis of what knowledge is and what knowledge is not? It is generally held that one thing he hopes to give is a justification for our beliefs, and thus provide an answer to what it is we can justifiably claim that we know. Essentially, epistemology amounts to investigating what can be claimed as knowledge. The result of epistemology is to improve the logical status of our claims of knowledge by the corrections it leads us to make in accordance to what knowledge is. Chisholm offers this description of the purpose of traditional epistemology as it, in this sense, relates to non-foundational propositions:

> ...we want to do our best to improve our set of beliefs - to replace those that are unjustified by others that are justified and to replace those that have a lesser degree of justification with others that have a greater degree of justification.[15]

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[14] Roderick Chisholm, *Theory Of Knowledge* (Printice Hall Int., Englewood Cliffs, 1989), p. 1.
[15] Ibid.

What lies at the root of epistemology, then, is a natural or intuitive concern for truth. With this concern the epistemologist generally focuses upon the justification of knowledge claims, and the dominant conception of knowledge is that it is justified true belief. In so doing, the epistemologist will provide us with a better rational stance with respect to our beliefs. Therefore, the most important work of traditional epistemology is to discern how justification of true belief is to be understood and attained.

B. Epistemology as belief guidance

Epistemic justification is concerned with declaring what ought, and ought not, be believed. This can be called the "belief-guiding" sense of justification. Epistemology guides one away from holding false beliefs which ought not be held, to true beliefs which ought to be held. However, there is another sense of justification. For some contemporary epistemologists, justification is all that is required for knowledge: the concept of knowledge can be defined as justified belief. But, as Pollock notes, "That, of course, is not very clear, because knowledge requires more than justification."[16] It is not certain what is meant by "justification". We are left with a vague rule which states that knowledge must be accompanied by justification. This is not satisfactory because we must be clear on what justification is. If we leave this definition of knowledge as it is, then we have a philosophical perspective that can lead to a view akin to sophistry.

We may hold any proposition as long as we can give *some reasons* for doing so. We must acknowledge that the concepts of truth and falsity never enter into this form of determining what knowledge is. This is because what reasons we may offer for holding a belief are not grounded in, nor stem from, that which is true. We must clarify what justification focuses on, which would introduce the missing piece to this definition of knowledge: truth. The reason why Pollock and many other epistemologists insist so tenaciously on the concept of truth to be included in the definition of knowledge, is that truth emanates from objectivity. To have an objective account of a belief provides certainty of its truth. It is truth which ought to be required for knowledge also. For a belief to be justified, a direct link ought to enjoin our beliefs and the reality which issue those beliefs. Justification alone does not do this. There is some debate as to whether there is a form of justification that is

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[16]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 10.

required for knowledge, and yet is distinct from a "belief-guiding" form of justification. I take the most commonly accepted concept of justification to be of the belief-guiding sort. Thus, the most common refrain sounded by the traditional epistemologist is that knowledge is justified true belief.[17]

C. Presupposing knowledge

A common concern about the project of epistemology is that if one is seeking justified true belief, then one must be presupposing something about it. Chisholm offers a response about this issue of the justification of the presuppositions of epistemology. He says:

> I have an idea of what it is for a belief to be justified and have an idea of what it is for a belief not to be justified; I have an idea of what it is to *know* something; and I have an idea of what it is for one thing to be *more justified* for me than another.[18]

Furthermore, he claims in light of the above, that he can rank his beliefs from those that are more justified to those that are less justified. And this presupposes knowledge about the status of justification of one's beliefs. For example, if a person believed both that there are nine planets in our solar system, and bulls in a rodeo are joyfully playing when they try to get the rider off of their back, we can intuitively rank which is more justifiable than the other. That there are nine planets in our solar system is a commonly learned and observable fact, thus it would rank ahead of the bull in the rodeo proposition in terms of being more justified to believe. The bull in the rodeo proposition is certainly of a lesser degree of justification given that all of the action to upset the bull before the rodeo seems to point in the direction of making the bull unhappy rather than in a playful mood. Thus, the bull in the rodeo proposition seems to be counterintuitive, where the truth

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[17]It is true that this conception of knowledge as justified true belief was agreed upon by nearly all epistemologists up until 1963. It is rare indeed that seemingly all philosophers would agree on such a substantive issue. In that year, to the astonishment of the philosophical world, Edmund Gettier published his seminal paper, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (*Analysis* 23: 121-123), which showed that this conception is inaccurate. In that paper he gave counter-examples which indicate that more conditions are needed in the analysis of knowing. Following the publication of Gettier's essay, epistemology has been confronted with more and more intricate, complicated, and highly nuanced views of the conditions of knowledge in order to measure up to his counter-examples. At any rate, I will not recount Gettier's arguments and examples here, but refer the interested reader to his paper to be read in its entirety. Even though this traditional conception has been justifiably questioned, it is standard - in general reviews of epistemology - to present knowledge as justified true belief while attaching a footnote (such as this one) specifying some dissent about how exhaustive it may be as a definition of knowledge.

[18]Roderick Chisholm, *Theory Of Knowledge* (Printice Hall Int., Englewood Cliffs, 1989), p. 5. Chisholm's emphases.

of the actual number of planets in our solar system can be observed. Chisholm, therefore, makes the claim that the epistemologist is justified in presupposing that he can correct his system of beliefs, and add those beliefs that are justified, and discard those that are not justified. What is fundamental about the examples above, pertaining to what they say about justification, is that justification is concomitant with objectivity. This is the reason why the proposition about the number of planets has a higher degree of justifiability than the bull in the rodeo proposition.

D. Criteria of knowledge

How exactly epistemologists determine justified belief from unjustified belief differs greatly as a result of which criteria of justification are used. Some think that justifiedness lies in the reliability of the manner in which beliefs are derived. This is to ask the simple question: is a given mode of procuring a belief to be trusted as yielding truth? For instance, wishful thinking, "guesswork", "hunches", or reliance on emotional attachment, are not reliable in yielding true belief. Imagine a state investigator who investigates a series of murders and has only one suspect: an eighty year old grandmother. Imagine that the investigator does not believe that this woman committed the crime because he *wished* it were not true. Let's say that he also believes this because he does not want to see her end her days in prison; emotionally, the thought is too much to believe for him. Simply, that belief evades the *truth* of her involvement in the crime. These mechanisms of belief acquisition (wishful thinking or reliance on emotional attachment) would almost never yield true belief. The reliable mechanism for this case, which would yield true belief, is deduction from the facts of her involvement.

We will see later how some foundationalists require a justified belief to be founded upon (or supported by) a belief that is self-evident. This condition of the basicality of belief is such that no reasoning can be carried out beyond it. So, if a belief rests on a self-evident proposition (thus, self-justified) that belief too is justified by a certain relation to it. The *truth* of self-evident propositions is immediately comprehended. Some have said that 1+1=2 is such a proposition for most people. We can say that the self-evidence of a proposition is one criterion of a justified belief for the foundationalist. Another criterion that was made famous by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle is the verifiability criterion of propositions. This view suggests that the justifiedness of a belief is determined by the method of its verification. Mathematical propositions can be demonstrated, thus

verified by tracing calculatory steps of a problem. Empirical or scientific propositions satisfy this criterion because their facticity can be verified in the natural world. As a consequence, metaphysical propositions (notably ones of religious belief, moral truths or aesthetic judgments) are, at best, characterized as expressions of attitude or sentiment because they cannot be factually verified. I tried to give a wide sample of what are considered criteria of justification to illustrate how varied they can be. Ultimately a criterion of justification expresses the necessary and sufficient conditions for a proposition's justification.

As can be readily seen, Malcolm would not agree with this notion of a generalized criterion of justification in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. He would say that a criterion of justification is internal and peculiar to a context. The reason why the logical positivists cannot accept the justifiability of truths concerning moral and aesthetic judgments, or religious beliefs is because they hold onto one contextual form of justifiability as that which is sufficient for all propositions of belief. A positivist can justify empirical beliefs because their criterion of verifiability is conceptually bound and internal to the scientific/empirical mode of inquiry. But, what is involved in establishing empirical truth is incommensurable to a context of moral beliefs. Malcolm suggests that a criterion of what counts as a justifiable moral belief is determined from within a context of moral judgments where one is operative.

Epistemologists also notice that if we have the ability to know something about our beliefs and the status of their justifiability, then we can presuppose that humans are rational beings. It is this ground level presupposition that gives support for the post-enlightenment conception of rationality that sets the stage for traditional epistemology. Because it is presupposed that humans are rational beings, it follows naturally that we ought to investigate the justifiability of our beliefs. Our beliefs, therefore, must measure up to the standard of rationality which is in accordance to our presupposed nature. This is to say that a conception of rationality gives rise to a concomitant conception of the justification of our beliefs. If humans are rational then their beliefs must be also; and if one believes something that is not rational then that person must know why it is not rational and discard it. What all of this amounts to is that epistemology is not so much concerned with knowing *per se*. To say that epistemology is interested in accounting for what is knowable is not entirely accurate. Epistemologists are interested in *how* one knows, or the grounds from which one claims to know something. So, from the conception

that humans are rational beings comes the conception that the justification of beliefs must accompany that rationality in order to evaluate or rank the justifiability of our beliefs.

It seems that the conception of human rationality is divergent, however. How humans are conceived of as rational, or what is considered the appropriate natural structure of rationality, is viewed in different ways. The question arises, what is a rational person? This, implicitly, is what epistemologists answer by giving views of what a rational belief is, and how it ought to be justified. For instance, as discussed earlier, a rational subject for the foundationalist is one who acquires a belief system with basic propositions that supports all of its other non-basic propositions. This principle is considered quite natural. It is not fabricated in order to create rationality for humans to have, as if humans were not rational by nature. When reflecting on what it means to have rational belief, they feel that this is conjoined to the innateness of human rationality. They intuit that, when we reflect on a certain belief and ask why we believe it, it connects logically to another belief and so on, until a belief is reached that cannot be reasoned beyond. Thus, a basic belief cannot be reasoned beyond because we attain its truth merely by understanding it; a basic belief refers to no other proposition that requires justification, it is an immediate recognition of truth. From this view of the naturally rational subject, we get the accompanying view of how beliefs ought to be justified, i.e. a criterion of justification.

Chisholm notes[19] that we have certain properties as rational beings, which are such that if we ask ourselves if we have a kind of property (such as the ability to reflect upon the rationality of our beliefs) it will be evident that we have it only upon reflection. So, it can be presupposed that we can know what we think and believe as well as recognizing inconsistencies of logic and reasoning. However, these presuppositions give rise to the assumption that the epistemologist can succeed in accounting for knowledge. This is reflected in Keith Lehrer's statement:

> The only security we have in the quest for truth is our trust in our own intellectual powers to reach our objective and the sense not to fall into needless error.[20]

It is with these presuppositions that the epistemologist is confident that he can

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[19] Ibid.
[20] R.J. Brodgan, *Profiles: Keith Lehrer* (D. Reidel, Dordrecht, 1981), p. 98.

account for knowledge. From these presuppositions emerges the post-enlightenment conception of rationality, which buttresses their program for the imperative justification of beliefs.

III. Internalism

A. The conditions of knowledge

In an effort to distinguish internalism from externalism we can say that it is a matter of seeing where the conditions of knowledge are primarily focused. That is to say, to know X we must comprehend what makes that possible, e.g. how is its possibility conditioned. The internalist will say that the conditions of a justified belief lie in mental processes. All of the conditions for claiming a belief to be justified are cognitively accessible. Therefore, merely by reflection we can determine if a belief is justified or not. Internal conditions for knowledge are what the subject must be *aware* of (or possibly aware of, in the sense of being at least mentally accessible), regardless of external considerations, to be rational. By contrast, externalism views the conditions of knowledge to be in mental processes congruent with the environment which one is in while acquiring a belief. Therefore, externalists consider states of affairs, facts of the world, and causal connections, for example, to be conditional to knowing X also. The subject is not aware of these external conditions by mental processes *alone*. These conditions must be investigated outside of the mind. So, the externalist broadens the conditions of knowledge held by the internalist to also include environmental factors. The externalist, as we will see by an example below, holds that it is certainly possible that some sensory impressions can be mistaken. Internalists hold that we receive knowledge of the world by sense impressions and that they cannot be mistaken at a fundamental level. Thus, externalists must venture outside the mind in search for some justificatory factors that are not mentally accessible, where the internalists claims that all that is needed is an analysis of one's mental states. The distinction between these two epistemological views, then, is a case of awareness. To make a claim of knowledge, where do we turn our investigative attention? What do we need to be aware of in order to make an informed argument about rational belief? Is it the justifiability of our mental processes alone, or the justifiability of holding a belief about the external world given its particular environmental conditions, and external justifying factors?

In the last section we noted that the classical definition of knowledge is justified true belief. Externalism and internalism, as viewed by many, seemingly vie for which quality (justification or truth) is to be emphasized when investigating and affirming particular propositions of knowledge. To help us define internalism and externalism, Adam Morton notes[21] that there are particular qualities of a rational belief emphasized by both camps. He sees the internalist emphasizing justification (as well as coherence, reasonability, and not being undermined by another person's belief) hence their focus on mental processes or internal justificatory mechanisms. This is in contrast to the externalist who emphasizes truth (as well as reliability, fact-tracking or tracing one's belief to facts in the world, and the usability of one's belief by others) by focusing on external considerations, particularly ones concerning the objectivity of beliefs. I must make it clear that both internalists and externalists consider a proposition of knowledge to be one that is true, as well as justified. The internalist does not call knowledge that which can merely be justified from within the mind, correspondingly the externalist does not totally disregard the correctness of mental processes in justification either. When drawing a stark contrast between these views of knowledge it can appear that truth is missing from the internalist position, and justifiability is missing from the externalist view. It seems that these different views stem from an intuition that one quality of rational belief ought to take precedence over the other. Later in this section we will see what role truth has in internalist theory, while in the next section we will consider the place that justification has in externalism.

The point of departure for the internalist theorist is the premise that knowledge of the world comes to us by perception. Naturally, the theorist wants a starting point to justify our beliefs of the world which does not rest on beliefs already held, and is not in need of justification also. He wants to proceed from the origin from which our beliefs emanate. Immediate sense perception is where he sees the firm ground of inquiry to be, primarily because the reception of sense data does not require beliefs about it. Immediate sense perception is direct and unmediated in the sense that it happens to us and does not require reflection or cognitive mediation in order to report it. Registering sense data (ability to report sensations) is a direct mental process which epistemologists call "internal states".

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[21]Adam Morton, *A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge* (Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, 1997), p. 125.

B. Internal states and states of mind

It is crucial at the outset to discuss the similarities and differences between internal states and propositions of knowledge and belief. The distinction between internal states and propositions of knowledge and belief is not always a clear one to describe, however. Firstly, propositions of belief and knowledge are distinct from one another in that they both assert a degree of justifiability about the truth of a proposition. What the epistemologist desires is knowledge, meaning certainty, of a proposition's truth, and that is distinguished from belief which involves holding a proposition by a range of "good" justifiable grounds. So, a distinguishing aspect of internalist theory on this issue is that a belief is justified if it is logically connected, or related, to another justified belief. As we will see is the case for the foundationalist, justified beliefs eventually rest upon self-justified grounds. The internalist starts by asserting that knowledge comes to us by perception. They notice that perception is immediate and direct, meaning that propositions which stem from it are not based upon other beliefs. Therefore, foundationalists describe propositions of immediate sense perception as basic, foundational or the ground of belief. The details surrounding these propositions will be given in a following section on foundationalism. The character of basic propositions which issue from perception is similar to internal states, in that perception, or acquisition of sense data, is an indubitable acquisition of knowledge about the representation of an object. It is a description of our visual field (as one mode of sensing) prior to any reasoning about it. A perceptual state is the experience of recognizing, or merely registering, sensory input; it is apprehended passively. To perceive an object also has the character of a basic proposition in that one does not doubt, one knows, what one describes in his visual field. So, basic propositions and perception are alike because (for the internalist) they are internal states. This is an important point because when justifying beliefs we recognize that our cognitive processes - that which directs our reasoning or evaluation of truth claims - can appeal to internal states (which are immediate, passive, and indubitable) and not only beliefs that are logically supported by other ones. Perhaps it is helpful to say generally that internal states make up a category which include perceptual states and basic beliefs (the latter being that which the foundationalist depends upon for his theory).

One internalist intuition about knowledge in general is that there must be a reason why a person uses the expression "I know" rather than "I believe". When a person communicates what he knows about the world by making use of either of

the two expressions above, it is clear that he does not make that choice because there is something out in the empirical world eliciting it from him (whatever that may mean). It is thought by internalists that the choice of "I know" or "I believe" is made by the subject with the aim of giving an accurate expression of his internal state of mind. Therefore, they are tempted to think that knowing and believing are states of mind. If the distinction between believing and knowing is to have any force it must issue from describing the two distinct states of mind concerning knowledge, vis-à-vis, the one of believing and the one of knowing.

C. The doxastic assumption and cognitive essentialism

Given the above, John Pollock identifies internalist theories as affirming what he calls the "doxastic assumption". This assumption derives directly from their sole focus upon internal mental states (which he also calls "doxastic states"). It suggests that justification is a function exclusively of what beliefs one holds. This is the case for them because the beliefs that one holds is what comprises one's internal state. So, the justification of beliefs will never alter in relation to whatever the circumstances or environmental affairs may be. Environment and circumstance do not explain the justifiability of beliefs. In order to analyze a belief's justification one focuses on internal states alone. This point is supported by their presupposition that knowing that one knows is an internal affair and not elicited by the external world. John Pollock writes:

> The rationale for it [the doxastic assumption] is something like the following: all our information about the world is encapsulated in beliefs. It seems that in deciding what to believe, we *cannot* take account of anything except insofar as we have beliefs about it. Consequently, nothing can enter into the determination of epistemic justification except our beliefs. Thus all an epistemological theory can do is tell us how our overall doxastic state determines which of our beliefs are justified.[22]

An important notion about this assumption of the conditions of epistemic justification is that there is no investigation into how we get from "I seem to see a tree" to "I see a tree". What this amounts to is that there is no analysis of the truth of an object *in itself*, or objectivity. It is externalism that will explicitly make that move because they claim that investigating the environmental conditions of an object can be a significant factor for knowledge of that object. So, the bottom line

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[22]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 19. Pollock's emphasis.

for internalism, as it is stated above, is that nothing can enter into the determination of epistemic justification except our beliefs. To put it another way, justification is internal to our doxastic states. Because all of our knowledge of the world comes to us by simple propositions of perception for them, and those simple propositions are apprehended in some self-justifying way, it is this doxastic state that is the ground for justifying our beliefs. When we apprehend the proposition "I seem to see a tree", we are not mistaken about what we seem to see. That we seem to see it is a mental affair. Thus cautiously, internalists (particularly Roderick Chisolm) have made some use of the term "being appeared to X-ly". They would assert, upon seeing a tree, that one is "being appeared to tree-ly". One cannot be mistaken about how one is being appeared to. Justification, in this sense of being appeared to, is internal to the immediate apprehension of that truth in this doxastic state. Generally, the subject can say that he knows that he seems to see a tree. But, it is the proposition "I see a tree" which creates problems for the internalist. It creates problems because it does not refer to doxastic states as such, but a tree objectively being in the subject's visual field. Without inquiring into the environment from which our perceptual beliefs come, the internalist cannot justify objects that may be there. The internalist can only consider the thoughts of the subject when justifying beliefs. This issue has caused much debate within internalism concerning the problem of perception and its relation (if there is any at all) to objectivity.

The doxastic assumption is formulated in the conceptual heart of internalism by the principle of cognitive essentialism. As the prime question for epistemologists is how to account for the justification of belief, or knowledge, we find the principle of cognitive essentialism providing the answer for internalists. The justification of a belief is internal to a cognitive process. It can be said that there are two kinds of cognitive processes: one set of cognitive processes is correct (rationally justified) and the other is incorrect (rationally unjustified). A justified belief is one that is held or arrived at by a correct cognitive process. Of course the question arises, how do we distinguish a correct cognitive process from an incorrect one?

D. Correct cognitive processes, epistemic norms, and truth

A cognitive process that is considered correct is one that conforms to an epistemic norm. In my mind, the analysis of epistemic normalcy is essential to the project of internalism, yet it is one of the most nebulous aspects of the theory to

grasp. A person who holds a rational belief is one that "makes the right moves" with respect to the epistemic norm. However, making the right moves with respect to an epistemic norm is an inherent feature of a cognitive process that it conforms to. The fact that justifiability is inherent in a correct cognitive process constitutes their principle of cognitive essentialism. That is, a belief produced by a cognitive process conforming to an epistemic norm is justified in any circumstance regardless of time, place, environment, or context. This is very much like views stemming from a moral norm which describe what is correct or incorrect about actions. Pollock specifically emphasizes the normative character of epistemic justification. As he puts it "Justification is a matter of 'epistemic permissibility'".[23] For him, when we ask if a belief is justified we are asking if it is all right to believe it. Thus, for the internalist it is all right (or justified) to believe X if it conforms to an epistemic norm. We see here how enticing it is to characterize epistemic norms in the same way that we characterize moral norms. Certain rules of conduct may pervade a community and provide support for one who considers them when deciding what is correct and incorrect about one's action or behavior. However, the analogy of moral norms and epistemic norms cannot be taken too far. A belief stemming from a moral norm may be prudent or morally permissible, i.e. correct, in as much as it conforms to a communal sense of standard behavior, but that does not necessarily say anything about the logical validity of holding that belief. That is, a moral norm may state that it is permissible, or prudentially rational, to believe P even when one does not have adequate logical justification to believe P. Pollock gives the following example:

> ...it is popularly alleged that lobsters do not feel pain when they are dunked alive into boiling water. It is extremely doubtful that anyone has good reason to believe that, but it may be prudentially rational to hold that belief because otherwise one would deprive oneself of the gustatory delight of eating boiled lobster.[24]

Epistemic norms, however, would never allow for such a conclusion. Epistemic norms provide guidance in reasoning, because they are the rules of logical validity. Also, epistemic considerations, as opposed to moral ones, would impel one to discern if it is *true* or not that lobsters feel pain when boiled alive. Whether one has moral permission to eat the beasts or not, is entirely external to the truth of the question that epistemic norms would force us to determine. We certainly cannot

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[23]Ibid., p. 124.
[24]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

say that moral norms provide us with logical rules: they provide us with rules about correct, incorrect, or permissible actions and behavior, and not necessarily modes of reasoning. At any rate, Pollock defines epistemic norms as, "Rules describing the circumstances under which it is permissible to hold beliefs..."[25] He also says in terms of internalism in particular, "...an internalist theory is any theory proposing epistemic norms that appeal only to logical properties of and logical relations between internal states of the believer."[26]

It is at least implicit in internalist theory that epistemic norms act as a rule book for reasoning. This is like a police officer who may not know what to do in a situation and so he consults the penal code which will govern and help him guide his actions. A difficulty for the internalist is how to account for the inherent justification of beliefs that are produced by cognitive processes which are in conformance to epistemic norms if epistemic norms function in this rule book fashion. Pollock puts this dilemma as follows:

> ...if we are to reason by making explicit appeal to a norm telling us that it is permissible to move from the belief that something looks red to us to the belief that it is red, we would first have to become justified in believing that that norm is included among our epistemic norms...[27]

The problem for the internalist rests in the effort to make epistemic norms explicit and clearly defined. But, by making epistemic norms explicit we must reason *about* them. That is, we must logically analyze them, and thereby justify their inclusion in our stock of epistemic norms. They then become an object of knowledge and require justification when epistemic norms are that which guide our reasoning to perform that very task. By this account we are faced with an infinite regress. If we seek an epistemic norm which is justified we need to justify its inclusion amongst our set of epistemic norms. Pollock shows that this difficulty can be avoided by saying that epistemic norms are not a positive force for reasoning but a negative one. He suggests that "our reasoning is innocent until proven guilty."[28] Furthermore, Pollock claims most internalists agree that we can use reasoning to evaluate reasoning, and use reasoning in applying epistemic norms, but "We cannot

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[25] Ibid., p. 8.
[26] Ibid., p. 136.
[27] Ibid., p. 127.
[28] Ibid., p. 128.

be required to reason about norms *before* we can do any reasoning."[29] So it seems for most internalists that epistemic norms are embedded within our reasoning; we can evaluate norms in as much as they take part in our reasoning. By epistemic norms being "embedded" in our reasoning I mean that they implicitly inform our reasoning. Therefore, epistemic norms in a sense are part of the concept of reasoning itself. This implies that *modus ponens* is an epistemic norm and wishful thinking is not. This primarily stands true because wishing that X be the case is not a part of reasoning generally considered. This is to say that wishing X to be true does not involve an analysis or verification (or reasoning in any guise) of a proposition being true in any manner whatsoever. Ultimately, the internalist finds beliefs to be justified if arrived at and sustained by correct cognitive processes that are in conformance to epistemic norms embedded within our reasoning.

One difficulty is to find an intelligible place for the acquisition of the truth of beliefs in internalist theory. This weighs heavily upon the function and purpose of epistemic norms if their role is indeed integral to the plausibility of internalism as a theory of knowledge. Internalists often concentrate on mental processes and modes of reasoning to such an extent that the notion of truth gets obscured in their discussions. It seems correct that we must appeal to some normative notions concerning reasoning processes. If my exposition of epistemic norms was directed towards elucidating that point I could risk evading the greater epistemological issue of how those reasoning processes yield *true* belief. If I merely discussed mental processes we may gain great clarity concerning issues of justification, but not truth. After all knowledge is justified *true* belief, not merely justified belief. Therefore, later in this section I will focus on a great difficulty for the internalist: how do epistemic norms yield true beliefs? By directing this exposition of internalism toward possibly answering this question the clearest view of the viability of their project may be attained. However, before that question can be intelligibly answered more ground concerning the nature of epistemic norms must be covered.

The definition of epistemic norms as the rules describing the correct circumstances in which one may hold a belief permissibly, is not completely clear. There is ambiguity as to what amounts to "circumstances". Both internalists and externalists, for the most part, agree that the justification of a belief is determined by what epistemic norms are at work in acquiring a belief. But, just for clarification,

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[29]Ibid. Pollock's emphasis.

the internalist affirms norms to be internal to doxastic states where the externalist holds that epistemic norms are those which can, for the most part, be evaluated by external considerations.[30] Hence the externalist does not hold that all norms are always correct like the internalist claims. However, both internalists and externalists differ about what is embedded within an epistemic norm. For the internalist epistemic norms are constants: they are logical rules that one must obey regardless of environmental circumstances or external conditions. Epistemic norms describe correct reasoning for the internalist. That is, the rules have nothing to do with environmental factors: they define the regulations of reasoning and logical validity. However, for the externalist epistemic norms can guide us in determining if a belief is justified by commenting on the harmony or disharmony between belief P and the environmental circumstance of believing P: they are relative to environmental affairs. The externalist insists, as Pollock writes, "...that the purpose of reasoning is to achieve certain epistemic goals (most notably the acquisition of true beliefs) and hence correct epistemic norms should be those enabling us to achieve these goals."[31] Pollock notes that an externalist epistemic norm may be that it is permissible to hold a belief if it is generated by a reliable belief-forming process or mechanism.[32] Concentrating on what belief-forming processes are reliable to yield a true belief can most often require information external to one's mental processes.

Given the nature of the internalist view of epistemic norms, they are never subject to critique by external considerations (like circumstance, environmental conditions and so on), they are always correct. An example given by Pollock is that it is always correct to reason by *modus ponens* and it is always incorrect to reason by wishful thinking.[33] *Modus ponens* is an epistemic norm, and regardless of external considerations, it is always correct. It guides our reasoning, and if a belief is acquired by conformance to it, the belief is correct by this example, and we cannot be accused of using *incorrect rational processing*. Below I will address the obvious

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[30]Pollock and others make the distinction between norm and belief externalism. Belief externalism appropriates externalist norms, e. g. all norms can be evaluated by information that is not internally accessible to the cognizer. Norm externalism claims that we must employ internalist norms when reasoning, but holds that an alternative set of internalist norms should be evaluated by external considerations. Both views reject the notion that *all* epistemic norms are always correct.

[31]John L. Pollock, "Epistemic Norms" in Ernest Sosa (ed) *Knowledge and Justification*, vol. 2 of 2 vols., (Dartmouth Publishing Company, Brookfield, VT, 1994), p. 62.

[32]Ibid.

[33]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 22.

objection that one could reason by *modus ponens*, and even though there will not be a flaw in reasoning, the belief may be false. For now we can see that the law of non-contradiction would fall into the same category of an internalist norm as *modus ponens*. To reason contrary to the law of non-contradiction would always yield an unjustified belief. Wishful thinking is not an epistemic norm because there is no consideration given to logical consistency, deduction, induction, reason or logic in any manifestation, but only sentiments of hope. We can extrapolate from these examples that internalist epistemic norms seemingly adhere to the canons of traditional logic. This is quite natural seeing that internalism has its roots in the work of Aristotle and formal logic. I am not saying, however, that the externalist denies the normative character of the canons of logical reasoning. The externalist finds more than the internal logical regulation of mental processes to be relevant for the justification of beliefs, i. e. cause and effect which may not be mentally accessible for a subject, but may require an investigation of the subject's empirical surroundings.

The distinction between what are epistemic norms for the internalist, as opposed to the externalist, is certainly bound to what characteristic of a rational belief one thinks ought to be emphasized. Justification is emphasized by the internalist thus it is natural that they hold traditional logic to be the epistemic norms which guide our reasoning and are central to making claims concerning rational belief. Conversely, the externalists emphasize truth which is bound to objectivity and discovered in the environment of belief acquisition. There are differences in the concept of objectivity, however. The externalist focuses upon empirical and perceptual objectivity. The coherence theorist, on the other hand, sees logical coherence as being objective, so he too operates with a notion of objectivity. For the externalist, at any rate, reliable mechanisms of belief acquisition can be affirmed as normative and yield true, i. e. rational, beliefs.

We can see that the internalist view of epistemic norms consists of the rules governing logical validity, e.g. *modus ponens*, the law of non-contradiction etc. Therefore, internalism remains consistent to their claim that the justification of a belief is internal to one's doxastic state. If one acquires a belief while violating *modus ponens*, for example, it will be an unjustified belief regardless of external circumstances. But, if *modus ponens* is part of one's doxastic state when one procures a belief, the belief will always be justified in terms of a correct rational process. This is to say that if one's reasoning is based upon that logical rule, the product will

be epistemically permissible; no rule integral to logical processes will be violated. Because knowledge is a state of mind for them we can only police our mental processes in terms of the violation of logical rules. And if no violation has occurred, what else is there that a subject can be mentally aware of which would cause her to think that her belief is not permissible? The canon of traditional (formal) logic is comprised of fundamental and rudimentary rules concerning logical connections, deductions, or extrapolations. These rules simply describe what reasoning is, and by implication, that which directs correct (permissible) mental processes.

In order to place basic propositions in this schematic of justifying beliefs, we can say that they are like the basis for a complex, and interconnected, chain of reasoning. They are like correct cognitive processes in that they are always unmistakably correct. Basic beliefs, as discussed earlier, are typically appearance beliefs. We saw that the foundationalist affirms propositions of the sort, "I seem to see P", rather than "I see P". By focussing on seeming to see P, or being appeared to as if P, the internal state cannot be mistaken. But the obvious objection by some philosophers (typically the externalists) is that one can be well *justified* in *seeming* to see anything, but what we want is to be justified in believing that our appearance beliefs reflect ontological reality of the empirical world. Is there no epistemic norm that the internalist can appeal to which would justify an intimate link between our beliefs about reality and what the reality actually is?

The internalist's claim that all epistemic norms are automatically correct, seems very difficult to reconcile. One person may employ different norms when reasoning than another. If Mary and Laurence believe proposition P for the same reasons, they are either both justified or unjustified. There is no room for subjective idiosyncrasies of personality or psychology to be relative to the justification of their beliefs. Pollock, who makes this point, writes:

> This seems to imply that there is just one set of correct epistemic norms, and the norms a person actually employs may fail to be correct. This conclusion would seem to be obvious if it were not for the fact that there is no apparent basis for criticizing a person's norms.[34]

If epistemic norms are internal to the doxastic state of the cognizer and, *pace* internalist, they are always correct (but with Pollock I must note that mental processes are either correct or incorrect, so some will fail), how can two people

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[34]Ibid., p. 142.

criticize and amend each other's stock of epistemic norms if all they can appeal to is their own doxastic system? This further accentuates the problems created by the absence of the role that the concept of truth has in claims of knowledge for the internalist. If this issue is not dealt with we are left with a thorough-going epistemological relativism. I ought to make explicit that for internalists knowledge can only be claimed by evaluating one's own doxastic state without reference to anything outside of it, e. g. if one's cognitive processes can be used and accepted by another person for his claim of knowledge. Even though that may be true (the law of non-contradiction is necessarily a universal law), the usability of a mental process by all does not make it justified. What is normative for the externalist is, perhaps, a belief-forming process that is considered reliable for the use of all people in accruing propositions of knowledge. Therefore, the present characterization of internalist justification leads to relativism in that it becomes very difficult for them to hold that one person's failing cognitive process about X can be amended by reference to another person's correct one about the same proposition. If the correctness of the latter's cognitive process is available for the critique and correction of the former's doxastic state, then the very concept of internalism is violated. Indeed, there seems to be no way to sanction criticism of another's mental processes. If there were a way to give the concept of truth a central role in claims of knowledge for the internalist then that could be a regulatory factor in terms of determining what are correct and incorrect cognitive processes. One could critique another's failing mental process for not yielding true beliefs.

One way that some internalists have tried to save their project from this objection is by introducing the concept of truth conditions. This sort of move is necessary if epistemic norms solely adhere to the canons of classical logic and cannot themselves yield true belief, but only regulate our reasoning processes. Epistemic norms, as we have seen thus far, regulate justification for the internalist, but up until now they have not accommodated the condition of truth for claims of knowledge. The standard view individuates concepts according to their truth conditions. This theory suggests that what makes concept X what it is are the conditions that must be satisfied in order for X to exemplify, embody, or represent that concept. Pollock gives the following examples:

> The truth condition of the concept *red* is the condition of *being red,* and the truth condition of the concept *blue* is the condition of *being blue.* The following is undeniable:

red = blue if and only if *being red = being blue*[35]

Even though this sounds appealing (in as much as I am imagining that we could accept it as plausible), we could easily assign truth conditions to concepts and dispense with the Chisholmian language of "being appeared to as if X-ly". Internalists would have access to claims of truth as much as claims of justification. The shortcoming of this theory is considerable, however. I agree with Pollock's following remarks regarding this view:

> ...it is hardly illuminating. Rather than explaining the concepts, the truth conditions presuppose the concepts. We might as well define the "identity condition" of a physical object to be the condition of *being that object* and then claim that physical objects are individuated by their identity conditions. That is about as unilluminating as a theory can be.[36]

The use of truth conditions does not really get us very far because we want the explanation of how one may be justified in thinking that the red object one sees is in fact red. Truth condition theory, construed in this way, merely asserts that an object must actually be red if we think it is.

I could continue illustrating many other suggestions which attempt to cure this problem that the internalist faces; some which incidentally involve introducing significant contemporary epistemic terms which cater to truth and falsity like entailment, warrant, and so on. My goal however, is not to resuscitate and accept a form of internalism but to provide clarity to some details of internalist theory in the broadest manner possible, within the limited space of this section.

It seems obvious that the issue of a true belief is very important in terms of understanding internalism as a viable epistemic theory. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, I will consider Pollock's own internalist view regarding how the concept of truth can be successfully accommodated. Until now I have referred to Pollock's work to clarify most theories of knowledge because he is a recognized authority on the field of epistemology. Now we will critically investigate a view that he personally argues for. This will provide an example of how an internalist can argue against critics who claim that internalists cannot move from "I seem to see a tree" to "I see a tree."

Pollock claims that we ought not be drawn into the common internalist fashion of considering human cognition as if it involved machines which only

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[35]Ibid., p. 143. Pollock's emphases.
[36]Ibid. Pollock's emphasis.

receive input and then determine the justifiability of that input without justifying the justification of that input. This is to say that it is important to recognize and focus upon the correction and judgement of our own reasoning processes. This would also answer to the charge that internalist theory is committed to a form of relativism because there is no basis to critique another's epistemic norms. He intends to show us how we can do it ourselves. Ultimately, he views cognizers as machines that justify beliefs in conjunction with an acute self-awareness about their reasoning processes. This is, of course, an issue of analyzing and judging our epistemic norms. Thus, he considers defeasible reasoning to be integral in understanding cognition, justifying beliefs, and accommodating the concept of truth to those beliefs. Defeasible reasoning involves reaching a conclusion by a kind of thought process, then undercutting that conclusion by another which is derived from an alternative reasoning process. If the functioning of concepts - as we think about their ordinary use in our life - do not strictly require truth conditions (we saw that truth conditions were mere stipulations of the concept of truth), Pollock rhetorically wonders why we have the concept of truth at all. He writes, "The answer is that this concept [truth] is required for defeasible reasoning"[37] He claims that we do not need truth in order to affirm a thought, because the affirmation of a thought is a part of thinking it. Evaluative concepts, such as truth and falsity, are *internal* to, and constitutive of, thinking about one's thoughts and judging them. He writes furthermore:

> The way in which we...ascribe truth values to propositions is dictated by our epistemic norms. If P is a proposition I am able to entertain, then my language of thought must contain a mental representation 'P' of P, and my epistemic norms must license reasoning something like the following:
>
> > What I believed was 'P'.
> > P
> > Therefore, what I believed was true.
>
> Just to have a label, I will call this *disquotational reasoning*.[38]

We must be clear on how our epistemic norms license truth values to our beliefs. I will quote the following at length because it expresses his conclusion from the above as well as answering the question of how one may justify applying truth value to our beliefs. He writes:

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[37]Ibid., p. 165.
[38]Ibid., pp. 165-166. Pollock's emphasis.

That schema [disquotational reasoning] is supposed to be dictated by our epistemic norms. But in order for our epistemic norms to dictate any such schema, it must be predetermined that 'P' designates P. Thus 'P' cannot designate P just accidentally. 'P' must designate P necessarily (this is precisely analogous to the observation that practical reasoning requires me to have a special way of thinking of myself that is necessarily a way of thinking about myself). 'P' designates P necessarily because our epistemic norms predetermine that it does, and the way they predetermine that is by licensing the above schema of disquotational reasoning.[39]

Disquotational reasoning is a necessary condition (licensed by our epistemic norms) of thinking about an object while seeing it and judging it to be true. The objectivity of a proposition (its truth) is therefore predetermined in our mental processes when thinking about it. This is like thinking about oneself which must be necessarily present to, and therefore predetermined upon thinking about oneself. One of his main points is to demystify the concept of truth by arguing that it is not outside of the mind somehow being elicited from the natural world. For Pollock truth is:

> ...just one more concept in our ratiocinative arsenal. The concept of truth is characterized by its role in reasoning just like any other concept. Rather than truth being fundamental and rules for reasoning being derived from it, the rules for reasoning come first and truth is characterized by the rules for reasoning about truth.[40]

As an example of why defeasible reasoning requires the concepts of truth and falsity Pollock considers a general kind of defeater which is applicable to all prima facie reasoning. He claims that all prima facie reasons for a belief are subject to defeat by "reliability defeaters". Briefly, if we know many X's which are all Y's that justifies us in believing that all X's are Y's, but if we discover a single X which is not a Y, all of our previous evidence for this prima facie reason stands for nothing. We may still hold this prima facie reason, but we have additional information which constitutes a defeater against the conclusion that all X's are Y's. Prima facie reasons which can be defeated by reliability defeaters must presuppose truth. For instance,[41] imagine that I believe the sheet of paper before me is red on the basis of its looking red. This reasoning is defeated by the discovery that there is a red light illuminating it and under such circumstances something looking red is not a reliable indicator that it is red. Pollock writes, "The reliability of P as an indicator of Q under circumstances of type C is just the probability of Q's *being true* under circumstances of type C given that P *is true*."[42]

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[39]Ibid., p. 166.
[40]Ibid., p. 167.
[41]Ibid. Pollock's example.
[42]Ibid.

So, truth is predetermined in our thinking about objects in the world. Moving from a thought of an object to claiming that one's thought of that object is true is a mental process that is internal and judged correct because it is epistemically and logically normative. For the internalists truth itself is not something that is elicited from us in the empirical world as the externalist presupposes. Truth is a regulatory feature of judging our mental processes and thus in line with their thesis that knowledge (justified true belief) is a state of mind.

It is difficult for me to appreciate this conclusion, however. What surrounds the concept of truth in the above is that it aids in, and seems crucial for, knowing that one knows. Earlier we heard Pollock claim that the concept of truth is not required in first order reasoning (thinking a thought and not thinking about thinking a thought), because affirmation is a part of thinking a thought. Thus, "truth values" come in the capacity to affirm, critique, or judge if our first order mental processes are true or false. However, we saw with Malcolm that an absolute and unmistakable *truth* is when we look at an ink-bottle and say "Here is an ink-bottle". The proposition that one has a heart is also held as true by most people without question. We do not ascribe the value of truth to propositions of this kind *after* reflecting on, and apprehending, the epistemic norm which sanctions such judgements. One may assure oneself of the truth of his belief by checking relevant evidence. Truth does not issue from internalist norms, that which orchestrates the rudiments of our reasoning skills; truth requires an attitude of certainty towards a proposition which is apprehended by different means according to context. Knowing that one has a heart is different than knowing that there is an ink-bottle in front of oneself when looking at it. Truth is implicit in both propositions, but the latter is based on empirical apprehension (identifying an ink-bottle by the senses, and having no doubt that it is an ink-bottle) and the former concerns, to perhaps put it crudely, a necessary postulate for all human beings. Again we must reiterate, if the ink-bottle and the heart propositions are not true then I do not know what truth could possibly be. Ultimately, truth is not a *regulatory factor* of our thinking about our thinking of thoughts. We consider a proposition true when it is held with great firmness because no question of its truth arises.[43]

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[43]This stands true for both the ink-bottle and the heart propositions. I agree with Malcolm that the ink-bottle proposition could never be false, yet the heart proposition (along with a host of other propositions) is properly held as true, but it is strictly conceivable that a context could arise which would question its truth (like a doctor who thoroughly search for one's heart and found nothing). However, until a context arises which questions the truth of propositions such as I have a heart, it is held as true.

E. Foundationalism and coherentism

For my present purposes I will discuss the list of internalist sub-theories which is exhausted by two groups: the foundationalists and the coherentists. Traditional foundationalism[44] holds that there are two classes of propositions of belief. One kind of proposition is foundational or self-justified, and the other is not, needing evidence and justification. This distinction will be described in great detail later within a section devoted to defining foundationalism.

Coherence theory maintains that a proposition is justified if it coheres rationally, or consistently, with a set of beliefs that are already held. It is true that the importance of cohering propositions in a system of beliefs is as present in foundationalism as it is in coherence theory. The difference between the two is that a rational belief system for foundationalism begins with the acceptance of a single kind of proposition which is basic, or foundational, thus rational as it is. Therefore, a rational belief system is one where the non-basic beliefs cohere with the basic ones in a supportive relationship. A logical chain of reasoning from non-basic propositions comes to rest on a basic proposition which is self-justified.

Coherence theory places no crucial importance on a single kind of proposition, but views the rationality of a belief system to be the manner in which all propositions comprising the belief system cohere. As we saw with all doxastic theories, the only components that can be appealed to for justification are the beliefs that one holds. The issue of the objectivity of the world outside of the mind plays no role in the justification of our beliefs in classical internalist theories, because knowledge is a mental phenomenon or state of mind.

One idea that surrounds coherence theory that is often appealed to in order to persuade philosophers of its correctness is called the "Neurath metaphor". It can be expressed as follows: "We are like sailors who must rebuild their ship upon the open seas." [45] At any given moment we have an enormous inventory of beliefs, which comprises our doxastic system. Among our stock of beliefs, are ones that inform us on how to modify this group of beliefs. It is intuitively correct to say that we cannot discard all of our beliefs and start afresh, because then we would not

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[44]I say "traditional" because even though reformed epistemology cleaves to the foundationalist picture of knowledge I do not wish to include them in the group of mainstream foundationalists because their object of inquiry and interests are greatly divergent.

[45] John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 67.

know where to start in reconstructing our doxastic system. To proceed in rebuilding our ship of beliefs in a rational fashion we must have beliefs that guide us in this task. These guiding beliefs, however, cannot be viewed as somehow logically primary to our overall system of beliefs in the way that basic beliefs are primary for the foundationalist. The reason that they cannot be considered logically primary is somewhat of a perplexing issue, but one that is at the core of the Neurath metaphor, and I think, unmistakably correct. The very core idea is that our beliefs are innocent until proven guilty. If we hypothetically imagine that a person starts out with a set of beliefs, we will notice that the reasons that he held those beliefs in the first place dissipate with time; they eventually fade away, until he no longer remembers the reasons for holding them. We tend not to remember these reasons, we just know our conclusions from them. Pollock, who describes this point well, continues:

> If we no longer remember our reasons for a belief, then it seems that the credentials of the belief no longer depend upon those reasons. Finding something wrong with the reasons cannot discredit the belief if we have no idea that the belief was originally derived from those reasons. This might seem perplexing. It might seem that we *should* keep track of our reasons. But it is an undeniable matter of fact that we do not. For example, we all believe that Columbus landed in America in 1492. But how many of us have any idea what our original reason was for believing that? We can guess that we learned it from our parents or from our teacher, but we do not really know and we certainly do not know the details.[46]

Coherence theory, then, is supported by this psychological presupposition that when we begin to interrogate our beliefs for justification we cannot determine a starting point for them.[47] Given all of the above, the question that needs answering is: how can we identify our reason guiding beliefs which aid us in discarding beliefs and acquiring others? Coherence theorists make ample appeal to epistemic norms which guide the coherence of a belief system. If a proposition can be held within a coherent system and its norms, then it is kept and justified; but if it does not then it is rejected for reasons of non-justification or incoherence.

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[46]Ibid., p. 70. Pollock's emphasis.

[47]This insight is not peculiar to coherence theorists. There are many philosophical theories, with a wide range of interests, that recognize that there are some beliefs that a person cannot abandon, nor objectively interrogate, primarily because they are part and parcel of one's being. For instance, I have in mind Martin Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's existential constitution. The presupposition that he holds involves the idea of *eventually* finding oneself interrogating one's sense of being. But, one cannot locate the origins of one's sense of being; that is, one's consciousness of being and there is no identifiable moment when one acquired such knowledge. Dasein's existential constitution is that of "falling and thrownness". Heidegger's metaphor is that we have fallen, or have been thrown, into the world. See the section "Falling and Throwness" in his *Being and Time* (Harper and Row, London, 1962), pp. 219-224.

Because coherence theory places no particular emphases on any one belief in a system of beliefs as being the origin of the system's rationality, reasonableness is internal to it. The consequence of this is that:

> ...insofar as we can be justified in holding one belief without having a reason for doing so (for instance, an epistemic norm), we can be justified in holding any belief without having a reason for doing so.[48]

I do not think that it is inconsistent to say that the coherence theorist does not consider belief systems as tautological. When they focus on the character of epistemic norms, as that which guides the modification of belief systems, we could suppose that they hold the coherence of a system to be a fairly accurate reflection of the way the world is. In support of this point they would readily point out that there are not an infinite number of epistemic norms. We can assume that epistemic normalcy is not a random affair. There is something about the way the world is which yields some beliefs as normative and others not. Perhaps the coherentist must embrace a trust in our epistemic norms, that they issue from objective reality even though we cannot rely on what reasoning there may be for holding them.

F. A rejection of internalism

I will now discuss why internalism and its variants (classical foundationalism and coherence theory) are implausible. What is problematic with the internalist views of knowledge is that which marks it as a unique domain of inquiry: its view of cognitive essentialism.

There are two criticisms of cognitive essentialism that I will focus upon. The first argument is to deny that we can determine if one is *justified* in claiming to know, or believe, proposition P by introspection alone. The second argument is a denial that we can determine if the truth of proposition P is known or merely *believed* by introspection alone. These arguments could be connected in many intricate and revealing ways, which perhaps would yield some interesting insights. But given the scope and space available in this chapter I wish to keep them somewhat distinct from one another. The only connection between them that I will make explicit (because it is my aim in this section) is that they reveal problems for cognitive essentialism. The first argument will highlight a problem surrounding

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[48]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 72.

the internalist concept of justification of empirical propositions. The second argument questions the intelligibility of discovering within the mind alone if one believes, or knows, P.

For the internalist justification is only found by analyzing our immediate impressions and mental processes about an object. An important question to raise is: can our sense impressions ever be wrong? If it can be shown that our beliefs about our perceptions are at times mistaken, then an evaluation of the environmental conditions one is in while procuring a belief would be called for in order to determine the truth of our perceptual beliefs. Information would be needed for justification that is not internally available to the mental processes of the believer. I will recount a particularly clear example given by Pollock which shows that, when it comes to empirical propositions, an external evaluation is imperative for their justification. All that one has to show is if it is possible to be wrong about one's beliefs regarding sensory experience. Pollock suggests[49] the scenario of a man who sits before a clock that upon the hour flashes a red light in the lower left corner of his visual field. He claims that there can be a time when that man is concentrated on something elsewhere in his visual field when the light flashes (e.g. a wasp flying about his nose). He may then form the belief that the red light flashed when he did not directly experience it. Furthermore, perhaps this time the clock was broken and the light did not flash. He had no sensory experience at all, but believed that there was a flash, though he didn't see it because he was distracted. In this case he would hold the belief of an immediate sensory impression, but he had none at all. This example convincingly shows that when it comes to empirical propositions an evaluation of the outside world (the reliability of the facts and the conditions they are in) must be taken into consideration. If it were a matter of prima facie justification of sense perception we still lack the notion of facticity, which I take to be essential when we speak of empirical propositions. Our thoughts of an object must agree with the facticity of that object in the world, apart from our mental processes. The internalist cannot *directly* justify the facticity of our beliefs. Some internalists assume that epistemic norms in some sense implicitly reflect objective reality, however they reject the notion that we can discover objective truth by fact-finding (which is required of the man in the example above). This is because justification is internal to mental processes and has nothing to do with evaluating

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[49]Ibid., pp. 59-60.

conditions outside of our mind. I think that the internalist intuits that mental processes are accurate reflections of reality, but at times our thoughts are mistaken about what we think about reality.

What the above example also indicates is that classical internalist theory has some difficulty distinguishing between appearance and reality. The internalist may respond to the example above by noting that appearances are often cashed out in terms of beliefs that do not cohere very well with the rest of our beliefs. Nevertheless, because our norms somehow implicitly reflect objective reality, and the way in which our beliefs cohere is informed by our norms for the internalist, the coherence of our beliefs somehow says something about objectivity. This response by the internalist does not answer the question at hand. We would like a response to the possibility that one can be mistaken about thinking that one has been appeared to at all. The example above is an instance when the coherence of beliefs is not really an important feature. We want to know if the red light flashed or not. Regardless of what appearance beliefs the man may have had, we want to know if he is correct about the light flashing. The subject in the example thought that the red light appeared, but it did not in reality. The facticity of an object, for internalism, is not possibly a part of justification because they maintain that belief and knowledge are states of mind. We see that the justification of objects ought to involve an evaluation of external factors.

This brings us to my second argument against internalism which is that knowledge and belief are not states of mind. We see at this point that the work of Norman Malcolm becomes pertinent. The reason this is so is because he questions the initial intuition of internalism that knowledge and belief are descriptions of mental states.[50] His argument centers on the investigation of the sense in our uses of "know". When we use the word "know" it partly involves a high degree of confidence in the truth of the proposition. If nothing could count against the truth of a proposition, then we say that we know it, it is certain. What is there in mental processes that would give us that confidence? Can that confidence be *discovered* there? Malcolm claims that knowledge is like an attitude toward a proposition; an attitude comprised of confidence in a proposition in relation to the possibility of it

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[50]Norman Malcolm argues against this central theme in his essay "Knowledge and Belief" in *Knowledge and Certainty: Essays and Lectures* (Printice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1965), pp. 58-72. In part, the object of his critique in this essay is a statement made by H. A. Prichard. Malcolm begins the essay by quoting Prichard, on page 58, as saying, "We must recognize that when we know something we either do, or by reflecting, can know that our condition is one of knowing that thing..."

being discounted. Also, by implication, Malcolm contends that there are no *general* criteria of knowledge that one could appeal to as necessary and sufficient conditions. He affirms that criteria for knowledge are contextually circumscribed.

The internalist would object to the notion that a claim of knowledge can be made only if there is no evidence to discount it. This is so because evidence which discounts the truth of a proposition is found outside of the mind, e.g. apart from our beliefs about an object and our mental processes which issue those beliefs. Often evidence can take the form of facts about an object that discount our beliefs about it, and which we recognize, understand, by discovering them outside of our set of beliefs that we already have in our mind. This stands true when we think of Pollock's example that I discussed above, which he uses to reject internalist epistemology. If one *believes* that the light flashed when he was concentrating on a wasp flying around his nose and it actually did not flash, then this shows that the facts of the world, and understanding them, have extreme importance in holding claims of knowledge. Ultimately, we must be responsive to discovering the facts of the world which help form and reject the beliefs which we already have. Thus, when we seek to justify beliefs about objects in the world we must take much more into consideration than merely our beliefs about them. I do not see any substantial objection that the internalists could make at this point which would challenge Pollock's example, and cause them to continue to hold onto their presupposition that the justification of belief is made by an analysis of internal states alone. With what I have said it seems that all internalist theories, in relying on the principle of cognitive essentialism, must be rejected.

Given this I think that externalism is headed in a better direction than internalism. They recognize that an environmental investigation which an object is in may offer information which one is not mentally aware of yet is pertinent to holding a justified true proposition about it. But, we will see that they also cannot evade the criticism of traditional epistemology leveled by Malcolm.

IV.   Externalism

Externalism can be defined in terms of a denial of cognitive essentialism. The externalist insists that there must be a form of inquiry that links the fact or reality of empirical propositions to our thinking about them.

There are two externalist sub-theories that dominate contemporary epistemology, reliabilism and probabilism. Both of them accommodate for the evaluation of environmental affairs which allows for the acquisition of information not mentally accessible to the subject for claims of knowledge.

A. Reliabilism

The reliabilist would agree with the internalist to the extent that the epistemic worth of a belief is to be found by an analysis of the cognitive processes that produce it, but he would disagree with his position that justification is part of a correct cognitive process without any reference to environmental conditions or states of affairs. Cognitive processes for the reliabilist can be correct in some circumstances and incorrect in others. The point is that the reliability of our cognitive processes is what provides for an analysis of the possibility of justification. For instance, our color vision is one human sense that we place great reliability in. If we found ourselves in an environment where color varied erratically we would no longer find color vision reliable. No *a priori* assessment of color vision is possible, however. Pollock who gives this example concludes:

> It [color vision] depends upon contingent matters of fact. Thus reliabilism makes epistemic justification turn on contingent matters of fact. Cognitive essentialism is false on this view.[51]

Reliabilist investigations hinge on contingent matters of fact such as the reliability of the senses. For instance when one looks at a color wheel in the normal light of day one can distinguish red from green, and there is agreement on the reliability of one making that distinction. However, a color wheel bathed in red light may present green as if it were identical to black. Because of the contingent matters of fact - the red lighting - what is green appears black and thus that fact makes all the difference to the justification of the belief of the color being viewed. Normal color vision is unreliable in this case because of the circumstances.

B. Probabilism

Probabilism generally does not seek an investigation into the reliability of cognitive processes concerning sensory experience. Justification for the probabilist is subordinate to the degree of probability of a proposition being true. There is an

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[51]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 23.

obvious hint of probability theory within reliabilism in that the reliabilist is concerned, to some degree, with the probability of a cognitive process yielding true belief. Generally, if process X is reliable in yielding belief Y, one may believe that process X will probably yield belief Y rather than not. Nonetheless, it is obvious that reliabilism is not a species of probability theory. The reliabilist is concerned with what trust we can justifiably have in our mental processes pertaining to sensory perception. Therefore, the probabilist focuses his investigation on the ordinary (non-philosophical) truism that one ought not hold a belief unless it is at least probably true. To have a justified belief implies that there is high probability of it being true. For instance, if a person waited for another person to meet him at a location, yet believed that it was not even probable that that person would show up, naturally we would think that person was irrational, crazy. It is true, then, that probabilism has strong links with statistical analysis. A common example given by probabilists concerns the odds on rolling dice and probable outcomes. For instance, because there are 36 possible outcomes on a roll of a pair of dice, and 11 rolls will include at least one 6, the probability of getting one 6 on one roll is 11/36. So, for some probabilists, the justification of belief is a mathematical or statistical matter. This is so because, classically, probability theory has been concerned with the theory of mathematics which underlies the probability of truths. This form of probabilism has had a lot of weight in the philosophy of science (and in other fields as well) in determining the probability of acquiring justifiable results from a given experiment.

However, one form of probabilism linked to the above intends to make direct comment on the justification of beliefs outside of the practice of science. The subjectivist theory of probabilism analyzes a belief in terms of its degree of probability. This involves a belief that is measured by a degree of confidence by the subject in relation to the bets he is willing to make on it being true. It is said that a subject is only entitled to use "probability" if his bets are "coherent". This means that one's bets are not coherent if he bets in such a way that he will lose whatever the outcome. It is the case, with this form of probability theory, that probability is the degree of the rational man's belief. The probabilist is intent on applying the power of statistical analysis to justify the assumptions (non-analyzed propositions of belief) of the rational person. Therefore, they try to express the idea that probability is objective, thus probability works as a guide in the rationality of one's beliefs, or the justification of propositions of one's beliefs. It raises the question,

how certain is the subject about proposition X?, and what is the subject's awareness of *probability* itself about proposition X? These are two different questions indeed. The former interrogates the attitude of the subject, while the latter comments on the objective nature of probability itself. The latter concern involves the notion that probability is not of our making. We do not create probabilities in the world. Given any number of circumstances and their related beliefs we will be faced with probable truths. If we are to be rational, for the probabilist, we must decide on the most probable truth. On probability and objectivity A. R. Lacey writes:

> Between them these theories [of probabilism] try to account for the ideas that probability is objective and not of our choosing, and yet is somehow relative to our knowledge, since things in the world are either so or not so, and not probably so.[52]

It is then the objective component of probability theory that gives it its force. The probabilist considers the objective nature of probability to be that which guides all human beliefs, and categorizes them into the justified and the unjustified.

C. A rejection of externalism

For my critical thoughts about these two externalist theories, with the aid of Malcolm's insights, I can say that reliabilism is a far more acceptable view of justification of belief than probabilism. With reliabilism we understand that the justification of a belief involves an investigation into the reliability of apprehending objects. For the most part, I have no argument against what they say about the justification of knowing objects. My critical question regarding the theory concerns how exhaustive it may be as a theory of knowledge. We can recall that Malcolm would never stipulate a general criterion of knowledge. A criterion of knowledge is contextually determined. Even though reliabilism seems to be quite sensible for empirical propositions, we run into some confusion if we try to investigate what amounts to our uses of "know" outside such a context of inquiry. I have in mind ethical or aesthetic judgements, as well as religious truths. It is clear to me that, in those cases, we cannot identify some kind of reliable mechanism or form of sensory perception for justification. I am not saying, at this point, that ethical or aesthetic judgements and religious truths are not objective reflections of reality. My point of contention with reliabilism is that it remains mute when faced with the fact that ethical or aesthetic judgements and religious truths are not issued

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[52]A. R. Lacey, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976), p. 171.

by extended objects to be apprehended within a sensory field. By this account the reliabilist is using a general criterion of knowledge that is only applicable to propositions seized by a reliable mechanism or the senses.

I cannot accept probabilism, however, because it seems to confuse all knowledge claims with having at least some degree of "probability" and never certainty. The concept of "probability" is the common denominator for all justified propositions of belief for them. Imagine that my wife and I are preparing for the arrival of dinner guests. There are not enough chairs around the table, so my wife asks me "Are there four chairs in the spare room?" The criterion of knowing that there are four chairs in the next room is not contingent on intricate modes of reasoning. Nor is there a sense that the anticipated response would properly be of a degree of probability. In fact, one may wonder what place "probability" may have here at all. The fact that there are four chairs in the next room is discernible by looking to see if there are that many chairs in the next room. The conclusion would require the response to be either yes or no. The response would be based on certainty, knowledge, undeniable truth, and *not* the *probability* of the proposition being true. Imagine my response to my wife being, "It's *probable* that there are four chairs in the spare room". Strictly speaking it may be an interim statement, of course. This means that I may not in fact know *for sure* I *believe* so, but I will soon see if it is true or not. As it is, "It's probable", is no response at all in this context. The question requires a yes or no, while bringing the chairs or not bringing the chairs. This relates to Malcolm's statement about appearance beliefs of an object. If I can only be certain of the appearance of an object (the sense data of it) what would one make of a comment that "There appears to be an ink-bottle here" when asked if there *is* one there. "Here is an ink-bottle" says nothing exclusively about sense data or appearances. Likewise, if I responded to my wife by saying "It is *probable* that there are four chairs" when she needs them, it would seem like I was joking and evading a straight answer to her question. But, her question, "Are there four chairs in the spare room?", is distinctively marked by the copula which refers to the ontological status of the chairs *being* in the next room. Her question does not refer to the *likelihood* of the chairs being there.

An epistemologist might object because it seems that I am merely stipulating that there are chairs in the next room, then, by seeing them. Thus, the question arises, how do I infer the existence of an object from merely seeing it? What warrants that inference? We could put the question negatively: what would

discount against my belief that the chairs are there when I seem to see them in the next room? We find ourselves in the same position as Malcolm when seeing the ink-bottle and saying "Here is an ink-bottle". I have no idea what would be evidence to discount the belief of the chairs being there upon seeing them at that moment. It is unintelligible for me to think that I do not really see them then. Therefore, my seeing the chairs is a case of knowledge, because there is no evidence around to dissuade me from that belief. What would count as evidence is determined by the context in which a claim of knowledge is being made. Malcolm, of course, may say "I seem to see an ink-bottle" in the particular context of describing what he thinks is on a table in the corner of a darkened room. But, when he stands over one in a well lit room and there is nothing that questions his ability to observe with certainty that there is an ink-bottle, having doubt that one is there, is unintelligible.

The classical internalist, perhaps, would claim that Malcolm's view on this issue lacks the essential analysis of what the epistemic norms are which are at work in claiming that "Here is an ink-bottle". Malcolm does not describe his mental state of knowing that proposition by analyzing what is epistemically normative about it. In the context of seeing four chairs in a room, he would suggest, nothing counts as that which could caste doubt on my knowing that there are four chairs. Knowledge is not a description of a mental phenomenon.

Probabilism and reliabilism get us nowhere when considering knowledge claims about belief in God. It appears absurd to view belief in God as a "probability" or in some sense "reliable". If this were plausible we would be forced to criticize St. Paul's belief in God, as expressed in his letters of the New Testament. St. Paul never says that all ought to have theistic belief because its truth is highly probable, nor does he indicate what mechanism it is that can be counted on to yield the true proposition that God exists. His writings reflect a certainty about his belief in God that does not involve probabilities, or statements about reliable mechanisms of belief acquisition. If his belief in God was to be subject to these analyses then it seems that the whole face of his belief would be radically altered. A mischaracterization of the kind of belief he had would arise. His belief in God would be characterized as if it were a probability he was entertaining, or an affirmation of a reliable process in which he acquired the belief, and not the steadfast conviction that it was.

V. Foundationalism and Basic Beliefs

We can now consider the mode of analysis involved in the internalist theory of foundationalism. This will provide the apparatus in which the reformed epistemologists find religious belief to be logically justified. The project of foundationalism has, for the most part, been seen to rely on the possibility of apprehending a single kind of proposition; those that are foundational or basic. We see here a sharp contrast with coherence theory, the other internalist view of knowledge. Foundationalists maintain the reality of self-justifying propositions which the rest of their epistemological theory is built upon. Coherence theory, by contrast, focuses on a proposition cohering within a whole system of belief, and not the logical status of a single proposition or a set of propositions. Thus, it is said by this kind of single proposition that foundationalists discover a foundation for knowledge. Quite naturally, foundationalism has/had a substantial voice in various empirical investigations of knowledge. Many foundationalists maintain that some foundational propositions of knowledge are apprehended by sense experience. Keith Lehrer writes:

> ...there are some empirical statements (for example, that I see something moving or, more cautiously, that it appears to me as though I see something moving) which constitute the content of basic beliefs. The belief that such statements are true is a self-justified belief.[53]

So at the center of understanding foundationalism is the requirement that basic apprehensions are among its sources of epistemic justification.

From an empirical point of view Lehrer notes that basic beliefs are, to put it cautiously, appearance beliefs. These are beliefs of the appearance of irreducible or basic concepts, such as movement or color. Even though Lehrer claims that empirical propositions often constitute the content of foundational beliefs, this is not to say that foundationalism is necessarily empiricist. In fact, all to the contrary. Foundationalists affirm cognitive essentialism, thus the justification of belief is internal to a cognitive process for them. The internal justification of cognitive processes has been an enduring feature of rationalist philosophy. Empiricism proper is best applied to externalist theories of knowledge where the focus is on evaluating the environment and conditions of empirical truths. Rationalism, by

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[53]Keith Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge* (Westview Press, San Francisco, 1990), p. 41.

contrast, claims that basic propositions have characteristics which inherently afford them a distinctively rational status. Such criteria for their basicality would be determined by distinctions of logical or rational "indubitability", for instance. However, the justification of a basic belief is not certified by an empirical apprehension, but by reason alone i.e., holding it because of its inherent rational characteristics regardless of the modality of procuring the belief. An example of rationalistic basic beliefs can be found in mathematics.[54] For the foundationalist, 1+2=3 is an indubitable truth which is basic in the sense that its truth is registered immediately to the mind and requires no reasoning about it. So, within the rationalist perspective, basic beliefs are irreducible, and constitute the base of a system of knowledge for them; such as color, or simple mathematics.

However, one rarely finds a foundationalist explicitly arguing for the primacy of rationalism over empiricism. That is, it is rarely insinuated that rationalism has precedence over the empirical. As you can see above, the foundationalist finds basic beliefs within empirical propositions as well as the (rationalist) domain of mathematics. So, ultimately the distinction between rationalist and empiricist for my purposes here is not too revealing, thus the application of the terms is not essential to understanding these domains of epistemology. Foundationalism, then seems to cut across traditional lines with a common assumption of what ought to be attained by it; namely, that an epistemological foundation is a guarantee of truth by a central, necessarily self-justified and basic proposition, either of an empirical or rational nature.

The existence of self-justified propositions is what differentiates foundationalist theories from coherence theories. It is true that in traditional coherentism beliefs rest on others in a logically complementary fashion akin to the way non-basic propositions rest on others for justification in foundationalism. Because of this we may speak loosely and say that some propositions are foundational in coherentism in the sense that an ample number of propositions rest upon them. For instance, both physics and psychotherapy are bound to, and founded upon, sense perception and its attendant concepts, yet these two systems of thought are radically divergent in many other respects. Nonetheless, we cannot say

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[54]I must note that this distinction between rationalism as internalist and empiricism as externalist is not as simple as my discussion my lead one to believe. For example, it is unintelligible to imagine a person knowing a mathematical proposition without any empirical considerations whatsoever. We all seemingly learn arithmetic by counting on our fingers or discerning how many apples there are in a page of our work book of mathematical excercises. So, rationalist/internalist propositions involve, as Kant would perhaps put it, empirical intuitions.

that what we may call foundational propositions in coherentism are self-justified basic beliefs as the foundationalist understands it. Basic beliefs, for the foundationalist, have a rational justification internal to them and are not to be considered by reference to other beliefs as is the case for all propositions in coherence theory. John Pollock writes:

> Basic beliefs must be justified independently of reasoning -- if a belief can only be justified through reasoning, its justification is dependent on the justification of the beliefs from which the reasoning proceeds, and hence, by definition, it is not a basic belief.[55]

Basic beliefs have rational characteristics, and so are rational as they are. But that is not discovered by a chain of reasoning about them. A course of reasoning about them inevitably requires the consideration of other justified beliefs that are held. If reasoning about them were dependent on other justified beliefs, then their justification would also be dependent on the justification of those other beliefs. If a belief is not held on the basis of reasoning about them, then it seems that basic beliefs are those involved in various kinds of perception. Thus, foundational beliefs are typically perceptual ones. But we have still to see how they can be secured into an epistemologically favorable status.

It is obvious that we can be mistaken about perceptual beliefs; however, if this is so then the content of perceptual beliefs need further justification also. For example, I may believe that a person who is walking toward me in the fog is my brother, but when he approaches further, I discover that I am mistaken; that it is someone who merely possesses a similar height and girth. Another example is of viewing a dark blue shirt in a poorly lit, gloomy room, and believing it to be coal-black. Pollock raises the question, regardless of whether a given perceptual belief is mistaken or not, can a person be wrong in that he/she is perceiving something? He writes:

> If not, we might reasonably regard beliefs as basic, and take beliefs about physical objects to be supported only indirectly, by reasoning from beliefs about our sensory experience.[56]

In an effort to place a term on this idea, contemporary epistemology refers to "being appeared to". So, in association with an environmental state of affairs, when

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[55] John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 27.
[56] Ibid., p. 28.

one perceives P we may say that one is "being appeared to as if P". Thus, philosophers, in this way, speak of perceiving something red as "being appeared to redly".[57]

At any rate, this suggests that foundational beliefs are those that are ways of being appeared to and not about physical objects themselves. Also, this assumes that ordinary perceptual beliefs can be mistaken, and if so they are not basic beliefs. However, "appearances", or "being appeared to" cannot be mistaken. "Being appeared to" excludes the source or object that seems to be appearing.

By way of summing up what foundational propositions can be, Pollock offers two conditions for them:

> For a foundations theory to work, the class of basic beliefs must satisfy two conditions: (1) there must be enough basic beliefs to provide a foundation for all other justified beliefs, and (2) the basic beliefs must have a secure status that does not require them to be justified by appeal to further justified beliefs.[58]

The second condition suggests that foundational beliefs must be self-justifying. That is, merely by holding the belief one is justified. This section is designed to be a general overview of the foundationalist view and his interests in basic propositions, therefore, we will see in detail, at the beginning of the next chapter, what amounts to the reasoning behind the conditions that the foundationalist sets down for basicality. By way of telegraphing that discussion we will see why the foundationalist holds the criteria of the self-justification of basic propositions to be either self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses.

At the bottom of foundationalism, if it is to have force, there must be such a thing as a self-justifying basic belief. The picture of knowledge that foundationalism often puts forward is one of a pyramid. A foundational belief lies at the base/foundations of a belief system with the related and non-foundational beliefs being supported by it. Non-basic propositions find their justification by being related to the self-justifying foundational proposition.

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[57]These philosophers can be regarded as sense-datum theorists. Some of the standard critical discussions on the subject are: Roderick Chisholm, *Perceiving* (Cornell University Press, Ithica, New York, 1957); Micheal Tyre, "The Averbial Approach to Visual Experience", *The Philosophical Review* 93: 195-226, 1984; Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), chapter 1; C. D. Broad, *Scientific Knowledge* (Thoemmes Press, London, 1996), chapters 7 and 8.

[58]John L. Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 28.

There is the question in contemporary epistemology of whether foundational beliefs do, in fact, exist. Even if that question can be answered affirmatively, we can ask that if there are such beliefs, are there really enough of them to support a whole system of beliefs? These issues are involved in a continuous debate with many and various avenues and positions being considered. I merely wanted to point out the logical landscape to indicate what is involved in the space of thinking "foundationalism" which will provide an intelligible path to the next chapter on reformed epistemology.

VI. The Status of Religious Propositions in Traditional Epistemology and Foundationalism

Foundationalism views all propositions to be of two kinds. For them, there are basic, self-justifying propositions, and non-basic propositions which are in need of justifying support. Because the former are self-justified and are in no need of further epistemic investigation, they constitute part of the framework of what is counted as a rational belief. But the latter kind of proposition is in need of further epistemological investigation, because it requires further evidence and justification. Non-basic propositions are discerned as having a degree of justification depending on their relation to the justification or evidence, but they can never be inherently rational as they are like basic ones. Therefore, these propositions are not rational as they are, but seem to take on a degree of rationality when holding them because they are reliant on other justified beliefs. We can see this degree of justification emerge if we look at the propositions of belief focused on by externalists, for example. They would say that non-basic proposition P has a high *probability* of being rational to hold, or the process by which proposition P was acquired has a high *reliability* of producing rational beliefs.

My point of concern for now is to bring out the kind of characterization that religious propositions may have in this scheme of justifying beliefs. It is said that, within foundationalism, propositions of religious belief are non-basic. It is thought that belief in God is not foundational because it requires further evidence to attain rational status. Thus, religious propositions are subjected to taking on various degrees of justification, or degrees of rationality. It is not my focus here to argue against the foundationalist characterization of religious propositions for their status to be basic rather than non-basic. It ought to be assumed, given my critique of the

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internalist and externalist theories of knowledge by reference to Norman Malcolm, that I would not accept foundationalism proper in any guise because of their acceptance of cognitive essentialism. It is in the next chapter that we will see the reformed epistemologists argue for religious propositions to be considered basic rather than non-basic.

I will support an argument made by D. Z. Phillips[59], against viewing religious propositions of belief as taking on various degrees of justification or rationality, since this does not reflect the *character* of belief that can be described in the lives of people holding a belief in God. The crux of this mischaracterization is that in treating propositions of religious belief in terms of degrees of rational evidence we cannot get away from the fact that holding a religious proposition is like entertaining a probability. The evidentialist, then, views religious propositions as never being conclusively verified, thus rationally justified in terms of certainty, knowledge. That is, they are rational *in as much as* the evidence indicates, but God can never be an object of knowledge for foundationalism, thus never thoroughly rational to believe in. Can we characterize a person holding belief in God in this way, e.g. as if a believer awaits further evidence or justification? Is a believer characteristically justified by *degrees* of rationality? This would give cause for a believer to refer to God's existence as *probable*, or another term that expresses at least a little uncertainty. I view this as another version of philosophical theism, or a view in regard to the God of philosophy, which has ignored the character of belief revealed in the God of scripture. I insist on this point if philosophy is to be conceived of as making a concerted effort to reflect upon issues that enter the lives of people (I assume that Christians are informed about their beliefs from the Bible and its interpretation by a Christian community, and not from texts on traditional epistemology) and not free to construct fictions about what believing in God is and must be. If we take religious belief as the foundationalist wants us to, that of an issue of competing probable hypotheses, what happens to a reading of the Bible? It follows that the character of presentation of the knowledge claims in the Bible would be surprisingly altered from Genesis to Revelations. We would read this mischaracterization of the scriptures from, "It is *highly probable* that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" to "*Probably* you are justified in holding the belief that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you all. Amen." From Genesis

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[59]This argument can be found in Phillips' *Faith After Foundationalism* (Westview Press, Oxford, 1995).

to Revelations there is no religiously recommended assessment of, nor consideration to, various degrees of rationality about having belief in God. We read, "In the beginning *God created* the heaven and the earth" to "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *is* with you all. Amen".

What Phillips' argument above directs us to is the necessity for a vigilant attentiveness to the use of concepts in our language. If we disregard the fact that one mode of thought cannot intelligibly be reduced to all other modes of thought, we may characterize religious belief as if it involves probabilities for all devotees. But, if we investigate how concepts expressed in language alter from context to context, and are often incommensurable to one another, we may avoid a mischaracterization of a context of belief like the one discussed above. This focus on language intends to reveal how a context of belief is to be assuredly characterized by showing how the concepts are definitively (and peculiarly) used within it.

I can imagine a probabilist making the following point, however, regarding the belief in God and the evidentialist mode of inquiry: whatever it is that the belief in God amounts to, she may assert, it does not seem to fall into the category of experientially or empirically supportable beliefs. This is the assumption that underlies classical foundationalism's view of religious propositions also. This assumption, in my mind, certainly gives their view considerable force, because it is true. A person who expresses her faith by saying, "Jesus Christ is my personal lord and savior" does not know that because it rests upon the basic belief, "God exists", which was invoked by an empirical experience. If she did say that she knows Christ is her personal lord and savior because it is connected to an empirical experience, I would not know what she could be referring to. Must that utterance, or any kind of expression of knowledge, always be justified in terms of the apprehension of empirical propositions? This relates to one of the objections that I have been making through the work of Malcolm: there ought not be one criteria of knowledge seen as that which can intelligibly cover all forms of the expression of knowledge. I contend that something is wrong about claiming that religious propositions require empirical support to be known. I will argue in the second and third chapters that not all propositions of knowledge require empirical or experiential support.

However, to assume that all believing characters in the Gospels did not require empirical evidence for the certainty of their belief is not entirely accurate. For instance, the disciple Thomas was not present at the first visitation by the risen

Christ. Afterward, the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen him. He said that he would not believe unless he touched his wounds. On the second visitation Thomas was present, and Christ said to him, "Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." At Thomas' inspection of the evidence of Christ in their midst after death, he said in affirmation of his belief, "My lord and my God!". Nevertheless, this is not the end to this episode and message about the character of believing.[60] If it were we could conclude that Thomas was lucky indeed to really make sure, in the evidentialist fashion, that Jesus Christ is the risen Lord. The depth and certainty of belief in God would really be a matter of luck. Thomas was lucky to be able to empirically inspect the wounds of Christ. Furthermore, the generations of Christians who came after this recorded incident would be epistemically estranged or alienated from the certainty of their belief. Thus, we Christians must believe, in some sense, on the say so of Thomas. Also, Thomas would be exemplified as the paradigmatic Christian, because he was really sure about Christ. But, Jesus responds to Thomas' sudden belief by evidence in saying, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those that have not seen and have believed." I think to best understand this statement we must consider the sense of "blessed". My understanding of one who is blessed is one who is holy and in Divine favor. It was good that Thomas, in the end, believed rather than not, as Jesus insinuated, regardless of what brought the belief. Jesus did allow him to come to belief by empirical investigation. But, the holy ones who are in Divine favor, or are "closer" to Divinity, are those who believe by the testimony of their heart and not their senses. But still, why? If one today, like Thomas, says that he will not believe unless he touches the wounds of Christ he will forever be in doubt. He would perhaps claim that it is possible or probable, that Jesus is the risen Christ, but because he did not touch his wounds he can only believe by a certain degree (or not at all) which will forever be at least shy of certainty. But, the favored one from Jesus' teaching is he who professes his lordship (knows him) within his heart, and apart from any empirical investigation. By Jesus' teaching - that he who has not seen and believed is blessed and in Divine favor - we get a sense that he who must believe in an empirical manner like Thomas, and not by the testimony of his heart, is lacking in his faith and Divine blessing. He does not know the fullness

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[60] John 20: 24-31.

of faith or the preferred character of belief. The truth of belief in God, its preferred character, is with one who has no empirical evidence yet believes. From this account we notice that the foundationalist who considers religious belief conceptualizes a logicality which can be viewed as contrary to the biblical teaching in the story of the doubting Thomas.

At this stage I can imagine the confident yet raw criticism against what I have said above by traditional epistemologists that it seems scripture is, and religious devotees are, imprudent and logically apathetic with respect to the rational standing of their beliefs. But, as we saw implied through my description of internalism, externalism and their respective sub-theories, most of traditional epistemology claims that knowledge is gained by our senses, or mental processes, which are both considered in relation to apprehending empirical propositions. Because the concept of God does not fall into the domain of empirical propositions, the rationality of holding a concept of God is reduced to degrees of rationality. The thrust of my criticism, which will be argued in detail in chapter three, is that perhaps there is a wholly different logical sense to believing in God that cannot be informed or scrutinized by an investigation based on empirical propositions as the paradigm of all propositions of belief. With this criticism an investigation into the grammar of religious belief will be crucial in order to challenge the assumption of traditional epistemology; that what is fully rational to believe, is that which emanates from the empirical world.

With sole consideration to the foundationalist project, shall we say that religious propositions ought to be treated as basic rather than non-basic? I will leave it to the reformed epistemologists to argue for that position in the next chapter. In order to lead into the main arguments against traditional foundationalism by the reformed philosophers to be covered in the following chapter, I ought to offer some further detail about the basis of their view of justified belief. Therefore, we must look at the problem of determining the criteria of basicality of foundational propositions.

VII. The Problem of the Criterion of Basicality

In order to set the stage for reformed epistemology and their critique of foundationalism in excluding belief in religious propositions from the set that are considered foundational, we must have a general look at the problem of the

criterion of basicality. I will not present this issue in terms of reformed epistemology in particular. I intend to explicate this problem in view of presenting foundational epistemology as comprehensively as possible given the limited space and scope of this chapter.

As I said at the outset, traditional epistemology asks "what can we know?" and "How does one know that one knows?" It has long been thought by traditional epistemologists, that if they are seeking justification, or evidence for (true) belief then the project of determining a criterion of things that are known would be an immensely fruitful area of inquiry. It would be to discover the criteria of the rationale which logically buttresses the search for justified belief. This is one of the most ardently debated topics within epistemology. There have been various criteria of knowledge put forward by philosophers, but certainly, not one of them has been decided upon.

Roderick Chisholm offers an interesting discussion about the problem of the criterion of knowledge. He views the following classical question to be one which, if answered, would benefit the whole agenda. The question, "what is the criterion of knowing?" leads one to ask "what is the extent of our knowledge?" Chisholm believes that if an answer is given to one of the two questions, then an answer can possibly be given to the other. If we could answer what the extent of our knowledge is, then we would have insight into what can be known and what cannot be known, which would serve as a portal into organizing a set of criteria that would demarcate what is knowable from what is not knowable.

However, in the event that we cannot find any answers to what the criterion of knowledge is, we cannot answer the question of what the extent of knowledge is, and vice versa. Chisholm rhetorically asks, "Is there a way past this problem?" *His* answer is:

> (1) We may try to find out what we know or what we are justified in believing without making use of any *criterion* of knowledge or of justified belief. Or (2) we may try to formulate a criterion of knowledge without appeal to any *instances* of knowledge or justified belief.[61]

An affirmation of the first case would result in a "particularist" position and the second could be described as a "generalist" position. A "particularist" is one who identifies particular instances of knowledge we already have. Malcolm could be

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[61]Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (Printice Hall Int., Englewood Cliffs, 1989), pp. 6-7. Chisholm's emphases.

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identified as a particularist in that he focuses on a particular context of belief, and considers if there is anything in that context that would count against a claim of knowledge. A "generalist", on the other hand, is one who gives a general or universal criteria for all things that can be said to be known.

Chisholm seems to think that we begin making claims of knowledge as "particularists". We identify particular moments of knowing without applying any general criteria of knowing or justification. His example is that of knowing that dogs exist. In order to know that dogs exist one need not apply criteria of knowing in order to hold that proposition. They have always been in most peoples lives, and that is something that we have understood and not logically interrogated for its justification. Furthermore, one need not prove how one came to know that dogs exist. It is hard to think of what such proof would be like. One would search in vain for such a moment that marks its beginning; an instance where by virtue of a logical investigation the proposition was analyzed, then accepted. This shows that some truths do not require a criterion in order for them to be justifiably believed. Merely by encountering dogs throughout a lifetime, we can say that dogs exist. That knowledge is embedded in the meaning of our existence, because dogs have always been around us. Chisholm cites D. J. Mercier[62] in claiming that the concept of epistemic justification then is objective, internal and immediate. This concept, of course, supports the dog proposition. Chisholm, therefore, shows that the justification of belief and knowledge does not firstly require a general criterion, but the reflection of our knowledge can be recognized as justified by the understanding of this concept of epistemic justification. He writes:

> It is *internal* and *immediate* in that one can find out directly, by *reflection*, what one is justified in believing at any time. And epistemic justification is *objective* in that it can itself constitute an object of justification and knowledge. It is possible to know that we know and it is possible to be justified in believing.[63]

We can see by this quote that Chisholm -- if we take his comments to be a typical sort of internalist apologetics as discussed by Malcolm -- is directly in contention with my ongoing criticism of traditional epistemology. We have seen that it is unintelligible to assume that we can discover knowledge and belief directly *from* reflection alone. However, considering the above quote in light of

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[62]Ibid., p. 7.
[63]Ibid. Chisholm's emphases.

Malcom's work, we may not object to the notion that the justification of certain beliefs (empirical and ontological ones in particular) is internal and immediate. This perhaps could be the correct characterization of what takes place with one who says, "I know that there is an ink-bottle on my desk" when looking at it. But we may object to what he has in mind in terms of reflection about it, which has a definite "knowledge is a state of mind" ring to it. We could easily imagine one saying emphatically, "I know that I know that there is an ink-bottle here!" This would express that the subject knows that he knows, or that he simply knows for certain that there is an ink-bottle on his desk. Therefore, we may ask to what extent do we reflect about knowing that we know. Is it not a steadfast internal and immediate reaction to a certainty?

Furthermore, again if we take his comments as supportive of internalism, a confusion seemingly surrounds Chisholm's notion of the objectivity of epistemic justification itself; that it constitutes an object also of justification and knowledge. Nonetheless, this is the quest of traditional epistemology. That is to describe systems of justification which will be an object itself by which we examine our knowledge claims. Thus, by examining our claims of knowledge by an epistemological system we can then, "know that we know". What I think is implied in Malcolm's work is that the notion of having knowledge that one knows is redundant and says nothing. At least I take that as a consequence of his argument against discovering knowledge and belief by cognitive processes alone. Given his view that the concept of knowledge, or the word "know", is used when there is no evidence around that would keep one from holding a belief as true, the notion of the knowledge of knowledge is asking something other than the role of evidence in understanding what knowledge is. Malcolm is, nonetheless, not prepared to give a universal account of what all knowledge claims amount to. Looking for discounting evidence in one context could amount to something different in another. But, he does show that evidence and subjective certainty have a role to play in many kinds of knowledge claims. But what would he say to the question, what is the knowledge of knowledge? For Malcolm the knowledge of knowledge is not that which requires justification also. To make a claim of knowledge in our everyday experiences, whatever that may involve, is to rest upon certainty itself. We could say, in somewhat of an awkward fashion, that knowledge includes the knowledge of knowing.

To continue on clarifying this domain of investigation as it is traditionally conceived, the criterion of basicality has been considered differently by philosophers other than Chisholm. Some have claimed a generalist position as regards the criterion of knowledge such as Hume, who is considered a skeptic in requiring a deducability from sense-experience as the criterion of knowing.[64] It was in finding this criterion failing in some fundamental cases which caused him to turn to skepticism. Traditionally, generalist epistemologists have thought that criteria are discoverable through reflection or introspection where ultimate concern is given to internal factors about our thoughts and experiences. Furthermore, generalists do focus upon epistemic principles that are derived by factual knowledge (empirical); principles of factual knowledge being those that are derived from outside of the mind, such as external causes, environmental states of affairs, and so on. Naturally, it can be seen why generalists often become skeptics. If no normative empirical criterion of knowledge can be accepted, and no factual statement can be relied upon that originates from outside of the mind, then questions of doubt about there being justifiable knowledge arise.

Skepticism is not an acceptable position either. This is primarily because with everyday knowledge claims, such as "I know that the keys are in the kitchen drawer, as I distinctively remember putting them there.", there is no evidence, in ordinary circumstances, that would lead me to doubt that this is a claim of knowledge. But, mostly this involves the issue, again, of knowing that one knows. The skeptic does not think there could ever be good grounds for claiming to know, therefore, one cannot say that one is justified in knowing. However, considering my argument against the view of Chisholm, knowing involves knowing that one knows. So, by my account the generalist view of the criterion of knowledge reveals very little about the condition of knowing.

There are yet others who claim a criterion of knowledge can be discerned by our relationship to our sources of knowledge. This is to focus upon the means of how we come to know anything. Given this investigative focus, the particularists and generalists perspectives are irrelevant. Nevertheless, it is thought that if we discover the right method of receiving knowledge we may have an infallible justification of a proposition as we found earlier with our consideration of the

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[64]David Hume's discussion surrounding his requirements for knowledge can be found in his essay "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" in R. Cummins and D. Owen (eds) *Central Reading in the History of Modern Philosophy*, (Wadsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, 1992), pp. 343-411.

reliabilist view. It has been thought by reliabilist philosophers that the reliable mechanism of acquiring knowledge could be that infallible method. However, even though this sounds remotely promising, what the reliable mechanism is, is far from clear.

I have tried to reveal not only why such a discovery of the criterion of basicality is sought by traditional epistemologists, but also that the answers and ways of looking at the problem from the traditional view are many and varied, indeed, with no acceptable conclusion of the issue in sight. It seems that there is no sure and decided way to account for such a criterion from within their styles of investigation. We will find this problem as the central issue that brings reformed epistemology in conflict with classical foundationalism in terms of the criterion of discerning which propositions are basic and which are not. We have seen that foundationalism rejects religious propositions as having a self-justifiably rational role in that domain of theory. Even though reformed epistemology will argue the contrary, they certainly wish to work within the foundationalist picture of knowledge as a theory to discern rational religious belief. The details of the kind of foundationalism advocated by reformed epistemology will comprise the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Reformed Epistemology's Claim of Reason

I. Introduction

I will begin my explication of reformed epistemology by clarifying some essential points about foundationalism which will prove to be indispensable for my critical discussion about their work. I will focus on how *reformed epistemology* discerns the foundationalist project. Proceeding this way will give us the eyes of the reformed philosopher,[1] thereby allowing us to see how the project of foundationalism is intricately related to their own reflections. I will begin with a discussion about noetic structures, which the reformist holds as the object of inquiry and critique of foundationalism. For the reformist, it is exclusively concerned with rational noetic structures; which means that foundationalism is motivated by seeking the proper expression of the logicality between propositions within a whole belief system. With an understanding of noetic structures, we can see what is at stake in the issue of determining the criteria of basic beliefs. By understanding the problem of the criteria of basicality we can consider the arguments by reformed epistemology concerning the collapse of classical foundationalism and their neo-foundationalist view of rational religious belief.

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[1] I intend to present reformed epistemology in a comprehensive fashion. This requires that I overlook most idiosyncratic views of particular reformed philosophers. Reformed epistemology is generally considered to be a reformation of the classical internalist theory of foundationalism. All reformists do not agree on every epistemological issue, of course. Alvin Plantinga, for example, is the most discussed reformed epistemologist and is a figure who will overshadow the others in my discussion. He turned to various externalist ideas in his later work. It is not typical at all for a reformed epistemologist to be influenced by externalist ideas. As interesting as it may be to see where various untypical ideas may lead the reformist project, I am determined to attempt to strike at the heart of reformed epistemology. Therefore, this chapter will feature what I take to be the most typical characterization of their views.

II. The Advent of a Reformed Epistemology

A. The concept of a noetic structure

Reformed epistemology wants to hold on to the foundationalist picture of rational belief. And it wants to claim that there is no criterion of rationality to exclude religious propositions from those propositions which can be accepted as foundational, they can be placed in the foundations of a belief system. Thus, reformed epistemology wishes to work within foundationalism to comment on the basicality of religious propositions and the rationality of religious belief systems. They must rely on a concept that expresses a particular kind of logical structure - a structure that foundationalism is accustomed to - as well as the knowledge of God. They are, firstly, interested in the logical status of single basic religious propositions, and secondly, how holding basic propositions in the foundations of one's beliefs secures the rationality of a whole structure of interrelated propositions, i.e. the logical structure of religious systems of belief. As a noetic structure is integral to understanding reformed epistemology I will briefly clarify what is meant by their use of this concept.

Alvin Plantinga introduces the concept of a noetic structure by saying:

> A person's noetic structure is the set of propositions he believes, together with certain epistemic relations that hold among him and these propositions.[2]

Because Plantinga is working within the foundationalist tradition he wishes to use this concept to indicate a coherently bound organization of propositions comprising a system of belief along with a clear awareness of what the basic proposition is within it. He writes, "An account of a person's noetic structure, then, would specify which of his beliefs are basic and which non-basic."[3] In a noetic structure what separates basic from non-basic beliefs is that non-basic beliefs are held on the basis of others and basic beliefs are not.

Plantinga uses the concept of noetic structure commensurately with the project of foundationalism. Plantinga writes:

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[2] Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 48.
[3] Ibid., p. 49.

We may think of the foundationalist as beginning with the observation that some of our beliefs are based upon others. According to the foundationalist a rational noetic structure will *have a foundation* - a set of beliefs not accepted on the basis of others; in a rational noetic structure some belief will be basic.[4]

I will quote the following at length because it clarifies how he understands what a rational noetic structure is. This will also give us insight into his thinking throughout his whole philosophical enterprise.

He writes:

...foundationalism is best construed, I think, as a thesis about *rational* noetic structures. A noetic structure is rational if it could be the noetic structure of a person who was completely rational. To be completely rational, as I am using the term, is not to believe only what is true, or to believe all the logical consequences of what one believes, or to believe all necessary truths with equal firmness, or to be uninfluenced by emotion in forming belief; it is, instead, to do the right thing with respect to one's believings. It is to violate no epistemic duties. From this point of view, a rational person is one whose believings meet the appropriate standards; to criticize a person as irrational is to criticize her for failing to fulfil these duties or responsibilities, for failing to conform to the relevant norms or standards. To draw the ethical analogy, the irrational is the impermissible; the rational is the permissible.[5]

I feel that with this quote we can understand how Plantinga views noetic structures as having a central role within foundationalism. We get a general sense of how Plantinga characterizes the reformed view of rational belief itself. He views rational belief to be a permissibility, not a wholesale dogmatic exclamation of what *the* rational belief is. A rational believer, for Plantinga, is one who maintains consistency within the norms and standards of a noetic structure. For him, there is not only one rational noetic structure. A description of the rational believer for him does not involve any philosophical assertion about any particular form of belief. He intends to analyze the relationship between propositions within a noetic structure and the rationality of one who holds the noetic structure by adhering to the epistemic duties of it. Epistemic duties are those which one is compelled to obey while seeking to remain consistent to the norms and standards of a noetic structure. To believe in the Christian God can carry with it norms and standards given the particular noetic structure in which that belief is held. Imagine that a Christian refused to give any assistance to the suffering. Some Christians would

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[4]Ibid., p. 52. Plantinga's emphasis.

[5]Ibid. Plantinga's emphasis.

claim that there is an explicit duty for the Christian to give assistance and aid to those in need. If one thinks that not giving assistance to those in need is one of his Christian beliefs, some could say that that person is not obeying the norms and standards of his Christian community. The notion of Christianity, with such a belief included in the foundations of its noetic structure, is confused and not permissible, because a central standard belief is to care for those who suffer. But if a Christian did give assistance to those requesting it, we could say that he is obeying his duties with respect to his Christian beliefs. He may be said to have rational justification, or rational permissibility, for that belief within his noetic structure. The rational then is the permissible.[6]

John Pollock points out that, "The foundationalist picture [the pyramid formation] seems to derive rather directly from psychological truisms, and this gives it considerable force."[7] The foundationalist views knowledge as being concerned with noetic structures. At first consideration, so assumes the traditional epistemologist, our everyday knowledge involves propositions that are related to the justification of others, until the final propositions are reached. These propositions form the base of a pyramid and do not rest on others, but seem to be basic in one's noetic structure. In the following chapter I will argue that this intuition is actually mistaken. Self-justifying propositions are not the point of reference for all claims of knowledge. Knowledge, then, does not rest upon foundational propositions.

B. Rational criteria of basic beliefs

The crucial question that has to be asked by the traditional foundationalist, given noetic structures, is what are the necessary characteristics, or attributes of a basic belief? What are the criteria of rationality of foundational beliefs? One response to this question, offered by Saint Thomas Aquinas[8], is that a basic belief must be self-evident. The self-evidence of a proposition means that its justification

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[6]This notion that the rational is the permissible will be elaborated upon in detail later as it will be central to my discussion of reformed epistemology.

[7]John Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, New Jersey, 1986), p. 27.

[8]Saint Aquinas' discussion of the criterion of basicality can be found in his *Summa Theologica*, ed. Thomas Gilfy (Harper and Row, London, 1963-1975), book I, Q, xii, a, 4. Aquinas typically follows Aristotle by distinguishing what is known through itself (*per se nota*) from what is known through another (*per aliud nota*).

or truth can be immediately comprehended. By understanding it, one immediately and simultaneously attains its truth. Certain mathematical propositions, for instance, fall into this category of immediate justification. 1+2=3 is not said to be justified because of reference to something else one justifiably believes; its truth is immediately attained by understanding it.

In order to make use of the concept of self-evident truth, which is fundamental to understanding foundationalism, we can further distinguish at least three different forms of self-evidence. 1+2=3 is self-evident, but only for those who have learned the technique of arithmetic. This is why we hear the foundationalist say that 1+2=3 is self-evident *to most people*. When we consider more complicated propositions of arithmetic the notion of self-evidence begins to lose hold. For instance, 5+14=19 is most likely self-evident to university students, but not to many children who have only begun to study mathematics. They must make calculations in order to assure themselves of the answer. Furthermore, 579x357=206,703 is not self-evident to anybody save the few individuals with an uncanny ability to immediately comprehend high level calculations. A second kind of self-evident proposition is that "All Bachelors are unmarried". Again, one must firstly know the concept of bachelor in order to immediately comprehend the truth of this proposition. A third form of a self-evident proposition is the kind that plays a key role in the work of Norman Malcolm, which we discussed in the last chapter. This form involves the sensations of claiming, for example, "Here is an ink-bottle" while looking at it on one's desk. Generally, however, a self-evident proposition is so if no evidence is needed to believe it, or understand its truth.

The way in which the reformed philosophers will allege that the truth of a religious proposition is foundational will, albeit in a non-detailed fashion, generally fit the concept of basicality. To grasp the sense of "basicality" used by the reformist is to seize that which is essential to his argument. We will see reformed epistemology affirm a general descriptive concept of basicality, and not a particular one that is defined by a single criterion, thus being prescriptive. If we assert that only one kind of basic belief justifies all belief systems, we are prescribing what kind of belief must be held in its foundations. For the reformist if we can describe a belief in a noetic structure as basic to the noetic structure (that all other non-basic beliefs logically refer to the basic one, e.g. the basic belief is the

basis of the noetic structure) it is *de facto* foundational.

From the classical foundationalist perspective, there are two criteria of basicality which are descriptive of intuition and sensory perception respectively. Firstly, the criterion of incorrigibility describes an intuitive basic belief. To clarify the epistemological term "incorrigible" we can say, quite simply, that one has an incorrigible belief if it is impossible for one not to hold that belief. It is difficult indeed to offer an example of a properly incorrigible belief because ordinary beliefs seem to be disqualified. For instance, if I believe that there is a candle in front of me it is not out of the realm of possibilities that I am mistaken (i.e. I am hallucinating). That is to say, it is possible for me not to believe it even though the reasons involve such notions as insentient hallucination, or various tricks of the mind. Skepticism has strong currency in the analysis of incorrigible beliefs.

Some philosophers have focused on perceptual beliefs which give rise to a second kind of criterion of basicality. This criterion of basicality involves propositions that are evident to the senses, thus they do not rule out ordinary beliefs. The sensations are immediate and refer to nothing other than themselves. When one reports the vision of a candle in front of oneself, it is evident to their sense of vision that that is what is there. For instance, to use Chisholm's language, in seeing a candle we can perhaps, at least cautiously, claim that we are being "appeared to candlely". Others may have good evidence as to why I may be wrong about being appeared to in this way, but it cannot be relevant in that I believe that I am being appeared to as such.

These criteria of basicality have had a long history in traditional epistemology from Descartes' notion of clear and distinct ideas, to Locke's agreement and disagreement of ideas concerning perception. A basic belief does not require a reason for holding that belief independently of it. For Plantinga it is essential for the classical foundationalist to embrace that:

> A proposition P is properly basic for a person S if and only if P is either self-evident to S or incorrigible for S or evident to the senses for S.[9]

The issues and argumentative avenues of what is a basic belief have been

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[9] Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 59.

hotly debated by foundationalists since the inception of traditional epistemology. The intricacies involved in these arguments - for example, the very possibility of holding incorrigible beliefs, how the relation between basic and non-basic beliefs ought to be properly understood, or if there are really enough basic beliefs to support a whole belief structure, etc.- is not what I am prepared to debate here in their terms. I wish only to sketch the ground of foundationalism. I will consider what is the rationale of determining what foundational beliefs can be, which is the starting point of their work and constitutes the very possibility of their enterprise.

C. Reforming classical foundationalism

1. Why can't belief in God be basic?

As related to this fundamental principle of classical foundationalism, it follows (in their collective work) that belief in God cannot be among foundational beliefs. As we saw above foundational propositions do not stand in need of evidence (by reference to another proposition), because they are basic in one of the three ways. Reformed thinkers however, persist in asking why it is that belief in God cannot be basic, thus foundational. These requirements for the basicality of foundational propositions seemingly are the basis for the foundationalist to deem religious propositions to be irrational. The foundationalist requires religious belief to have this rational evidence; a religious proposition must be logically linked to a properly foundational belief to be justified.

The crux of the reformed challenge to foundationalism is concerning this view. The reformists argue that foundationalism requires a religious proposition to be judged by too narrow a conception of rationality. In identifying evidentialism as that which constrains the foundationalist's concept of rationality, which is central to foundationalist thought, Plantinga offers the following comment:

> The existence of God ... is not among the propositions that are properly basic: hence a person is rational in accepting theistic belief only if he has evidence for it. The vast majority of those in the western world who have thought about our topic have accepted some form of classical foundationalism. The evidentialist objection to the belief in God, furthermore, is obviously rooted in this way of looking at things.[10]

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[10]Ibid., p. 48.

It is this way of looking at things, vis-à-vis the foundationalist requirement of evidence for rational belief in God, that they wish to put into question and offer an alternative to.

2. The rationale for basic beliefs

Given the foundationalist's motivation towards determining rational belief, it would follow that they would have *reasons* for these requirements of what can be basic beliefs. They must have rational justification for their criteria of a proposition's basicality. It seems that they make such judgements of what propositions are foundational because they can justify choosing the criteria that they do, which is used to assess if a belief is, or is not, properly basic. The reformed philosopher challenges foundationalism with the problem of criteria that I discussed in the last chapter. The reformists press the foundationalist to be explicit about what the rationale for their criterion actually is -- some reasoning must be at work in their assessment of what propositions are, and are not, properly foundational in relation to a criterion of rationality. And the further the reformists press this point the more it is apparent that the foundationalist cannot provide a rationale for the criteria of foundational beliefs, because they do not in fact possess any such rational justification for them. For Plantinga et al., there are no justifications for these kinds of propositions which support the foundatinalist's argument that they ought to be the foundational ones.

In defense of foundationalism, however, we must note that they could respond to this interrogation by arguing that the entire debate about providing justifying reasons for which beliefs are basic and which are not, is a confusion. It is confused because *by definition* basic beliefs are not ultimately grounded upon anything else. There is good reason why most foundationalists have remained silent when confronted with this argument. It is not that they lack ideas or an adequate grasp of their own project - quite the contrary - they are rightly confused by what the reformist could mean by providing justification for a basic belief. The moment the foundationalist determines a justifying reason for holding a particular basic belief, the belief in question cannot be basic because it must be resting on another proposition from which issues a reason for holding it. Even though this argument, I think, is unmistakably correct about the idea of justifying basic beliefs

("justification" being what is involved in seeking the rationale for them), the reformists must acknowledge that there is a confusion about what they are asking the foundationalist to provide. Nonetheless, the foundationalist response (whatever it may be) does not impede the reformists from being united in their enterprise by affirming the argument that the possibilities of foundational beliefs, as conceived by the tradition, are far too narrow. In fact, the notion that basic beliefs cannot be justified by a criterion of rationality is what gives force and motivation to the reformed project.

The reformists see that propositions which are self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses are generally basic. They describe a basis for knowledge. Those criteria of basicality describe beliefs that are held without logical reference to any other belief. Conversely, the foundationalist (when affirming one of the three criteria of basicality) is prescribing what a basic belief must be. Given that they have no rationale for prescribing particular basic beliefs, why couldn't theistic beliefs (and atheistic beliefs as well), the reformists suggest, be viewed as basic if they also act as a basis for knowledge in a noetic structure? Therefore, for the reformists, if religious beliefs can be revealed as generally basic, then they should also be, *de facto*, a foundation for knowledge.

3. Traditional foundationalism collapses

In an essay by Alvin Plantinga called *Reason and Belief in God*, he dedicates a section to this problem that the foundationalist faces, which he titles "The Collapse of Foundationalism". He raises the simple question: Why should belief in God not be among the foundations of my noetic structure? He then gives *the foundationalist's* response:

> ...even if this belief were *true*[God exists], it does not have the characteristics a proposition must have to deserve a place in the foundations. There is no room in the foundations for a proposition that can be rationally accepted only on the basis of other propositions. The only properly basic propositions are those that are self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses. Since the proposition that God exists is none of the above, it is not properly basic for anyone; that is, no well-informed, rational noetic structure contains this proposition in its foundations.[11]

Plantinga is right in noting two claims being asserted in the response by the

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[11]Ibid., p. 59.

foundationalist. The first is that a proposition is properly basic if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. This seems reasonable enough, because all can see that those kinds of beliefs are, in fact, not based on any other. For the sake of argument, Plantinga suggests, we can concede it. The second is that a proposition is properly basic *only if* it meets one of these conditions. Then he asks:

> But what is to be said for the second? Is there any reason to accept it? Why does the foundationalist accept it? Why does he think the theist ought to?[12]

If the foundationalist thesis of what can be basic beliefs, and therefore what can be rational systems of belief (which follow from basic beliefs), is indeed correct, Plantinga continues, then "...enormous quantities of what we all in fact believe are irrational."[13] He continues:

> Consider all those propositions that entail, say, that there are enduring physical objects, or that there are persons distinct from myself, or that the world has existed for more than five minutes: none of these propositions, I think, is more probable than not with respect to what is self-evident or incorrigible for me; at any rate no one has given good reason to think any of them is.[14]

We can see that Plantinga is moving in a direction to dismantle the classical foundationalist's restrictive criteria of basicality. When we consider the foundationalist's criteria of basicality, a lot of our everyday beliefs seem to be irrational. Generally we see that the reformist intends to displace the narrow prescriptive view of basicality and argue, instead, that there is a wide variety of basic beliefs. We can see the wide variety of basic beliefs if we just describe how they function in a foundation of a noetic structure: a basic belief supports its many related non-basic beliefs. This emphasis on describing rational belief rather than prescribing what ought to be believed in order to have rational belief, comprises an important Wittgensteinian insight which will be elaborated on in the following chapter.

Plantinga raises another convincing argument against classical foundationalism, concerning this problem of criteria of basic beliefs, and that is

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[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid.
[14]Ibid., pp. 59-60.

that it seems to be "self-referentially inconsistent"[15]. This means that the foundationalist has constructed the criteria of what must be the basic beliefs in the foundations of a rational belief system without conforming to his own program of assessing rational belief. Particularly, the belief that basic beliefs must be self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses is neither self-evident, incorrigible, nor evident to the senses, and thus, cannot be properly basic for the foundationalist. Plantinga writes:

> ...if he [the foundationalist] cannot find such an argument for [the rationality of his conditions for basic beliefs] he ought to give it up. Furthermore, he ought not to urge and I ought not to accept any objection to theistic belief that crucially depends upon a proposition that is true only if I ought not believe it.[16]

As a reformed epistemologist, Plantinga does not accept the exclusion of religious propositions from those that can be considered basic by the seemingly arbitrary conditions that classical foundationalism sets down for them. But, it is nonetheless true that the reformist perpetuates the foundationalist picture of knowledge because he finds it compelling as the correct description of the working structure of rational belief.

Before investigating the reformist's claim of reason with respect to theistic belief it is prudent to offer a recapitulation of the results that we can glean from the discussion thus far. Firstly, we are faced with a certain psychological dissonance if we accept traditional foundationalism as the true theory of knowledge. Given their eminently restrictive criteria of basicality, we saw that most of our everyday beliefs are rendered irrational by reference to their view of knowledge. Secondly, while considering the reformist's discussions on the viability of foundationalism, we are presented with the conclusion that their criteria of basicality are stipulative. And lastly, that it is still correct (from the reformed view) to speak of the rationality of belief to have grounds or foundations, e.g. some proposition must be foundational, but we do not have to accept the foundationalist's formulation of what *must* be that basic proposition.

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[15]Ibid., p. 60.
[16]Ibid.

III. Reformed Epistemology and Rational Religious Belief

An obvious and encroaching question presents itself to the reformist. How can one rationally justify the inclusion of religious propositions among those that are properly basic? To keep the foundationalist picture of knowledge and submit religious propositions as properly basic while casting aside rational criteria of basic beliefs that the foundationalist insists upon, one must respond to the possibility of holding a rational belief that is not accordingly justified by a rational criteria for holding it.

Before I go on to describe what their response will be to this question, I must make a few general remarks about the characterization of reformed epistemology and foundationalism in terms of their argumentative basis. Particularly, this is to ask the question: from what basis does the reformed epistemologist argue if he rejects strict criteria for basic beliefs? It can be extrapolated from what we saw above, and in the previous chapter, that the classical foundationalist position is a strong foundationalism. This means that they have a very strict argumentative base for their project which assesses what can and cannot be a rational belief. If belief P is not linked to, or deducible from, a proposition that is either self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, it is not a foundation of knowledge . This makes their critique of rational beliefs broad and conclusive without leaving any room for a gray area of what a rational belief is. Any system of belief can thus be dismissed or accepted by seeing if the beliefs held in its foundations fulfil their criteria of basicality. The reformist, in holding onto foundationalism but absolving themselves of prescriptive rational criteria for basic beliefs, develops what can be called a weak foundationalism. We will see how they accept a vast plurality of basic beliefs. Their project is not based upon stipulating what the restrictive rational requirements of basic beliefs must be in the style of traditional foundationalism. They argue that a basic belief is that which does not depend on another for holding it, and it supports a whole system of beliefs. We will also see how they maintain an argumentative basis (that is, to argue for and against certain kinds of belief as being properly basic), albeit a weak one, while rejecting the strong argumentative basis of traditional foundationalism.

A. A reformed view of basic beliefs and the role of argument

We have discussed that the classical foundationalist, in holding that religious propositions are not properly basic, means to suggest that to hold such a proposition, and be rational, one must accept an argument for it that stems or emanates from properly foundational propositions. This kind of domain or schematic in thinking about the rationality of belief in God is what has enforced the labor spent throughout past centuries on natural theology. This, to put it simply, is providing positive argument for the belief in God. I conjecture that within philosophy there are few other domains of inquiry with such an impressive history. To recognize this I merely mention such illustrious figures as St. Augustine, St. Anselm,[17] Ockham, Descartes, Abelard, St. Aquinas, Pascal and Leibniz, who have engaged themselves in producing logical proofs or arguments for belief in God. This has everything to do with the program of classical foundationalism. Indeed, it can be seen that the history of natural theology stretches back in tandem and parallels the history of foundationalism. On this historical path what is asserted is that rational belief in God needs argument or proof which is delivered *from* properly basic beliefs. This is because it is not self-evident, incorrigible, nor evident to the senses. So they endeavor to argue for belief in God from what they take to be properly basic beliefs, and try to show that theistic belief can be a deliverance of reason. Even though natural theology constitutes an illustrious, eminent and distinguished tradition, Plantinga suggests that many reformed theologians react with tepid endorsement, while others have a mildly stated uncomplimentary view of the enterprise. In fact, rejections of arguments for the existence of God by some Protestant theologians have ranged from indifference, to amiable opposition, on to flamingly hostile accusations of blasphemy. What does Plantinga see in the reformed opposition to positive

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[17]I am presenting the work of these figures as I think that they are currently or popularly received. In my experience, the proofs of God's existence, as argued by St. Anselm, were presented as what I am calling positive arguments for His existence. That such arguments will give reasons for one to have belief. However, the sense of "proof" may be understood in divergent ways. St. Anselm acclaimed the dictum *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) and St. Augustine affirmed *credo ut intelligam* (I believe that I might understand). This means that their respective theological reflections aim toward *clarifying* the knowledge of God for one who already believes, and not proving it for those who do not. St. Anselm's argument from design would then be directed towards aiding a believer to clearly see (in perhaps a contemplative fashion for worship) how God orchestrates the world and the cosmos in perfect harmony. If this note was not added, then my inclusion of St. Anselm and St. Augustine in this group would make my present objections a straw-man argument.

argument or proof for the existence of God? What kind of theistic belief underlies this range of responses? Why is there not an enthusiastic promotion in Protestant theology for this species of inquiry into the belief in God that saturates pre-reformation theology? Plantinga observes that there is a legion of theologians[18] who take belief in God to be basic, thus in no need of argument whatsoever.

At this point I must discuss an example of theistic belief as a basic belief (in the descriptive sense of basicality as discussed above), that Plantinga makes use of in his work, in order to become clear on what he means by it, and how it differs from the classical foundationalist's formulation of the concept. Out of the references he uses there is one that strikes me as particularly strong for our present purposes. In it we get the sense of why belief in God ought not be attained nor sustained by natural theology and what kind of thing theistic belief, therefore, is. He quotes the following by the nineteenth-century Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck:

> We receive the impression that belief in the existence of God is based entirely upon these proofs. But indeed that would be "a wretched faith, which, before it evokes God, must first prove his existence." The contrary, however, is the truth. There is not a single object the existence of which we hesitate to accept until definite proofs are furnished. Of the existence of self, of the world round about us, of logical and moral laws, etc., we are so deeply convinced because of the indelible impressions which all these things make upon our consciousness that we need no arguments or demonstration. Spontaneously, altogether involuntarily: without any constraint or coercion, we accept that existence. Now the same is true in regard to the existence of God. The so-called proofs are by no means the final grounds of our most certain conviction that God exists. This certainty is established only by faith; that is, by the spontaneous testimony which forces itself upon us from every side.[19]

There is quite a lot to cull from this passage; for the sake of brevity I will strike at what I consider the heart of the matter. It is clear that the most important position being asserted in the above is that the belief in God, like belief in the self or the world around us, is in no need of argument. Thus, we ought to recognize that belief in God is experienced as, and characteristically, basic. Therefore, we do not have to accept the foundationalist characterization of religious belief in as

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[18] "A legion of theologians" perhaps is a bit excessive, however, I wish to express and recognize the utter power and influence of the formidable thinkers, and not the number of them, that Plantinga recruits as examples of those who take belief in God to be basic. Those whom he mentions, and discusses in most of his work, are Herman Bavinck, Karl Barth, Abraham Kuyper, and most notably, John Calvin.

[19] Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. William Hendricksen, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1951), pp. 78-79.

much as they assume that it awaits, and needs, argument to be held. What is certainly connected to this, is the question of *how* it can be argued that it is a rationally self-justified belief. Plantinga finds Bavinck to be saying that argument is not needed here *for* rational justification of belief in God. The believer is "...entirely within his epistemic rights... "[20] to hold this belief as basic. This second point will show how reformed epistemology claims the basicality of belief in God to be rational.

It seems apparent that what Bavinck means by "argument", in his statement that belief in God does not need argument, is the kind offered by natural theology in the style of Aquinas, et al. But, why not? and *need* it for what? "...Arguments and proofs are not, in general", claims Plantinga "the source of the believer's confidence in God."[21] He goes on to claim that the believer does not affirm that God has created all the world *on the basis* of argument. If argument is not the source of belief in God then what is? There are many passages in the Bible that urge the believer to see the existence of God, for different reasons, in the natural world.[22] In religious or devotional literature there are monumental volumes containing detailed descriptions of this kind of belief. Its character is such that when the believer gazes slack-faced into the mysteriously exacting intricacies of a flower's petal he does not recount acceptable arguments of its genesis, and *therefore* reaches and accepts the conclusion that there is a God that makes such things. The believer sees the power, glory, goodness and wonder of God within it, surrounding it, and illuminating it. The existence of God is the point of origin from which this believer *sees* the flower's petal. In this case we do see a belief in God that seemingly can be described as a basic belief. The existence of God is a basis for seeing the natural world.

Another rich quotation from Bavinck that Plantinga focuses on is the following:

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[20]Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p.71.
[21] Ibid., p. 64.
[22]A few examples can be found in the following passages: Genesis 1:29-30, 27:28; Exodus 8:22, 9:14, 19:5; Numbers 14:21; Deuteronomy 4:39; 2 Kings 19:15; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalms 24:1, 33:5; Mathew 16:19, 28:18; Luke 21:26; Acts 2:19; 1 Corinthians 10:26. Also, the apocryphal Gnostic gospel of Thomas is well known as being particularly forceful in expressing the view that, not only can God be seen working in (and effecting) nature, but nature is metaphysically imbued with Divine presence.

> Scripture urges us to behold heaven and earth, birds and ants, flowers and lilies, in order that we may see and recognize God in them. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these." Is. 40:26. Scripture does not reason in the abstract. It does not make God the conclusion of a syllogism, leaving it to us whether we think the argument holds or not. But it speaks with authority. Both theologically and religiously it proceeds from God as the starting point.[23]

This is a very crucial statement in support of Plantinga's case that religious belief ought to be seen as basic and not based upon other propositions. Also, we can see within it, that it does lend itself to a neo-foundationalist reading. This is because Bavinck holds that God is to be believed as basic (so, not based on argument), therefore, and most importantly, that basic belief is the starting point of the Christian's system of belief. Plantinga reads this quote as speaking directly to the need for Christians to view their belief in the existence of God as their *foundation* for their Christian view of reality. This basic proposition can then be affirmed as resting in the foundations of a Christian's belief system. Plantinga obviously and enthusiastically embraces this idea in writing:

> ...scripture "proceeds from God as the starting point," and so should the believer. There is nothing by way of proofs or arguments for God's existence in the Bible; that is simply presupposed. The same should be true of the Christian believer then; he should *start* from belief in God rather than from the premises of some argument whose conclusion is that God exists.[24]

In order to be very clear on how belief in God can be held as basic we must consider the work of another reformist theologian that Plantinga et al., claim expresses such a belief in God. That theologian is John Calvin. The central aspect of Calvin's thought, which Plantinga finds to have epistemological import, involves his use of the concept of the *sensus divinitatis*. This concept is one that describes a pre-reflexive belief in God. As its name indicates, it is to have a sense of the Divine. The way that Calvin describes it, we can recognize that it is in agreement with belief in God as basic and not based on argument. In Calvin's *Institutes of The Christian Religion* he claims that the *sensus divinitatis* can be activated in certain conditions. One such condition is environmental, as in observing the beauty of the natural world. Plantinga refers to the passages in Calvin's text that indicate that one can apprehend the existence of God within this condition, and concludes that one is within his or her epistemic rights in

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[23]Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. William Hendricksen, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1951), pp. 78-79.
[24]Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationalty* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 65.

doing so. He claims that if we believe that "God created all of that beauty" it is not because we have affirmed the logicality of the propositions regarding it. Thus, Plantinga finds support in Calvin when he claims that we can apprehend this belief in God without any argument whatsoever. Belief in God is not apprehended by argument, but continuously reaffirmed by the enactment of the *sensus divinitatis*.

However, none of this is meant to diminish the role and power of argument or logical persuasion. We must still see that reasoning is central in arguing for and against certain beliefs in theological reflection. Even though it is not the starting point of faith, it provides clarity and sense to beliefs based upon these experiences of God that Plantinga discusses. For instance, Calvin's *Institutes* is not a logical starting point for faith. We do not consult Calvin's work *in order to* have proof that the Christian faith reflects a viable view of reality. Nonetheless, the *Institutes* clarifies and makes sense of experiencing God as basic for those who readily identify with the knowledge of God as being bound to concepts akin to the *sensus divinitatis*. Reasoning, then, is indispensable for clarification within a belief system, but it comes after the affirmation of a particular view of reality.

In the first sentence of the first chapter of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* we read:

> Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.[25]

Partly then, sound wisdom is based upon knowing God. So, Calvin illuminates in the *Institutes* what is reasonable if one possesses this basic starting point of human wisdom. He endeavors to clarify by reasoning what results from possessing this basic belief. Notions about the Divine, sanctity, morality, the after life, vocation, and so on, will come after and reveal a clear view of what it means to be a Christian.

What is important, in order to explicate Plantinga's use of Calvin, is that we further investigate the character of the *sensus divinitatis*. Calvin strictly couples the knowledge of God with the knowledge of ourselves. He writes:

> No one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he "lives and moves" [Acts 17:28]. For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves;

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[25]John Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), p. 35.

indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.[26]

I think it is reasonably clear that these sentiments are in perfect agreement with his concept of the *sensus divinitatis*. I believe Calvin can be paraphrased here as saying that if one reflects upon God, one reflects upon the foundation of one's being, oneself, and vice versa. For Calvin, then, the knowledge of God is implanted in all humans; it is a part of our very make-up.

It is in great measure insubstantial for one to ask me if I philosophically find this to be a plausible belief, even though many philosophers throughout history have considered it to be the most essential question. The belief that all humans have an intuitive knowledge of God, as we will see, *can* be viewed as basic, as it is by the reformed philosophers. It can be held for a person as the ground from which all other beliefs about the world emanate. The classical foundationalist would call for argumentative proofs for this belief, and thus the justifiability of holding it logically. However, we have seen that there is no need for the logical proofs of beliefs such as this one. A person may not hold this belief; they may see nothing in it whatsoever. This is an issue, however, of what the reformists would call a noetic structure, simply, a context of belief. It has an absolutely substantial place within the noetic structure of Calvinist Christianity, but we cannot say that it has any place at all in the noetic structure of the Korean Shaman. All that I can say philosophically is that I can see how this Calvinist belief can be considered basic by the reformed epistemologists regardless of whether I am willing to endorse it myself. It coheres with the logic of "basicality". The nature of these remarks will become much clearer later when we consider how the reformists provide a plurality of beliefs within their reflections, which I will maintain in the third chapter even though I reject reformed epistemology. For now, we must continue to describe this Calvinist concept in greater detail.

In the third chapter of the *Institutes* we read a more direct description of the characterization of the *sensus divinitatis*:

> There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of Divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his Divine majesty.[27]

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[26]Ibid.
[27]Ibid., p. 43.

By the language above, that the belief in God is a "natural instinct" and "implanted", we get the direct sense that for Calvin theistic belief is basic and part of our being. It is not to be received or accepted externally by argument. Indeed, if the belief in God is implanted by Him, I know of no other truly basic belief! Belief in God - by this example - via an affirmation of the *sensus divinitatis*, may be among one's foundational beliefs; therefore it is not to be held on the basis of any other belief, nor affirmed by an acceptance of any argument for it.

The concept of the *sensus divinitatis*, therefore, is an implanted and intuitive awareness of a transcendent being, presence, the creator of the universe, or the source of reality. It is an experience which recognizes, or recalls to the mind, the background to which all believers view reality. That background, as that which created and sustains the universe, is God. Within theology and inspirational religious literature this can be viewed as the most normal of all forms of Divine recognition. Vivacious traditions of communal life have centered around such principles as the *sensus divinitatis* as the life-source of the deepest Christian existence. The Christian monastic traditions of the west are informed by, and founded on, writings (concerning this form of Divine recognition) by St. John of the Cross, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Teresa of Avila, or St. Benedict. In their writings we are offered teachings concerned with how to be in a perpetual state of prayer by seeing all of life's manifestations as contingent upon the will of God. In a general sense, prayer is to simply turn one's thoughts to God, or to be "mindful" of the Divine. The *sensus divinitatis* is one such, shall we say, existential conception of being mindful of God as the ground of one's being. In monastic communities there is the expressed desire to see God in all things, actions, thoughts, ambitions and so on: that is, to constantly recognize God as the foundation of one's existence. My example of seeing the glory and power of God in a flower's petal is clearly at home in this form of community. In the same manner the eastern Christian monastic communities, which were partly founded on the writings of St. John Chrysostom, St. Maximos the Confessor, St. Thalassios the Libyan, St. John the Presbyter, and St. John of Damaskos, have for centuries used *The Philokalia*[28] as the life source of

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[28]*The Philokalia* is a compilation, or anthology, of writings by Eastern Christian monastic ("desert") Fathers that have been collected from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries. All of the texts are concerned with the contemplative spiritual path of the Hesychast which centers on the "prayer of the

communal existence. In *The Philokalia* we read the teachings of the "prayer of the heart", or the "prayer of Jesus", which is a mystical practice to invoke the Divine, in part, by contemplating the name of Jesus. About the role of this form of prayer in monastic life, the Cistercian (Trappist) monk Thomas Merton writes:

> The practice of keeping the name of Jesus ever present *in the ground* of one's being was, for the ancient monks, the secret of the "control of thoughts" and of victory over temptation. It accompanied all other activities of the monastic life imbuing them with prayer.[29]

In seeing that this form of monastic life is centered around viewing reality from the ground or foundation of one's existence we recognize the wide currency and acceptance of such principles as the *sensus divinitatis*. In any study of monastic life this concept of a perpetual state of prayer, which I am linking in similarity to what Calvin calls the *sensus divinitatis*, will be presented. Even though this is perfectly sensible and intelligible for religious devotees, what can we say about Calvin's universalistic proclamation that *all humans* have knowledge of God implanted in them? If we asked the atheist on the street if she has an intuitive knowledge of God, I could anticipate the response being along the lines of, "Of course not! There is no God to know!" Calvin interprets this response as the atheist being in the grips of sin, thus rejecting this knowledge. With the quote by Merton above, we read that keeping the name of Jesus in the ground of one's being is a way to avert sinful temptation. A classical and non-controversial formulation can be that it is impossible to be sinful and serve God simultaneously: you cannot serve two masters, as the traditional aphorism has it. The Christian experience, by and large, can be seen as a personal struggle between denying the sin of the world and serving God, and being tempted by the sin of the world and denying God. Calvin, therefore, seems to suggest that through the *sensus divinitatis* we recognize this sinful aspect of ourselves and thus the perverse tendencies of the human mind to deny God and the implanted knowledge of him. Derek S. Jeffreys shows that Plantinga holds, by reference to the Calvinist view, that without sin we would

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heart", or "the Jesus prayer". Particularly, the prayer of the heart of Hesychia involves a meditative recitation of the prayer, "Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me" (or a similar formulation to the same effect), while keeping the knowledge of God in the ground of one's being and contemplating Christ's passion, death and resurrection. See St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth (comps) *The Philokalia* (4 vols., Faber and Faber, London, 1983).

[29]Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (Image, Bantam Doubleday, New York, 1996), p. 22. My emphasis.

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believe in God with the "...same natural spontaneity that we believe in the existence of other persons, an external world, or the past."[30]   Therefore, the atheist, for Calvinists is aligned with sinfulness (meaning generally, ignoring, forgetting and not serving God), and does not have access to this natural spontaneity. Or, to be more precise, at least she does not recognize the potential access to it. Perhaps what this suggests is that in the absence of sin fundamental truths would be believed in without any doubt. Generally, it seems that doubting is a hallmark of sin. It traditionally is conceived as that which keeps us second guessing our beliefs.

But we cannot see this as a dogmatic philosophical assertion. This is the Calvinist view of people who do not believe in and serve God. For Calvin, those who are Christians are so, in part, because they hate sinfulness and all that is bound up with it, i. e. forgetting God, fulfilling one's will and ignoring God's, indulging in selfish desires and worldly pleasures, and so on. Perhaps it helps, at risk of an exaggerated analogy, to see this Calvinist view in terms of a conceptual tribalism. Generally the people of a tribe affirm their beliefs and revere their practices. They do not accept the beliefs and practices of those outside of their own tribe, e. g. meanings expressed by other tribes often contradict or offend their own sense of meaningfulness. So, that which is unacceptable and detestable (because it represents an offence to that tribes sense of meaningfulness) becomes characteristic of those outside of the tribe. For Calvin, to be sinful, in a broad sense, is not to live in accordance to God's will. It seems obvious enough that a person who does not believe in God does not live in accordance to His will. So, all people who live outside of God's will are living in relation to sin. The non-believer perhaps could be said to be in a state akin to moral blindness. I am not saying that for Calvin non-believers are blind to morality. Of course, one can be an atheist and possess a scrupulous code of moral conduct. The non-believer does not see what the believer sees, and no amount of showing or instruction can make him see it; the subject must testify to God in *his* soul in order to overcome sin, for Calvin.

We must be rigorous in making the distinction between what Calvin professes by his testimony of faith, and what Plantinga is asserting philosophically. We must recognize that Plantinga is using Calvin's notion of the *sensus divinitatis* as an example of how to have a basic belief in God. I make this point because

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[30]Derek S. Jeffreys, "How Reformed is Reformed Epistemology? Alvin Plantinga and

Plantinga's quote above could be seen as something other than illustrative of an expressed philosophical position: a philosophical position being a disinterested conclusion that is not bound to any community of ideas. If we take Plantinga as saying exactly what Calvin does - that all human beings know that God exists, it is just that those who are immersed in sin stifle that awareness - we could sum up his enterprise by proclaiming reformed Christianity as the one true rationally justified religion. But, that is absolutely *not* what can be drawn from Plantinga's work. The reformed epistemologist's view of rational belief accepts a vast plurality of noetic structures, ranging from those of the theist's to the atheist's. Whereas the distinction between atheist and theist for Calvin is an issue of sinfulness, we will see for Plantinga that the distinction is concerning how the atheist and the theist hold basic beliefs in the foundations of their noetic structure. In the quote above Plantinga, I think, wants to show within the work of Calvin that belief in God is as basic as other foundational beliefs like the existence of other people, the past, or the external world. The *sensus divinitatis* recalls basicality to the mind which is grounded in experience. It just happens that sinfulness for Calvin distorts or disrupts the experience of realizing Divine providence. So, without sin in Calvin's work we would recognize a whole host of other properly basic beliefs also. I think that Plantinga ought not be thought of as making a claim about sinfulness here. His interests are focused on the rational structure of belief. It may be, however, that personally Plantinga finds religious inspiration and illumination of the truth in every word that Calvin has ever uttered or has written down. Actually, his personal acceptance of reformist Christianity is a widely known and documented fact. But that must not be confused with (nor detract from) the epistemological position he endeavors to clarify by using Calvin as paradigmatic of one who holds a rationally basic religious belief. We ought not be confused in thinking that Plantinga asserts any rational argument about what sin, Divine providence, the resurrection and the rest of it, amount to for all humans. Thus, I think that it is helpful to resist this line of argument by always keeping in mind that Plantinga's philosophical interests are structural or logical and not inspirational or, it could even be said, religious.

Regarding the above, while focusing on Plantinga's philosophical interests,

Derek S. Jeffreys writes that he presents:

> ...John Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* as an epistemic module akin to those like sense perception, a priori knowledge, induction, testimony and other epistemic modules. Plantinga defines the *sensus divinitatis* as a "many sided disposition to accept belief in God (or propositions that immediately and obviously entail the existence of God) in a variety of circumstances." Like other epistemic modules it produces beliefs in an appropriate cognitive environment, aims at the production of true beliefs, and generates beliefs which have a high statistical probability of being true.[31]

With this quote we can concur with Jeffereys that Plantinga intends to accept Calvin's thoughts here as having serious epistemological import. Cautiously however, it must be noted that I think Plantinga would object to what is put forward at the end of the last sentence. I cannot see Plantinga affirming any religious belief (especially in terms of basic one's) in terms of generating a "high statistical probability of being true". In fact, I think that that is not true when considering Plantinga's work and interests. However, the rest of the quotation seems to be correct. The experience of the *sensus divinitatis*, from what Calvin expresses about it, can readily be seen as a "disposition to accept belief in God" in an epistemologically basic way. I think that Jeffereys is right in saying that Plantinga does submit Calvin's notion of the *sensus divinitatis* as an epistemic module as one which is like those that other foundationalists have focused upon that yield rational belief. This can also show that Plantinga is not merely a Christian philosopher who labors to make his beliefs acceptable within his profession and the increasingly anti-religious, cynical western academic world. I think that he has really shown an important likeness of the *sensus divinitatis* and the remarks about belief in God by Bavinck (as just two of his many examples), to be relevant to serious epistemological investigations.

For Plantinga belief in God can go in two directions. There is the path of classical foundationalism, which when coupled with theology yields something akin to natural theology; thus a demand for argument and proof for God's existence. This means that before a person has any wisp of religious fervor he must construct and accept a cogent argument, inductive or deductive, for the existence of God. The second path to the rationality of belief in God is to recognize in experience that that belief is basic; it is in no need of argument or proof, because

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[31]Ibid., p. 419.

it is in the foundation of one's belief system. Given that reformed epistemology clearly aims to travel down this second path, it is time to consider how Plantinga et al. plan to argue for the rationality of this kind of religious belief.

When Plantinga focuses on the circumstance and environment which enact a basic belief in God he means to suggest that the proposition evoked will not typically be the simple belief that "God exists". He mentions[32] that one may be reading the Bible and have a sense that God is speaking to him; after committing a wicked deed in the sight of God, one may feel compunction, be contrite in asking for forgiveness, and form the belief that God has granted him forgiveness; or in times of sweetness a person may praise God for his condition of contentment and have the belief that God is to be thanked and praised. Given these conditions that enact beliefs in God, says Plantinga, we see that none of them are the simple and generalized belief that God exists. Instead we have beliefs like God is speaking to me, God forgives me, and God is to be thanked and praised. Plantinga then writes:

> These propositions are properly basic in the right circumstances. But it is quite consistent with this to suppose that the proposition *there is such a person as God* is neither properly basic nor taken as basic by those who believe in God... From this point of view it is not wholly accurate to say that it is belief in God that is properly basic...[33]

Even though Plantinga makes this point about rigorously determining what are properly held basic beliefs, he nevertheless says that it is alright, speaking laxly, to claim that "God exists" is properly basic. He writes, "...perhaps there is thus no harm in speaking of [God exists]...as properly basic, even though so to speak is to speak a bit loosely. "[34]

On this issue of what it is exactly that comprises a basic religious belief, I will argue that in making a claim of rationality we ought not be permitted to speak loosely in this way. I will merely point out now that when we speak of "God is to be thanked and praised" our investigation into its rationality is strictly confined to the very particular moment and circumstance from which this belief is recalled to the mind. Therefore, a general sense of the rationality of a Christian form of being (outside of any particular experience of holding a basic belief) becomes quite

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[32]Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), pp. 80-81. Plantinga's emphasis.
[33]Ibid., p. 81.
[34]Ibid., p. 82.

obscure, and in certain ways, difficult for the reformist to capture. Also, intuitively, it seems right to say that that kind of belief is not strictly basic because one must believe that a God exists before one can be moved to offer him praise. If God does not exist there is no object of praise. "God exists" must be primary, in some way, to such qualitative propositions. We will see in the next chapter why the reformists speak of basic beliefs in this fashion and why it presents grave difficulties within their view.

B. Epistemic duty and justifying basic religious beliefs

In moving from the reformed rejection of the criterion of basicality of foundational beliefs asserted by classical foundationalism, to their examples of belief in God as a kind of basic belief which is not held *because* of any argument emanating from other basic beliefs, we must now look at their concept of justification of basic religious propositions. As an abrupt beginning, I will offer Plantinga's formulation of a justified basic belief. He writes the following with appearance beliefs in mind in order to offer a more general formulation, and not one that ought to be thought of in terms of religious belief alone.

> Let us say that a belief is justified for a person at a time if (a) he is violating no epistemic duties and is within his epistemic rights in accepting it [e. g., the perception of a tree in this case] and (b) his noetic structure is not defective by virtue of his then accepting it. Then my being appeared to in this characteristic way (together with other circumstances) is what confers on me the right to hold the belief in question; this is what justifies me in accepting it. We could say, if we wish, that this experience is what justifies me in holding it; this is the ground of my justification, and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself.[35]

We must take a close look at what is being expressed by these two principles and raise some serious questions regarding them. What does he mean by "violating epistemic duties"?, as well as one being "within his epistemic rights" in holding a basic belief? We must then ask: how does a noetic structure become "defective" by "violating epistemic duties" and holding a belief which is not within one's "epistemic rights" to hold?

When reading the texts of reformed epistemology I see that there is not, to my knowledge, a profound degree of rigor exerted to exhaust these questions. But,

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[35]Ibid., p. 79.

given their sustained critique of strict criteria of basicality asserted by classical foundationalism, this may not be a great deficiency. My feeling, when I read the passages by reformed epistemologists that involve discussions about holding basic beliefs, is that they always develop into explications regarding the violation of epistemic duties, or rights. Often, I read allusions to an ethics of belief. However, they do not push this too far by developing a system of "belief ethics", if there ever could be a justifiable formulation of such a thing.[36] Nonetheless, Alvin Plantinga, as I understand his work, sees the very concept of justification, as it has been handed down by the tradition and modified along the way by seminal epistemological figures, to be a deontological one. This means that there is an ethical parallel to be drawn from properly holding justified beliefs. He writes that "...we could call [justification] to remind ourselves of the reference to duty and obligation, *deontological* epistemic justification."[37] To support his claim of the centrality of a deontological conception of justification in traditional epistemology, he writes, "For Descartes and Locke... deontological notions enter [justification] in a way that is explicit *in excelsis*"[38] Furthermore, Plantinga holds that a deontological sense of justification can be found in more implicit ways within the work of many others.[39] He particularly recognizes that it plays an essential role in internalist theories. He writes, "Cut off the deontology, and the internalism looks like an arbitrary appendage."[40] This is not an idiosyncratic characteristic of reformed epistemology, and I do not think that Plantinga displays any kind of radical perspective by suggesting that epistemology is interwoven with deontological

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[36]There have been a few attempts, nevertheless, at formulating an ethics of belief. So, I do not intend, by any means, to give the impression here that this enterprise is completely inane. In fact, it plays a role in Roderick Chisholm's *Theory of Knowledge* (2nd ed., Prentice Hall, Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1977); as well as his *Perceiving* (Cornell University Press, Ithica, New York, 1957). Also, there have been some epistemologists who have constructed theories which promote the maximization of epistemic values. For example see Isaac Levi's *Gambling With Truth: An Essay on Induction and the Aims of Science* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1967); and Alvin Goldman's "The Internalist Conception of Justification", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 5, 1981, pp. 27-52.

[37]Alvin Plantinga, "Justification in the 20th Century", in Ernest Sosa (ed) *Justification and Knowledge*, Vol. 2 of 2 Vols, (Dartmouth Publishing Company, Brookfield, VT, 1994), p. 751. Plantinga's emphasis.

[38]Ibid., p. 750.

[39]See the entirety of Plantinga's paper referenced in note 37. In this paper he traces and makes explicit the dependence that the tradition has upon a deontological conception of justification which is central, as he sees it, to understand classical internalism and the justified true belief conception of knowledge.

[40]Alvin Plantinga, "Justification in the 20th Century", in Ernest Sosa (ed) *Justification and Knowledge*, Vol. 2 of 2 Vols., (Dartmouth Publishing Company, Brookfield, VT, 1994), p. 768.

ndions. All epistemology is seemingly founded upon some kind of underlying intellectual ethic, or virtue. We saw this come to the fore in the last chapter by considering the presuppositions of traditional epistemology which state that one must trust oneself to not fall into *needless* error, to *improve* one's system of beliefs, and so on. At the base of traditional epistemology there is the presupposition that humans are rational by nature. Therefore, it is the apparent *duty* of the epistemologist to help humanity get their beliefs right, or to be intellectually secure in the rationality of their beliefs. In this respect one thinks of Spinoza's *De Intellectu Emendatione*[41] on the improvement of understanding, as well as Descartes' *Regulæ ad Directionem Ingenii*[42] or "Rules for the Direction of the Mind".

I gather that epistemologists of any persuasion would claim that, as rational beings, we have a duty to avoid irrational beliefs and not to fall into needless epistemic error. What else has been the motivation for epistemological inquiry? I doubt that it is like becoming adept at a technique, in the sense that one hopes to hone a personal skill in the same manner one may pursue a hobby which is congruent with one's personal tastes. It is considered important, and by some crucial; and those who work within the field labor with their thoughts in order to discover what is right and wrong about justifying belief for all. It depends on how that epistemic motivation is interpreted, however. The classical foundationalist claims that only particular kinds of belief can be properly basic. Thus, we have a duty to acquire a belief system with such beliefs in its foundations. The reformist has a much looser conception of what can be a basic belief, thus a much looser conception of epistemic duty with respect to believing.

For the reformists one has a duty to believe X in accordance to one's environmental circumstances, thus the claim of rationality itself hinges upon the fulfilment of these duties. This circumstantial rationality is evidently a part of the forms of belief that we saw expressed by Calvin and Bavinck above. They claimed that the basicality of belief in God is part of a circumstance and environment where that kind of belief is enacted. Where the classical foundationalist submits a criterion of basic beliefs to be equally relevant in all circumstances, the reformists

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[41]In Benedict Spinoza's "Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione" (1701) collected in *The Chief Works of Spinoza*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes, 2 vols., New York, 1955-1956.
[42]In René Descartes' "Regulæ ad directionem Ingenii" (1628) collected in C. Adam and P. Tannery (eds) *Œuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., Paris, 1964-1976.

claim that a rational basic belief is one that is held because of, or concomitant with, certain circumstances. "Certain circumstances" partly amounts to, as I understand it, occasions or events in a person's life which call on him to believe a proposition which is congruent with his noetic structure. If there are any constraints on what can be a basic belief for the reformist it involves the circumstances or context the believer is in which determines what can or cannot be believed. This also holds for empirical beliefs, like those stemming from sensory experience, for instance. Quite obviously, if one were swimming under water there is no room to procure a belief stemming from the sense of smell. Thus, there are epistemic duties that come with this environment which naturally regulate which beliefs are rational to hold and which are not.

For an example of a religious belief we can consider the lack of fulfilling one's epistemic duty as a Christian in holding that one ought not care for those in need, which we discussed earlier. The Christian noetic structure, by and large, has no room for such a belief. In a community of believers, as they inform themselves about their belief by reading the scriptures (that is, to love one's neighbor, cloth the naked, feed the hungry and so on), to not care for those in need would be an act in violation of Christian duty. Acting on that belief would not be epistemically permissible. Simply, it is epistemologically relevant to say, as a Christian you *can't* believe that. In this sense, if one were to believe a proposition that confused their system of beliefs, and everyone else's within that system, it would be irrational, thus, impermissible. Furthermore, I imagine that this would occur if one held proposition P and found their whole community to be utterly confused as to how or why this member of their community believes that proposition, i.e. the surrounding community sees proposition P as not making sense against the background of their belief system. By the internal logic of their own noetic structure, proposition P is not permitted. It seems that the principle issue concerning the permissibility of a belief involves this idea of the sense and intelligibility of it being held within a noetic structure. An impermissible belief for the Muslim, for instance, would be the belief that Allah is not merciful, but vindictive and sadistic. We can easily see how a believer would confuse Islam by holding this belief. The entire Muslim community surrounding this believer is imbued with the concept that Allah is to be praised *because* he is a merciful God.

There are no circumstances for the Muslim to hold the belief that He is not merciful. For the Muslim community one cannot believe that Allah is sadistic and cruel, and still take part in their daily prayers which involves worshipping him because he is merciful. The concepts of mercy and cruelty, in as much as they are involved in identifying the character of God, are mutually exclusive.

The rational person carries out the logical consequences of his beliefs; he does the right thing with respect to the context of his belief. A rational person then is one who obeys the duties of his belief system, and therefore, can be seen to have consistency and permissibility with regard to his beliefs. If a member of a Catholic community were attending a funeral and affirmed the proposition that death is a sleep of infinite duration, people would be rightly confused at that belief. There is no environment or circumstance that would demand a Catholic to believe such a thing in order to fulfil his epistemic duties with respect to the Catholic noetic structure. I can imagine people saying that he is wrong, or at least that he has an immensely shallow belief about death. For the reformist this is not because the essence of death is known and he is mistaken about a fact, or he does not comprehend the logical entailment of a deductive or inductive argument for it. The community would call him wrong because his concept of death is completely logically unconnected to any other concepts within Catholicism, e.g. praying for the soul of the dead to enter heaven and be spared from a long stay in purgatory. Within this problematic belief in death we can see that he has not obeyed the duties or responsibilities of his Christian beliefs as a member of that community. His Christian belief system is defective with that belief of death among it. That belief of death confuses his Christianity and makes it problematic by conceptual opposition within the belief system. For instance, there is no distinction between what sleep ordinarily is, and what he means by death as eternal sleep. When he sleeps at night does he believe that that is exactly what death is? This confused conception of death takes the finality of perishing away along with what the finality of existing may entail for a Christian. But, to judge him as holding a wrong belief is made from the view that he has disobeyed the duties and responsibilities with respect to his beliefs, (particularly that he had ignored the "Parting this earth to join the father in heaven" sense that death has in Christianity), thus his belief is defective. In this way it can be viewed as a defect of the beliefs he has about his

Christian experience within his particular communal environment.

C. The accusation of irrationality

A fundamental question about accounting for rational belief, which can be anticipated by the classical foundationalist regarding the whole enterprise of reformed epistemology, is: if they dismiss a restrictive criterion of rationality for basic propositions why, then, cannot any proposition be held as foundational in a noetic structure? Plantinga writes:

> Suppose I believe that if I flap my arms with sufficient vigor, I can take off and fly about the room; could I defend myself against the charge of irrationality by claiming this belief is basic? If we say that belief in God is properly basic, will we not be committed to holding that just anything, or nearly anything, can properly be taken as basic, thus throwing wide the gates to irrationalism and superstition?[43]

Plantinga et al., clearly wish to cut this criticism off at the roots. This is because, if they cannot argue against the charge that they must accept any proposition as basic, thus forced to let the gate to irrationalism swing widely and let any proposition to be held as basic, then (as insinuated in Plantinga's quote above) their work becomes a source of perverse amusement, and not a statement about what is rational to believe, and what is not. To put it strictly, if they cannot argue against this insinuation then their work can be viewed as merely negative and destructive to the western canonical understanding of rational belief. It would be viewed as negative in the sense that they have torn down classical foundationalism, but cannot put anything constructive in its place, save arguments supporting an "anything goes" or "laissez-faire" epistemology,[44] while not arguing for, nor clarifying, what the logical limits of holding basic beliefs are. Also, by implication, it would be difficult for them to provide examples which show what difference there is between the concepts of rationality and irrationality

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[43]Ibid., p. 74.

[44]This is not an unknown species of legitimate epistemological inquiry for some philosophers, however; in fact, all to the contrary. So, I do not intend to suggest that laissez-faire epistemology is without supporters, and therefore, an *obviously* absurd path to take. Some standard expressions of this view can be found in the following texts: Richard Rorty's, "Deconstruction and Circumvention", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.11, 1-23; *Consequences of Pragmatism* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1982); and *Irony, Contingency, Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989): Jean Baudrillard's, *Oublier Foucault* (Editions Galilée, Paris, 1997): Gianni Vattimo's, *The End Of Modernity*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988): and Stanley Fish's, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

themselves. We would not be able to compile a catalogue of beliefs which could never be rational regardless of contextual circumstances that could issue them. Some may protest that it would not be a philosophy of intellectual guidance to aid one in getting their beliefs right. It would be a promotion for humanity to believe what they wish, because one could always find justification for his beliefs by appeal to some circumstantial experience. This would also show the enterprise of philosophy to be, in one sense, impotent. *Any* assertion, that one could think of, can be regarded as rational as the next. Plantinga, therefore, wants to argue that certainly not all propositions can be held in the foundations of a noetic structure. He claims that:

> According to the reformed epistemologist certain beliefs are properly basic in certain circumstances; those same beliefs may *not* be properly basic in other circumstances.[45]

He further exemplifies this by saying that if one sees a tree it is properly basic in certain circumstances which are hard to describe in detail, but it involves being appeared to in a characteristic way. However, that same belief is not taken as properly basic in circumstances including, "...say, my knowledge that I am sitting in the living room listening to music with my eyes closed."[46] So, circumstance and environment are crucial for the acceptance of a properly basic belief to be held in the foundations of a noetic structure. When one is in a particular environment there is a connection between what one is experiencing and what one thinks about it. To take Plantinga's example, if he knows that he is sitting in his living room listening to music with his eyes closed, the conditions to which seeing a tree is properly basic, are non-existent. In those circumstances, that there is a tree in front of him, is not basic. What he knows in this example is determined by a circumstance that has no room for appearance beliefs. For him, the domain of possible propositions of knowledge are constrained in conjunction with the conditions of listening to music with his eyes closed.

These remarks do not thoroughly cut the criticism off at the roots. He is right in saying above that when one is listening to music with his eyes closed there

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[45]Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 74. Plantinga's emphasis.
[46]Ibid.

is no place for an appearance belief to be basic. This is unmistakably correct. However, another, and most crucial part of the critical question that the reformists face is if there is a belief that could never be held rationally in *any* environmental circumstance. The reformists rightly suggest that a basic belief is contingent upon the environment of a noetic structure, but we can say that *any* proposition could be claimed as rational by appeal to the appropriate circumstances and accompanying noetic structure in which it is used. Plantinga has written about what he calls "the Great Pumpkin objection"[47]. By the title he makes reference to the odd basic belief that the Great Pumpkin visits on Halloween. Throughout his discussion he focuses on how a belief could be considered basic in some circumstances while not in others. This is like I just discussed; walking in a wooded area is obviously conducive to evoking the basic belief that one sees a tree, whereas this basic belief is not possible (there are no commensurable circumstances for it) when listening to music with one's eyes closed. But, nonetheless, one could still logically justify the belief in the Great Pumpkin by imagining and describing the correct circumstances in which it could possibly be believed basically. Can't we imagine some person strolling through a pumpkin patch at midnight on Halloween and believing that the Great Pumpkin visits on such occasions? Wouldn't that comprise proper circumstances for holding such a belief? Isn't this akin to the Christian who performs a wicked deed, feels remorse and is contrite in asking God for forgiveness, then believes that God has granted him that forgiveness?

The prime question facing the reformists, then, is not about how one proposition could be basic in some circumstances while not in others, but whether there is a kind of belief that could never be basic in any circumstance? We find out that Plantinga et al., cannot completely stave off this objection from within their work. We will see that there are perhaps some basic beliefs (in the sense accustomed to Malcolm's discussion on the matter which we saw in the last chapter) that all people agree upon regardless of circumstantial events. I do not mean to suggest that these beliefs have necessary and sufficient conditions, but they are a part of a person's noetic structure, context of belief, regardless of what the content of the propositions comprising the noetic structure, context of belief, may be. I will address this issue in great detail in the next chapter, and argue that there are certain

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[47]Ibid., pp. 74-78.

beliefs that seemingly all people have that become confused when certain religious beliefs contradict them.

For now let's continue with citations from the work of Plantinga to see how he tries to deal with this objection. Plantinga protests that just because reformed epistemologists reject the problem of the criterion of basicality and embrace a *de facto* concept of foundational beliefs, they should not be viewed as having to tolerate such irrationalism? He offers the following analogy to consider:

> In the palmy days of positivism the positivists went along confidently wielding their verifiability criterion and declaring meaningless much that was clearly meaningful. Now suppose someone rejected a formulation of that criterion - the one to be found in the second edition of A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic,* for example. Would that mean she was committed to holding that
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> (1) T'was brillig: and the slithy toves did gyre and gymble in the wabe,
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> contrary to appearances, makes good sense? Of course not. But then the same goes for the reformed epistemologist: the fact that he rejects the criterion of proper basicality purveyed by classical foundationalism does not mean that he is committed to supposing just anything is properly basic.[48]

Plantinga, therefore, argues that just because there is no justifiable criterion for rational basic beliefs does not force them to pronounce that the epistemologist must close shop and academically bow-out, then follow in the footsteps of the philologist on the path of obsolete disciplines. Crucial importance is given to environmental conditions or circumstances which govern or regulate the possibility of a basic proposition being held permissibly. According to Plantinga, a formal criterion of basicality need not be in place, and accepted by all, in order for a person to claim that a proposition is foundational for him in *certain circumstances.* Plantinga argues that a person can realize the proper basicality of a proposition in his noetic structure regardless of any formal criterion of basicality that is expected to be referred to. A proposition may be trusted as foundational in as much as it is in accordance with the epistemic claims of that person living within that particular noetic structure. Given the claims of the reformists about epistemic rights and duties in holding basic beliefs, they think that that is the vantage point from which they can argue against a nihilistic, "anything goes", view of knowledge. But, from my view it does not. We can still appeal to such circumstances of a noetic structure

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[48]Ibid., pp. 74-75.

in which we could justify any proposition as basic: their view of the rationality of belief ought to be seen as necessarily bound to that consequential, and considerable, shortcoming.

D. Experience as the grounds for belief

Plantinga, nevertheless, suggests that even though basic beliefs are not justified by a rational criterion of basicality in the style of classical foundationalism, they are not groundless. He claims that having characteristic sorts of experiences of holding basic beliefs provide a crucial role in their acquisition. He uses the example of believing that a person is in pain. We may witness a person doubled-over and moaning, or at least displaying this sort of typical, pain behavior. He claims that that is not the *evidence* of believing that this person is in pain; we do not infer that this person is in pain on the basis of other beliefs, nor do we accept it from other beliefs. He writes:

> ...my perceiving the pain behavior plays a unique role in the formation and justification of that belief; it forms the ground of my justification for the belief in question.[49]

Therefore, the reformed epistemologists find the justification of basic beliefs to be grounded in these experiences. We noted earlier that the *sensus divinitatis* requires a similar kind of experience to be enacted. That basic belief in God is grounded in one's environment and experiences which enact it without any requirement of its rational acceptability by virtue of a criterion of basicality. A rational basic belief for the reformist is then not linked to rational evidence in being related and evaluated by a rational criterion of basicality as it is for the classical foundationalist. Perhaps it can be said to be rationally justified internally to a noetic structure, together with circumstances that give rise to the belief, rather than a logically arguable proof. In the classical foundationalist manner of evaluating rational belief there is very little concern for context, or other propositions that are linked to the basic one. Exclusively, the classical foundationalist interrogates the possible basicality of one proposition while disregarding any contingent circumstances. This is a program of purely logical concern. However, the reformist has the human condition in mind along with the

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[49]Ibid., p. 79.

context of belief, and the cogency of holding particular beliefs in the foundations of a noetic structure. Therefore, there is an important psychological dimension to their claim of rational belief. The mindset, or the understanding that a believer has about her belief in God (by recognizing it in the foundations of her noetic structure) makes all the difference in the world for her to claim that she holds her belief rationally. If a believer understands that her belief - God is to be thanked and praised, for instance - is the root, or the very base of her being, in a circumstance that evokes that belief, she can say it is rational to hold. A believer in this circumstance may look around her and see birds foraging for berries in the trees and think that God is to be thanked and praised because He provides for his creations. She may look at a Mother and daughter talking and laughing, holding onto each other's arm, while shuffling through the market place and think, God is to be thanked and praised because He is present at the center of such moments of joy and contentment that His children share together. In this moment the concept that God is to be thanked and praised reaffirms itself to her from all directions. To be rational she must know that she has no other belief supporting this one. In these experiences, all of the world's meaningfulness originates from that ground level belief for her.

However, imagine that a person believes that God is to be thanked and praised because she *also* believes that *if* she does not thank and praise God, she will spend eternity in hell after death. This proposition is conditional upon another, thus her reasons for her to thank and praise God do not stem from a circumstance where that belief is basic. Her noetic structure is based on the belief that God is to be pleased *or else* one will suffer an eternal and undesirable fate as a consequence. In both examples above the subject must be cognizant of what beliefs rest in the foundations of her noetic structure to be rational about her belief. This cognizance or awareness of what beliefs are truly basic is essential for one to be rational with respect to one's beliefs. If one is not aware of what beliefs are basic in his or her noetic structure, then one does not know what amounts to one's belief system being rational.

E. Communal discourse as the margins of rational belief

Plantinga also makes the point that not everyone may agree with an

example of a basic belief. In fact, he seems to say that how we judge a belief to be basic is often divergent from others. He speaks of a Christian who holds that belief in God is properly basic and rational for him. He writes:

> ...if he does not accept this belief on the basis of other propositions, he will conclude that it is basic for him and quite properly so. Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hare may disagree; but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community, conform to their examples? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to *its* set of examples, not to theirs.[50]

As we noticed earlier, the reformed epistemologists cannot guard against the criticism that any belief can be held foundationally if one can appeal to what may be proper circumstances for evoking it. Reformed epistemology, in mostly focussing on the individual and her circumstances of holding basic beliefs, must be committed to a position which could support a mode of thought that is reminiscent of, or related to, sophistry.[51] An individual could justify any belief merely by coming up with a circumstance in which that belief was evoked. However, perhaps the above remarks point to a saving dimension in the work of Plantinga et al. A community teaches its members about the permissibility of beliefs by the sense of practices, behavior, and rituals. By this communal focus we no longer only consider an individual in isolation, justifying beliefs merely by giving an account of what he takes to be proper circumstances for holding a basic belief. It is an established communal existence which affirms what counts as basic and what does not. The Christian community is responsible for its set of examples of basicality. I take this as meaning that what counts as basic is determined by dialogue internal to a community, which affirms what beliefs are permissible and which ones are not. By this account, it may be argued in defense of reformed epistemology, that nothing can be held as basic if a community does not affirm it.

Have the reformed epistemologists cut this criticism off at the roots now? From my point of view, not entirely. We may think that a move from the

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[50]Ibid., p. 77. Plantinga's emphasis.
[51]To accuse the reformists of sophistry perhaps seems a bit strong. However, I am thinking of the sophist, Aristophanes and his satirical play, *The Clouds*. Partly in this play we are introduced to a man who wishes to be a student of Socrates in order that he may argue his way out of his debts. The debtor is not interested in truth or duty, but seemingly wishes to use a philosophical system to believe and live as he wishes. I see a similar attitude that could possibly be applied to the project of reformed epistemolgy. I have maintained that a person can believe what she wishes, and by reference to any conducive circumstance, she may argue that her belief is rational.

individual to a communal determination of a criterion of basicality helps because we can appeal to norms, canonical beliefs, shared practices and experiences. It is true that in a community there is dialogue about the meaningfulness of "the people". Therefore, anyone with an impermissible belief will be considered wrong and corrected by virtue of standards or mainstream beliefs. But, can't we raise the same objection of a community which we raised about the individual? Can't we imagine a community holding *any* kind of belief as basic? It is true that, with a communal focus, we no longer have a collection of individuals believing rational basic propositions in isolation from others around them, with equal epistemic firmness. But, I am not convinced that we completely escape irrationalism by saying that the criterion of what is a permissible basic belief is determined by a community. Just because we can appeal to norms and standards does not mean that all communities have norms or standards that are not fantastic or irrational.[52]

Antithetically, it is true that some individuals in the past have acted alone in their discoveries or reflections, and in the course of expressing their views they have challenged various norms, standards and canonical beliefs of their historical epoch. Some of these examples reveal that the individuals were correct, and the communities at large were wrong.[53] I particularly have the story of Galileo's astrological work and fight against the Catholic church in mind, concerning the operation of the solar system. If Galileo was in fact irrational (and still considered so) because he did not adhere to the norms and standards of the Catholic community and the Aristotelian professors who surrounded him and his work at the time, we would not have had the *truth* that it is the earth which rotates around the sun, and not vice versa.[54]

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[52]One will find a remarkable catalogue of irrational beliefs held by *communities* throughout the history of western civilization in Charles Mackay's *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1932). The fact that communities can many times be irrational with respect to their beliefs is what makes such texts possible.

[53]It is generally the case that Wittgensteinians make ample appeal to the internal logic of communal discourse in order to make a claim of rational, justified, or permissible belief. This focus challenges restrictive criteria of rationality by traditional philosophers and fulfils their goal of calling attention to the divergent forms of logic that can be described in, and comprising, various forms of discourse. However, because this focus is so dominant I feel that my present point risks not being sufficiently appreciated by philosophers influenced by Wittgenstein.

[54]It ought to be noted that in October 1992 a Papal commission finally acknowledged the Vatican's error in condemning Galileo and his work by linking it to heresy. This is not to say that the Vatican once thought that his work fulfilled her criteria of heresy, and she was wrong about her application of that criteria. The greater acknowledgment involved the admission that the Vatican was simply wrong about the facts concerning the operation of the solar system.

As another example (that a communal criterion of basicality cannot serve, *de facto*, as a justification for rational belief), we can consider a community (called "Heaven's Gate") from southern California. This community believed that a passing comet (in 1997) intended to "pick them up" if they all committed suicide at a particular time when it was visible from earth. They believed that they would be transported to paradise in the comet's fiery tail. There are no remarks by the reformed epistemologists which could classify this belief as fantastic. It is more elaborate than the belief in the Great Pumpkin, nonetheless, we could still see from the reformed view that it could be held as a basic belief. By my view we cannot say that this group knew what they believed. The problem is what this group meant by "paradise", being "transported" in a comet's tail, and how killing themselves would have gotten them to the comet, and so on. Another problem with this belief is that scientists can track the course of a comet, thus they know where they go. They apparently believed that "paradise" spatially exists at the end of the comet's course, thus it can be *scientifically* verified that paradise occupies a particular location in the universe. All of those ambiguities involve unintelligible conceptual grammars. The problem, to some extent, is that a lot of what is involved in this belief system violates what is known about cause and effect. In the next chapter I will explicate this general problem of a religious belief that incorporates conflicting grammars, and offer many examples. Partly, this problem involves a person (seemingly every person) who knows the cause and effect of, for instance, throwing a ball in the air and watching it fall, yet also believing (like the members of this community) that killing oneself would cause one to be transported to a comet's tail. Briefly, I will say here that the latter belief is confused, unintelligible, in light of the causes and effects that we know govern the empirical world. What are the causes and effects that they are appealing to, which would partly justify the beliefs of this community? The cause of a ball falling when we throw it in the air is gravity. But when we consider the cause of a person being transported to a comet's fiery tail after committing suicide we are reduced to shrugging our shoulders. We know what it means for a person to be transported to New York from Paris *via* the Concorde, but that is not and cannot be what this cult meant by being transported. We are dumbfounded by what the concept of transportation amounts to in this case. A logical problem surrounding their belief that paradise spatially exists

somewhere in the cosmos, is not that they are necessarily wrong, as if everybody knows in fact where paradise is and it is not *there*, but another place. The problem concerns the intelligibility of what the concept of paradise could amount to if we are to think of it in the same manner than we think of spatially and temporally bound places like Casablanca, Morocco or Kiev, Ukraine. We must concede, for the same reasons, that no island could be Orgygia,[55] and no wheat field could be Yaru.[56] We strictly cannot make sense of their use of the concept of paradise, nor the role cause and effect had within their beliefs.

Many Christian beliefs seemingly fall into the same category because they use propositions which have confused conceptual grammars. For instance, some may suggest that the belief in the resurrection is similar to the above example. Doesn't that belief appeal to a cause and effect which confusingly mimics the cause and effect which governs empirical bodies? If I say that I know what caused a ball to fall when I threw it in the air - that it was gravity - we must admit that that same logic of knowing empirical laws is confused when we apply it to human beings being resurrected from the dead. We do not know what it means for a person to die, and then later, rising again, like we do the effect of gravity. What the concept of cause and effect amounts to in the belief in the resurrection is indiscernible.

F. The plurality of basic beliefs

At any rate, let's continue with the exegetical issues of reformed epistemology. They hold that accounting for basic beliefs may differ from noetic structure to noetic structure. Because of this point, one important and characteristic aspect of the reformed epistemological project is that it is distinctively pluralistic. Even though they find an immense amount of valid epistemological examples of what they claim is a rational belief system in the work of Christian reformers, their claim of rationality is a universal one, regardless of what kind of belief is being proclaimed. For Plantinga, not all people may agree with an example of a religious basic belief. But all will be able to see, and agree, if it functions foundationally in relation to other propositions within its noetic structure. As we

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[55]Orgygia is the mythical island in the Ionian sea where the sea nymph Calypso lived alone in ancient Greek mythology.
[56]Yaru is the heavenly realm in ancient Egyptian religion which is characterized as a glorious wheat field where the wheat grows 3.7 meters high (12 feet) and one lives for eternity in extraordinary earthly comfort.

have seen, Plantinga holds a rational believer to be one who consistently adheres to and obeys the epistemic duties of his noetic structure. An atheist could see the conceptual foundations of a Christian being the belief in God, even though he or she does not hold the same propositions in the foundation of his or her belief structure. It seems to be an issue of recognizing what logically is the case for another, understanding the logical relationship (consistency) between propositions, even if one does not hold the same concepts to be true.

Seeing the differences in the logicality of belief systems is what makes university departments of comparative religions possible. As an example, we can consider how Gandhi decided in his later life to cease any kind of sexual relationship with his wife for religious reasons. Gandhi, being Hindu, believed that the soul (or *Atman* in Hinduism) is not male nor female. It is impossible in this chapter to give anything like an exhaustive account of Hindu metaphysics. However, it is reasonably clear for practical purposes to say that the *Atman* is equivalent to, and part of, the Divine force of which all life is imbued. All devotees work for a lifetime to disclose the *Atman* in themselves through meditation and self-renunciation. Because it is neither male nor female, sexual relations can be regarded as an act that is not founded upon one's Divinity, thus it was not religious for Gandhi. Sexual relations necessarily involve an identification with maleness or femaleness. For Gandhi it had to cease because one cannot identify with one's maleness while also identifying with one's *Atman*, which has no gender. We can see the logical relationship within Gandhi's noetic structure which led him to believe that it was religiously necessary to cease any sexual relations. We can understand the *reasonableness* of Gandhi's decision to curb his sexuality, even though multitudes would not find that to be reasonable to adopt in their own noetic structures.

I insinuated earlier on that this kind of epistemological attitude tends to be referred to as weak foundationalism, which is differentiated from the strong foundationalism in its more orthodox or classical vein. I mentioned this because the classical foundationalist has very strict criteria of what are basic beliefs and what are not. Therefore, the domain of properly basic beliefs is quite small, and it takes painstaking analysis to accept a belief as basic from their view. However,

with the reformists we get a relented sense of basicality which is not constrained by an inevitably arbitrary criterion of basicality. Their use of basicality is somewhat akin to a common sense notion. To know the basic beliefs in one's noetic structure one need only reflect on those beliefs that one cannot reason beyond. That is generally what we normally think "basicality", or "the foundation", is.

I want to pause for a moment and discuss an objection regarding how reformed epistemology has been characterized thus far. What the above amounts to is that we must accept a plurality of beliefs as basic because one can see the internal consistency of a given noetic structure regardless if one holds that belief as true. One perhaps may object that this generous epistemological tolerance is fine as a consequence of a defeated foundationalism, but what is left is a dramatically feeble notion of rational belief. Thinkers like Karl Marx may be able to see the internal consistency of a Christian's noetic structure, but for him the Christian has been dulled and enslaved by an opiate. To be a Christian, for Marx, is to be far from holding a rational belief. Logical consistency of religious belief, for Marx, does not mean that religious belief is rational. But, we ought to investigate what Marx means by rational. He does not appeal to necessary and sufficient conditions of truth, like the classical foundationalist. In this sense he does not use the concept of rational as that which is concerned with the pure logicality of belief. I think that what is meant here is that the truth of another's belief is not testified to. Marx sees Christianity as immensely shallow, and in certain respects, embodying pernicious attributes that have a negative effect for the human race. When he considers what he takes to be deep issues concerning human existence, against the backdrop and thrust of Christianity, he quickly observes that it does not speak to those problems, but perpetuates them. This Marxian attitude toward religious belief is an expression of conviction about a particular form of life. Marx views rational people as those who believe what he believes. What this involves is a very normal attitude of conviction that is intimately bound up with most transcontextual discourse. Rationality, in this way, can be synonymous with correct, or right. Etymologically, we can see that the word "rational" is connected to "ratiocination" ("right thinking"). Two people who think each other rational, take themselves to be thinking the same way.[57]

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[57] I note that the term "rational" as well as "epistemic virtue" (which follows from being attentive to

G. Religious belief is rational as it is: on epistemological description

Now that we have discussed some fine points about the reformed rejection of classical foundationalism, and how the reformists wish to hold onto the foundationalist picture of knowledge and in what kind of way, I wish to turn to another reformed philosopher and further consider his general view of rationality of belief in God. I will consider some points made by the reformist George Mavrodes in his essay *Jerusalem and Athens Revisited*.[58] In this essay he speaks for reformed epistemology, that belief in God, if held foundationally, can be viewed and described as rational *as it is* by philosophers, thus in no need of logical/philosophical intervention to make it rational. Mavrodes uses the analogy of safe drinking water to illustrate how philosophers generally view the rationality of religious belief. He invites us to consider a group of explorers that come upon water during their journey and ask if it is safe to have a drink. In the case of a pure mountain stream free of toxins, it is safe to drink *just as it stands*. But, what of a lake that contains noxious bacteria? With the knowledge of the bacteria, the explorers would know that they can boil it to *make* it safe. However, it must be recognized that it is unsafe to drink *just as it stands*; it needs a purifying treatment. He also has us consider a lagoon that contains bacteria which cannot be eliminated. Here, the water cannot be *made* safe and no amount of boiling will make it safer. Mavrodes takes note that some philosophers have thought that, vis-à-vis rationality, theistic belief is like the lagoon. That it is irrational and the irrationality of religious belief cannot be remedied. He says that some Christian philosophers have suggested that it is like the lake. In some circumstances theistic belief can be irrational, but it can be *made* to be rational. For instance, one may believe that faith is not based on any reason, it is just a hope or wishful thinking. If one accepted the cosmological

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the rationality of one's beliefs) have two senses to them, one of which Marx follows and the other which Platinga (and most analytic epistemologists) accept. As described by Aristotle, one (the Marxian) sense of "rational" refers to the qualities of wisdom and good judgement which aid in a "correct" *view* of reality. The other (in the Plantigarian sense) refers to qualities conducive to the discovery of truth and the avoidance of error, which is quite a different notion. The first sense of the term means that there is a particular view of reality that is apprehended by the wise person; other views of reality are not wise because they are not in accordance to good judgment. The latter sense refers to logical principles and methodology used in discovering what the conditions of truth are, regardless of what belief may be investigated and affirmed. See "Nichomachean Ethics" in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. M. McKoen (Random House, New York, 1941), Book IV.

[58]In Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief In God* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983).

argument, for example, as making sense of one's hope or wish that God exists, one's belief has been made rational. It was irrational; then, upon accepting the cosmological argument, it became logically grounded. Mavrodes and the reformed philosophers, however, consider religious belief to be like the mountain stream: nothing can be done to *make* it rational because it is rational *just as it stands*.

Mavrodes says that for one to understand reformed epistemology it is best to look at John Calvin. He offers a quote from Calvin regarding rationality and belief in God.

> Since for unbelieving men religion seems to stand by opinion alone, they, in order not to believe anything foolishly or lightly, both wish and demand rational proof that Moses and the prophets spoke divinely. But, I must reply the testimony of the spirit is more excellent than all reason.[59]

In speaking about reformed epistemology, Mavrodes writes:

> Like Calvin they have no intention of providing unbelievers with reasons to believe or, for that matter, of providing believers with reasons to continue their faith.[60]

Thus, Plantinga and Mavrodes see theistic belief to be much like the mountain stream; for believers, belief in God can be viewed to be rational just as it stands. Therefore, they do not offer reasons for a theist to continue in his faith. Also, for the same reason, they do not offer the atheist reasons why she ought to have belief. I think that this can be explicated by the last sentence from the quote above by Calvin: "...the testimony of the spirit is more excellent than all reason." We discussed Plantinga's view above that argument is not the source of confidence in God. Reason cannot deliver such confidence, but it emanates from such beliefs in God that are continuously reaffirmed, for instance, by Calvin's concept of the *sensus divinitatis*. Again, this position is supported by their view of the problem of basicality. Ultimately, the reformed philosophers see that no such criterion of basicality can be a deliverance of reason, it cannot be justified. Because argument for a kind of belief rests upon basic propositions - the thrust of classical foundationalism - to argue for or against the rationality of belief in God or any

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[59]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), p. 79.
[60]George Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 195.

other kind of belief, is folly. This reveals their weak foundationalism. It is weak because they find it problematic to convincingly argue *for* a belief in the absence of a universal criterion of basicality. On the other hand, classical foundationalists argue for and against all species of beliefs given how they stand under the inquisition of their criteria of basicality.

This is not to imply that reformed epistemology is engaged in an exercise of what has recently been branded "negative theology" or "negative epistemology"[61]. By "negative theology" I am referring to a philosophical standpoint which promotes the view that positive statements about what the correct religious system of belief arguably is, is an impossible task. A negative epistemologist would, perhaps, assert that because there are no justified criteria of basicality that enforce arguments for a kind of belief to be rational, we are left to censure the work of philosophers who think otherwise. Therefore, their stake in philosophy is purely one of critique and denunciation, *via negativa*. To support that they are not engaged in this species of philosophy we need only look at what Mavrodes writes about the program of reformed philosophy: "...they hold, for the most part, that the

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[61]The accusation of "negative theology" has, to my mind, recently been a lamentable source of unconstrained denunciation. I want to indicate here the sense that this accusation often takes. It centers around the concern for a growing epistemological nihilism. This nihilism is thought to have been born out of an attack on the possibilities of enlightenment reason, finding that positive argument for universal meaningful truths is doomed to failure. However, critical analysis of what is truly at stake in the arguments of negative theologians or epistemologists (a rigorous engagement with their views) is shamefully a rare occurrence. What "debate" there is often gives voice to a strong philosophical prejudice and invective. I say prejudice because when one is called a "negative theologian", or an "epistemological nihilist" it is done on the level of name-calling, while denouncing the "non-serious" philosophers out of hand. The extreme irony of this situation is that the ones who use these pejorative labels with great abandon often never extend the intellectual courtesy of the requisite diligent engagement with their arguments. As an example, Jacques Derrida is still too often thought of as an epistemological nihilist. But, if anyone took the requisite time that his demanding work calls for by being intellectually rigorous (regardless if that person shares Derrida's views) one would see that his thirty years of philosophical output has been dedicated to arguing against any temptation to turn epistemologically nihilistic. For evidence of this see his "Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion" in *Limited Inc.* (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill.,1990), pp 111-160; "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy", trans. John P. Leavey, *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. VI, No. 2., 1984, pp. 3-37; and "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils", *Diacritics*, Vol. XIX, 1983, pp. 3-20. Some of the few lucid and deeply critical discussions of negative epistemology can be found in the work of Christopher Norris. See the section "The American Connection", in his book *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (Routledge, London, 1991), pp. 90-122. And his essay, "Right You Are (If You Think So): Stanley Fish and the Rhetoric of Assent", in *What's Wrong With Postmodernism?: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy* (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1990), pp. 77-133.

characteristic and preferred way to hold theistic beliefs is in this basic way."[62] According to Mavrodes, one who holds belief in God in this basic way can be characterized as "The mature and well-instructed believer..."[63] He parenthetically claims this to be their position "for the most part", because in a "...curious article [Nicholas] Wolterstorff appears to deny it."[64] If one is going to be a theist the way to make the claim of rationality of your belief is to hold it in this epistemologically reformed way.

At any rate, the mature believer, in their view, sees his belief in God as basic for him, and thus in no need of epistemological intervention for its rational justification. Those who recognize belief in God as the foundation of their belief system do so rationally, and those who do not would certainly be rational if they chose to recognize this eventually in their own noetic structure. However, the reformists maintain, this does not mean that atheists are irrational in their atheism, or that it would be irrational for believers to abandon their faith. To tell someone that it would be rational for him to believe in God does not amount to giving reasons for him to do so, nor would it insinuate that his belief, whatever it may be, is irrational. There is no paradox, reformed epistemology claims, in a person agreeing that it might be rational to believe in God, yet persist in his atheism. An atheist can recognize the rationality of a theist placing a religious proposition in the foundations of his noetic structure without adhering to the same concepts. What this means is that two people who hold incommensurable beliefs rationally in respective noetic structures, can see the logical consistency and intelligibility of each others belief. As we have seen, Plantinga et al. view rational believers as those who obey the epistemic duties of one's own foundational belief system. Because this is the case for them, one can recognize how it is possible for another, with differing beliefs, to be rational. Therefore, in the view of reformed epistemology, the atheist and theist alike can see the rationality of another's belief system regardless of what kind of proposition is in the foundations of his own noetic structure without fear of paradox. Again, this does not mean that the atheist must like what the theist believes. In fact, the atheist may not see how a human

[62]George Mavrodes, "Jerusalem and Athens Revisited", in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1983), p. 195.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid.

being could possibly believe in God for a single minute, but he may see the sense of the belief system as a whole. He may be able to see the intelligibility of a Christian belief system; how and why one may affirm such beliefs and attitudes. The plurality of noetic structures is based upon logical considerations and intelligibility, regardless of what the content of the beliefs in question may be.

Like Plantinga, Mavrodes claims that the reformed sense of rationality is, in a weak sense, that of epistemic permission, and not of an epistemological demand. The project of reformed epistemology is precisely to express how belief systems can be viewed to be, and held, logically. Because they see belief in God as basic, it is the case that others can come to the faith and have it rationally. But, one can be rational in one's atheism as long as it is held foundationally, and the believer is dutiful in respect to its epistemic demands. This is the character of their epistemic permissibility and their weak foundationalism. They show that belief in God is rational, but one does not *have* to have it to be rational.

IV. Concluding Remarks

I enthusiastically support reformed epistemology's analysis and rejection of classical foundationalism, for the most part. With that project there is an unjustifiable postulation of rational criteria by which all potentially foundational propositions must be evaluated. The reformist questions this narrow view of rationality and shows that, with the absence of criteria to fully justify that requirement, one may place the belief in God in one's noetic structure; although this is in a weaker sense than the classical foundationalist aims for. Thus, by a weaker sense of rational justification their enterprise is characterized by an epistemic permissibility. The salient feature of their analysis of rational belief is that the basic proposition must be permissible within a noetic structure.

I also appreciate reformed epistemology for focusing on the contingencies of existence, environment, conditions and so on, which are absolutely relevant with respect to holding beliefs and the formation of beliefs. We get very little of this with the classical foundationalist, thus one begins to wonder how applicable their reflections are to human existence. They have focused on the problem of the criterion in order to make the forceful arguments that they wish to put forward.

But, without a justifiable criterion of basicality they must concede that there is no justifiable rationale to constrain the domain of basic beliefs as they have wanted to assert. Also, in this connection, I appreciate the expressed acceptance by reformed epistemologists of a plurality of rational beliefs. This way we get away from the popular conception of philosophy, as expressed in common parlance, as that which discloses *the* particular acceptable truth.[65] Plantinga et al. rightly uphold a view of philosophy that is not part of any community of ideas, and that seeks to clarify the structure and function of logical systems.

For the remainder of this chapter I will indicate why I think that Wittgenstein's view better serves us in the analysis of rational belief. In light of reformed epistemology we will see Wittgenstein's later work in detail in the next chapter. I will argue that reformed epistemology has uncanny similarity with Wittgenstein's work concerning the rationality of belief. We will see the characterization of basic beliefs by the reformists to be a little different from Wittgenstein's, however. The reformist's imagery of a belief structure being like a pyramid (with the basic beliefs comprising its foundation) is different for Wittgenstein. He prefers to take a less tidy view of the structure of belief. In the next chapter, we will consider the ground of belief and its corresponding structure after a discussion of Wittgenstein's general method of investigation.

Basic beliefs are the nexus of a form of being. They are our central beliefs which we cannot do without. Wittgenstein calls them "hinge" propositions, because all other beliefs rotate around them. They function in a belief system like an axis of meaningfulness. Hinge propositions are also dependent upon contextual considerations. What is a hinge proposition in one context may not be in another. Wittgenstein gave the example of the hinge proposition, "I have two hands" (which can be taken just like Malcolm's basic proposition, "Here is an ink-bottle") however, it may not be such if a wounded soldier was asked if his hands have been shot off. We see that the reformed epistemologists are in complete agreement with

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[65]Such expressions come in the form of "What is your philosophy of life?" or "My philosophy of marriage is..." These uses of "philosophy" make the discipline seem as if it is solely occupied with professing very particular interpretations of reality. Therefore, the reformed epistemologists would agree with me that the philosopher's work is greater than what is involved in a person seeking to merely refine opinions, because philosophy must be concerned with vast and deeper logical issues such as: How is any form of meaningfulness possible? Is philosophy autonomous? And if so, how is philosophy's autonomy conditioned?

Wittgenstein in terms of the importance placed on context and circumstance of belief. For the reformists, basic beliefs are dependent on circumstances within a noetic structure, which is similar to the hinge propositions Wittgenstein discusses. However, Wittgenstein drops the foundationalist imagery of rational belief. We will see why Wittgenstein views basic beliefs to be implicit in our actions. They are rarely, if ever, brought to the level of cognizance. Because of what results from this Wittgensteinian view, I will argue that reformed epistemology has no reason to hold onto their residual foundationalistic concerns and foci.

Why is this? I think that Wittgenstein rids himself of the foundationalist picture of justified belief because basic propositions are the only ones that are focused upon for logicality. If a basic proposition is rational, then one can easily build a corresponding rational noetic structure on top of it. The claim of rationality always refers to the basic belief that is held by the subject for the foundationalist. Therefore, the primary and necessary focus is on basic beliefs. This is especially the case in the work of reformed epistemologists.

Another problem related to the above emerges. Reformed epistemology has such a relented sense of basicality one can think of any belief (held by an individual or a community) that could possibly be held foundationally in a noetic structure. The reformist focuses on describing a single basic belief which is held in one particular moment. We will consider the work of the Wittgensteinian D. Z. Phillips who shows that when one considers all of the basic beliefs a person holds, one may notice that some of their basic propositions clash with others. Philosophers ought not concern themselves with the crystalline purity of a single pyramid formation, but with all of our beliefs. He investigates various empirical propositions that clash with religious ones. Phillips reveals that not all beliefs can be held rationally because problems arise when a person holds conflicting basic beliefs. For the reformists to make this claim as well, they would need to abandon foundationalism. The reformists cannot argue this way because they are bound to analyzing a single basic religious proposition in relation to a single circumstance in which it is held. Their philosophical system and analysis is quite clean and crystalline as a result: it is easy to follow. But their tidiness comes at a price. By isolating an experience of holding a basic belief, one can no longer see the possibility that other beliefs (which a person may still hold while experiencing a

religious proposition as basic) may cause conflict, confusion and unintelligibility for a person. Because they aim to show that religious beliefs are rational, and exclusively in a foundationalist way, they must isolate and explain what makes a single religious proposition basic. This can only be accomplished, in turn, by isolating a moment of experience which would illustrate that a particular belief (and it alone) is foundational. This inevitably involves the isolation of one noetic structure a person may have (for instance, a religious one) from others (for instance, empirical ones pertaining to cause and effect). This is the reason why Wittgenstein considers belief systems to be extraordinarily messy. It must be made explicit that noetic structures, or contexts of belief, overlap. Perhaps we have beliefs that we hold as basic, and that are considered and operative in all (or at least in many) contexts of belief. When a kind of basic belief in God is held in a particular moment, we still hold other non-religious basic beliefs also, i.e. the belief that one is bound to the earth by gravity, etc.

We heard Plantinga argue that believing in one's ability to flap one's arms and fly about the room is not basic because it is not up to the individual to discern what they would like their basic beliefs to be. We considered their view that what is basic for a person is discerned by communal discourse. But, for Wittgenstein the reason that the belief that one can flap one's arms and fly is not basic is because it violates everything that we know about human physical capabilities. Most importantly, if a person can flap his arms and fly, then I have no idea what it means to know anything. If I know anything at all, it is that people cannot flap their arms and fly about a room. If I am wrong about that, then I am at a loss as how to even begin investigating the very concept of knowledge. Knowledge would be imbued with such mystification that I would not know what grounds or foundations of such a truth could possibly be like. We must keep in mind all of our basic beliefs that we hold when we consider issues of rationality, because some may clash with others in a particular circumstance. For Wittgenstein, we must be aware of a subject's "form of life" when considering issues concerning rational belief. This concept points towards a person's general sense of meaningfulness.

The hermeneuticist, Hans-Georg Gadamer, nicely expresses the problem surrounding the isolation of a single horizon of being (the foundation of one's

beliefs about reality) while ignoring others. In his *Truth and Method*[66] He writes:

> ...the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*[67]

It is this that I will insist upon: the analysis of the rationality of a religious belief cannot be carried out by only considering single instances of a belief being held apart from other beliefs that a person holds. As Gadamer says, the very concept of understanding is at stake here. A consequence of this is, if we consider all the basic beliefs that we hold, as we move through many circumstances and environments we may be compelled to abandon some and adopt others. This is what is involved in understanding oneself and the world. If a person faces conflicting beliefs she may abandon one or both which requires a greater understanding of them; not of what those propositions mean apart from each other, but how they stand with respect to all of the beliefs that she holds. She understands the totality of her beliefs, how and why one belief relates to another, and how and why one belief is incommensurable with another, by considering all of her beliefs. This is the wider picture of understanding one's beliefs, oneself, one's community and all the world. This also makes possible understanding what is religious and what is not. We know the grammar of religion by contrasting it with a conflicting grammatical belief. This can only be done by looking at what all of our beliefs mean in relation to each other. We must consider all of the beliefs that we have, more or less simultaneously, in order to understand the rationality of our beliefs about being in the world.

To consider how a basic belief may clash with another, leads one to ask what the role of superstition is in all of this. Philosophers often charge some believers with superstition, as do some religious believers of other religious believers. We have seen that Plantinga wishes to not let the "gate to irrationalism and superstition" swing open. But, we have also seen that he cannot stop it from doing so. There are many beliefs which Plantinga could consider to be rational, yet countless others would characterize as superstitious. If I heard of a community whose members believed that they could flap their arms and fly, I would be

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[66]Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Continuum, New York, 1993).
[67]Ibid., p. 306. Gadamer's emphasis.

wlling to call their belief superstitious: this is a belief that cannot be rational because it violates common sense beliefs that everyone has. Common sense is bound to what is generally known about what the human body can and cannot do. This is not like a community having the belief that they are the fastest and strongest runners on earth, like the Tarahumara tribe in northern Mexico may claim. Everyone knows that humans can run and at various speeds and strengths. We know that there must be a community whose members do it the best. But, we can't imagine any human being taking flight by their own self-propulsion. This is a confusion because there is no sense to it that could be common to all. If one could flap their arms and fly, then we would ask if that person is human or not.

It is Wittgenstein's treatment of this issue that I feel results in a far better alternative to what the reformists offer. For him the sense of reasonableness is found within a context of belief that is organized in a much more ragged manner, than the sublimed or idealized structure of knowledge asserted by the foundationalist and reformists. Religious beliefs are not such things that we can map out and analyze as if they were blocks of stone that form a pyramid. The foundationalist structure of belief cannot be justifiably held as a normative conception which lies outside of all particular instances of belief. In this connection, we will see why Wittgenstein says that logical structures must be shown rather than said. It is only when we look at a context in which a particular belief is held, that we will be able to see the logicality of that belief. The foundationalist structure of belief must be given up, because it can be shown that it is not the logical standard for all rational beliefs. D. Z. Phillips notes:

> In the growth of Reformed epistemology in America, we often find the assumption that any common inquiry into religious belief or unbelief *must* involve an appeal to a common rationality by which they are assessed. But, inquiry may show that no such standard exists.[68]

That inquiry is one that shows logicality rather than idealizing or stipulating it.

Even though reformed epistemology rejects classical foundationalism for their arbitrary exclusion of religious propositions from those that are considered

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[68]D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (St. Martin's Press, London, 1993), p. xx. Phillips' emphasis.

basic (which leads to their claim that a foundational belief does not require a criterion of rationality) they still speak of rational belief as if it is this kind of general inquiry that Phillips discusses. The inquiry that Phillips has in mind is of the sort that Wittgenstein suggests. This is an inquiry that seeks conceptual clarity by describing the role beliefs have in a context, including concepts of rationality and the structure of belief systems. The reformists have the foundational view of knowledge governing all varieties of belief systems. All believers, from theist to atheist, must be analyzed by this view of rational belief. Wittgenstein argues that rational belief is not an idealized or sublimed notion of all rational belief structures. Instead of philosophically formulating "rational belief" and seeing all varieties by that formulation, we ought to take examples of contexts of belief and describe what is meant by "rational" for the believers within those contexts. Once we describe all concepts in a belief system we may see problems arise, conflicting senses of belief, which would aid in staving off the anything goes criticism.

Wittgenstein's perspective provides illuminating clarity and simultaneously dispenses with the foundationalist picture of knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

Wittgenstein and the Grammar, "Ground", Logical Structure, and the Intelligibility of Religious Belief

Tantum homo habet de scientia, quantum operatur.[1]
St. Francis of Assisi, "Mirror of Perfection"

I. Introduction

In this chapter I intend to explicate the later work of Wittgenstein in light of the reformists view. We will see that Wittgenstein and reformed epistemology share many ideas pertaining to the rationality of religious belief. Both the reformists and Wittgenstein view rational religious belief to be a matter of the relationship between propositions held within a particular context of belief or noetic structure. Rational belief is not as the classical foundationalist would have it. It is not an issue of discovering the criterion of basicality for rational religious propositions in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. In the first section I will describe Wittgenstein's general methodology of philosophical investigation. We will see the importance he places on the context of belief and problems that emerge when one philosophizes independently of contexts. For Wittgenstein there is no sense to a general form of investigation into religious belief. In comparing the differences between contexts of belief, there is no logical commonality that exists between them. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions of religiousness. The sense to the operative concepts of a religious belief are indispensably linked to the particularities of its context. As a result there is no sense to a general concept of religion, God, the Divine and so on. With this general

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[1] "A man has only so much knowledge as he puts to work."

intoduction to Wittgenstein's method of inquiry we will see several key sinilarities with the reformist's position.

In the second section I will consider the structure of belief systems and its grunds. I will describe how Wittgenstein's view of the structure of belief is diferent to the reformists in the sense that basic propositions do not comprise a foundation where non-basic propositions are seemingly placed on top of them. They are like a hinge on which non-basic propositions turn.[2] By this difference of imugery we will see some slight differences of how belief structures are held together. For Wittgenstein a basic proposition gets its sense by the non-basic propositions that hold it in place at the center of a context of belief. The proposition is implicit in our activity and not the focal point for a claim of ratonality. For the reformists a basic proposition is the focal point of rationality. If a proposition can be described as basic in a noetic structure then the non-basic propositions are understood in reference to that basic proposition. We will see that the Wittgensteinian and reformist positions are similar but with fundamental diferences.

Certain philosophers who are influenced by Wittgenstein have unfounded assumptions about reformed epistemology. I will consider an argument made by D. Z. Phillips who claims that the work of the reformed philosophers can be sunmed up as a Calvinist project with the sole interest of showing that that Calvinist Christian belief is rational. By considering how a Wittgensteinian view coud elicit this argument, but how it is unfounded, we will achieve a better uncerstanding of the nature of reformed epistemology as well as Wittgenstein's phiosophical concerns.

The third section will take us to the starting point of my criticism of the refarmist project. For Wittgenstein, what lies at the bottom of contexts of belief is diffrent from what the reformists claim is there. He finds at the very bottom meaningful action and reaction to experiences in the world that cannot be described in terms of a single rational proposition of belief.[3] Meaningful actions and reactions cannot be said to be rational or irrational, they are just there, as Witgenstein says, like our life. This is not to say that beliefs are non-rational.

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[2] A discussion of this central idea can be found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), §341-343.

[3] A discussion of this central idea can be found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (Basi Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), §479-484 and his *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), §166, §204-211, and §259.

Rationality takes part in an established system of belief in terms of dictating the sense of the operative concepts in it.

Wittgenstein argues that logical propositions can be shown,[4] but cannot be said to lie at the base of a noetic structure. For instance, a basic belief (the logic of basicality) is shown by the examples that the reformists offer of that kind of belief, e. g., "God is to be thanked and praised", and so on. But, reacting to the immediate attainment of a truth is prior to calling it logical. And we will see how some basic propositions of logic cannot be conceptually formulated. Wittgenstein asserts that logical structure cannot be described, but if we look at the practice of language we will see it.[5] They cannot be said. We can only grasp what they amount to by being shown their application in a particular context. To a great extent reformed epistemology already has moved in this direction. They work also at showing basicality. By rejecting a criterion of basicality, they suggest that if a belief can be described as basic, then it is foundational. Nevertheless, they do consider basic beliefs as the locus of epistemological inquiry. In this sense they have some reliance on the foundational picture of knowledge as expressing rational belief. The reformist does not see basic beliefs as that which are non-interrogated and precognitive for us like Wittgenstein. For Wittgenstein this means that they are held at the center of a context of belief *because* all of the surrounding non-basic beliefs secure it in place.

For the reformist, at the base of a noetic structure is the inherently logical basic belief. The existence of basic beliefs are what establish rational noetic structures, i.e., the foundational picture of knowledge. A basic belief, for them, is where rationality is derived. Throughout this section we will see that Wittgenstein has an inclusive and comprehensive approach to rationality. The basic beliefs in a context are taken for granted; they make sense of the non-basic beliefs and put them to work. Basic beliefs are like general managers. Imagine a productive and well reputed business. We may not know who the head boss is, but we can be sure that whomever it is forms the foundation of the business. We could seek the boss out to verify our claim. But by seeing the practices of the business and their success, we can conclude that they are receiving solid and focused direction. Yet it is the employees who are doing all of the work and bringing repute to the boss. After all,

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[4] A discussion of this central idea can be found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), §36-37 and his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1974), §4.021, §4.022, §5.5561, §5.557, and §5.61.
[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), §501.

the work and production is what is important. The boss could be viewed as very much behind the scenes. I think that for Wittgenstein, a context of belief, and the basic and non-basic beliefs within it, could be thought of in the same manner. To speak of the various aspects of the business *is* to speak of the boss as well. To speak of non basic beliefs is to speak of basic beliefs as well.

The difference between Wittgenstein and reformed epistemology involves a difference in epistemological focus. Wittgenstein investigates an entire context of belief by seeking the sense in the relationships between the non-basic beliefs. The reformists on the other hand, at least in some sense, have an exclusive view of investigating knowledge. When it comes to rational belief systems they observe the basic beliefs and exclude the non-basic beliefs. They do not completely ignore non-basic beliefs of course, but their focus is on the basic ones. If they secure the rational standing of a basic belief, they seem to think that the non-basic ones will fall into place. It is this focus that expresses their residual interests in foundationalism. Given the results from the reformists form of investigation we will see that Wittgenstein has a much preferable position.

The last substantive issue that I will address is the greatest difficulty that remains for reformed epistemology; a problem that stems from their focus on basic beliefs. They cannot guard against the accusation that just any kind of belief can be held rationally. Some will want to say that Wittgenstein must be committed to an "anything goes" epistemology as well. Any kind of belief system must be accepted as legitimate by this view, since logicality is internal to a belief system. Therefore, to make claims of rationality or irrationality, one must investigate the sense of propositions as they are held within a particular context of belief. This question stems from a classical epistemological perspective which maintains that the domain of rational religious belief is much narrower than Wittgenstein shows it to be.

Traditional epistemologists assume that religiousness is linked by a single principle, so what counts as rational for them is equally as narrow. Given what will have been said about the need for a clear use of concepts in a context of belief in order to make claims of rational and irrational beliefs (and that there is no intelligibility to a general conception of religion) this criticism loses force.

I will further argue that with Wittgenstein we can let reason come in at the right place, e.g. in the context of belief. In divergent belief systems, the concept of rationality, religion, God, prayer and so on, take very different and often incommensurable forms.

Thinking that *any* belief can be rational is untenable in the face of the particular aspects of Wittgenstein's view. We must seek a deeper understanding of the functionality between language-games and why some beliefs cannot be held because of grammatical conflicts. Particularly, I will discuss the interrelatedness between contexts of belief. By speaking of religious contexts of belief as having an internal logic, and not subject to a general logical form of propositions, some may object that I am presenting religious beliefs as coarsely isolated from all other forms of belief. If that were the case then what I accuse reformed epistemology of (the inability to argue against the anything goes argument) applies to my view also. If religious language-games are logically isolated from other language-games, then just any belief can be justified merely by saying that it has a unique logic. We could not say that some beliefs are fantastic or superstitious. However, I will show that there are criteria of meaningfulness of non-religious beliefs already operational in the life of a believer which conflict with some forms of religious beliefs. Thus, we may show how to guard against irrationalism; and by utilizing a Wittgensteinian contemplative form of philosophy as a positive force, we may prevent religiousness from being confused by the fantastic. And this is the substantial point that the reformists cannot make.

II. Wittgenstein on the Possibility and Limits of a General Form of Propositions: the Indispensability of Particulars

A. Language-games and conceptual grammar: the problem with metaphysics

One main thrust of Wittgenstein's later work was to rid philosophers of the idea that logic is prior to all experience, or is the *a priori* order of the world. Logic, that which discerns sense from nonsense, is only found within language. The notion of sense and nonsense takes hold as one learns a language from childhood. One is raised to communicate with others and within communication is the ability to discern sense from nonsense. Wittgenstein shows that language-games are bound by an internally related logic that orders the sense that is made within it, and not by a logic that orders and links all language-games from the outside.

It simply will not do to say that the language-game of obeying orders, for instance, has a particular logic about it in as much as we think of it generally. It

would be superficial to describe the logic of that language-game as merely involving the enactment of what one is ordered to do. Even though it does indicate a kind of concept, it elucidates nothing of the very important differences in grammar between various modes of obedience. By "grammar" I mean the characteristics of a language-game that would reveal it as a unique kind of obedience. To comprehend the grammar of a concept is to grasp the sense of it. To understand what is involved in a particular case of obeying is to be clear about the context in which that concept has a role.

One needs to draw a distinction between what Wittgenstein calls "language-games" and "forms of life". The grammar of a language-game must be elucidated to become clear about the sense and nonsense of it. But how is this actually done? The description of a language-game itself does not do this. To be clear about the sense of a language-game one must take into consideration the form of life in which it occurs by elucidating its grammar. Take the example given above regarding the language-game of obedience. The two forms of obedience that come to my mind are that of obeying one's parents as a child, and obeying the state. The love and care of the parents is often central to the former, whereas it is not the case in the latter. But even so, there are sizeable differences in the grammar of obeying the state when considering the different forms of life that that concept can have a role. For instance, a person that obeys the state by paying taxes may do so within a form of life where she feels a civil duty, responsibility as a citizen, and joyful participation as a subject of a state. However, another person may obey the state in paying taxes, albeit grudgingly. That person may feel helpless because he cannot do otherwise, and thus feel a sense of being denigrated and deprecated by an authoritarian regime.

While following a common assumption above, I have taken a certain kind of love to be central to the obedience of one's parents and not to the obedience to the state. It can be recognized that this concept of love could be reversed as befitting the obedience to the state and not to one's parents. For instance, we often hear talk about "the fatherland" in reference to some countries where the subject feels an intimate father/child connection to the state. This person may feel a kind of love relationship to the state, and through it endeavor to fulfill his duties to it, which would involve obedience to its laws and policies. We can also imagine an adolescent sixteen year old, obeying his parents in a way that has nothing to do with intimate feelings or sentiments for them, but acting with the mere intention of

not causing any personal friction in his life, thus obeying them and tolerating their orders. The language-game of obeying gets its sense by describing the grammar of the form of life in which it is embedded.

In *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein considers "the great question" to be: is there "a general form of propositions" or a logical commonality between language-games? He challenges the idea that there is a rule, a common logicality, that runs through all language-games that can be discovered in order to disclose language's essence. This discovery would bring about the ideality of language or the metalanguage. Such a discovery has been thought to be the logical form that would be the basis for metaphysics -- the rule(s) that is (are) essential for everything. However, in Wittgenstein's introductory statements to *Philosophical Investigations*, prior to his argumentation against the idea of a unifying principle of language-games, he gives a distinct warning of how not to begin such an investigation. With the concept of games as his example, he claims that we ought to resist saying something like "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games.'"[6] He then states, and this is a crucial warning to which we must give close attention, that to resist this attitude we must commit ourselves to looking rather than thinking. By looking at the character of a particular language-game and describing its grammar we allow it to show itself. The point of his advice, that we must look rather than think, directs us to the proper method to reveal the differences in grammar. By looking and describing what conceptual differences exist in our ordinary language we can resist the temptation of discovering a general meaning of concepts. For traditional philosophy, declaring a general meaning of a concept involves discovering the essence of it through a rational investigation. By differentiating between the characteristics of what seem to be similar games we will see that there is no unifying principle running through or underlying all of them.

Wittgenstein still recognizes that concepts have some commonalties in general. But, as we have just said, strict clarity is grasped by a concept's use in a particular context. Generalities can only give us a modicum of conceptual clarity, because on some level they remain superficial. So, Wittgenstein suggests that we must not forget any general usage of, for instance, the concept of games. We still use a general form of the concept in certain circumstances; like on a rainy day we may say to another "Would you like to play a game? The weather is too awful to do

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[6]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), §66.

anything outside." The concept of game here refers to one of many kinds of games that can be played indoors. This is an example of a set of concepts which are bound, as Wittgenstein says, by "family resemblances" because of some similarity between them. He writes:

> ...for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colours of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross...—And I shall say: 'games' form a family.
> And for instance the kinds of number form a family in the same way. Why do we call something a "number"? Well, perhaps because it has a - direct - relationship with several things that have hitherto been called number; and this can be said to give it an indirect relationship to other things we call the same name.
> But if someone wished to say: "There is something common to all these constructions - namely the disjunction of all their common properties." - I should reply: Now you are only playing with words.[7]

The reason that we can appeal to family resemblances is because it provides a purpose or use in ordinary discourse. "Family resemblances" is not meaningful because it expresses the essence of a group of concepts, it is meaningful because it shows how we ordinarily group concepts together.

So, family resemblances, then, are by no means essences. For Wittgenstein we must pay attention to the use of our ordinary language rather than philosophically constructing convoluted and abstract notions indicating essences because they cause confusion and unintelligibility. It is in our ordinary use of language where these differences are crucial, because they demand an understanding of a kind of sense, and therefore, resist an indication of an essential meaning. Wittgenstein writes:

> When philosophers use a word - 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' - and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.[8]

For Wittgenstein, to "try to grasp the essence of the thing", involves the assumption that there is, in some sense, a postulated and essential logical nature of it which can be discovered in the metaphysical. The reason that Wittgenstein suggests that we must ask if the essence of a concept is actually used the same way in a language-game is because he wants to draw the distinction between idle and working concepts. Metaphysical propositions are idle because in ordinary discourse we never make use of philosophical abstractions. The role and meaning

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[7]Ibid., §67.

of an object is always contingent upon the context in which it is used. In an introductory philosophy course when discussing metaphysics, students might be asked to interrogate the essence of chair. They are asked to discover what is essential about a chair. What is logically necessary for a chair to be a chair. Responses like "all chairs must have four legs" are eliminated because some have three legs and bar stools can't really be said to have any legs at all. A response like "chairs are to be sat on" won't hold either because a chair in a room which is used as a plant stand is still called a chair even though nobody ever sits in it. Students will be able to see that the concept of chair has many uses; and it is by the use of chairs in our life and ordinary talk that gives the concept its meaningfulness. But the question then is: what would we *mean* by an essence of chair?

Wittgenstein brings to our attention that metaphysical propositions are pseudo-explanatory and distort the phenomena that we investigate. Metaphysical propositions act as if they *explain* the meaning of something by referring to essential truths regardless of what a given proposition may mean in the context in which it is used. What is involved here is the thought that the meaning of our experiences is subordinate to some realm of context-independent ideality of meaningfulness. In some sense the essence of an experience awaits explanation by a metaphysical investigation. We may have thoughts about the meaning of some experiences, the metaphysician will assert, but it is up to metaphysics to show us what we really did experience, and what it really and *necessarily* means. In considering this issue Wittgenstein thinks about what is involved in the metaphysics of aesthetic judgements. In considering music, he writes that one may be inclined to ask:

> "What is it like to know the tempo in which a piece of music should be played?" And the idea suggests itself that there *must* be a paradigm somewhere in our mind, and that we have adjusted the tempo to conform to that paradigm. But in most cases if someone asked me "How do you think this melody should be played?", I will, as an answer, just whistle it in a particular way, and nothing will have been present to my mind but the tune *actually whistled* (not an image of *that*).[9]

Wittgenstein questions the intelligibility of what an essential tempo would be for any melody. I am familiar with many different interpretations of the American national anthem. I have heard brass bands play it at a very slow, even melancholic, tempo; symphonic renditions that have in mind a particular tempo to

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[8]Ibid., §116.
[9]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Harper and Row, New York, 1965), p. 166. Wittgenstein's emphases.

fit a grand and stately occasion; as well it being sung by soul or gospel singers who have "played" with the tempo (speeding up and slowing down) which is a style of soul and gospel music. One point of Wittgenstein's is that to think that there is a paradigm of the American national anthem, an essence of it which explains how it ought to be played, is to be confused about that paradigm actually existing somewhere in the metaphysical realm. Also to think that there is an essence of the anthem, a fixed way that it ought to be played, we can expect other performances contrary to that paradigm to be denounced or argued against. However, such an argument, as we have just seen, is based on a non-existent essence. All that we can say exists are the many different tempos at work in the many different interpretations of the anthem.[10] To say to another that an ideal tempo of the American national anthem exists is to leave that person dumbfounded. How is that knowledge to be apprehended? What would knowing *that* be like? To think such an essence of the anthem exists is, therefore, confused. Furthermore, if one said that there is a definitive tempo of the anthem, and thereby critiqued all other divergent forms of the anthem in relation to that paradigm, those other forms would be distorted and violated by making the paradigm a necessary reference to it. That paradigm would act as an ideal representation of the anthem, thus a critique of a divergent form would involve trying to hear that paradigmatic representation in the divergent form. As Wittgenstein intimates, we ought to pay attention to the way that melodies are actually played. That way we can be clear about the tempo that is actually at work while not confusing it with any sort of ideality of the anthem.

There is however a popular aesthetic paradigm which is not to be taken as an essential paradigm of the piece. For most people the American national anthem cannot be played in just *any* tempo. This statement may lead one to object that then there is some kind of essential paradigm of the piece. This issue involves recognizing and understanding that there is an agreed upon sense of the piece.[11] People know the anthem because they have heard it before. By hearing all of the

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[10]A composer once told me that his most psychologically challenging moment came when he instructed a quartet which was rehearsing one of his pieces, to play his music the "right" way. The musicians, along with many master teachers in the hall at the time, had to impress upon him the simple truth that there is nothing strictly essential in the sheet music that he wrote. There is only a very vague sense of his piece that remains for the musicians. Once a composer gives sheet music to a group of musicians, the music is strictly theirs. The composer must remain silent, because the musicians are the ones who will *actually* play it for an audience.

[11]I also have in mind the experiments conducted by the jazz saxophonist, John Coltrane in the mid-fifties. He noticed the obvious limitations of the instrument, that a player can only sound one note at

variations of it through time, one knows a traditional version from other highly stylized ones. But, for example, we could imagine such a slow tempo, like that of an exaggerated dirge perhaps, where people would say, "That is *not* the national Anthem!" For many that tempo would be utterly unbefitting of the sense of the piece. Though there is a popular aesthetic, there certainly is not an essence, or ideal paradigm of tempo at which it must be played.

We must resist thinking that there are common rules, or necessary ideals, that run through all language-games, and once we turn our minds to the sense in ordinary language we will see this fact. It must be made explicit that when Wittgenstein insists on elucidating the sense in ordinary language, while resisting "the craving for generality", he is not pointing towards that logical space in which the true and false are to be found. The philosophical issue, concerning the use of metaphysical concepts versus particular ones which are contextually delimited, is one of meaning and intelligibility.

B. Wittgenstein and the homogeneity of the religious

Analogously with religion, a necessary logical principle is thought to be running through or underlying all beliefs of religious traditions, and furthermore, the various beliefs within each tradition. This thinking is what seems to be orchestrating and motivating a philosopher to seek or discover justifications, foundations, presuppositions, and assessments of all belief; the motivation of the strong sense of a post-enlightenment philosophy. We saw in the first chapter a rather lengthy overview of that project. This project comes under scrutiny with Wittgenstein, and calls for the philosopher to bring his language back from the metaphysical to its ordinary use.

How does this relate to the project of the reformed epistemologists particularly? They rightly give up on trying to forge a hard and fast position (like

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a time. So, he began playing what was called "sheets of sound". He concentrated on many notes at the same time, which resulted in sections of quick and sharp blurts of notes that seemingly made no music sense (the notes certainly did not sustain a melody or even a musical phrase). Critics at the time could make no sense of it. It was just aggravating noise for them. Then he began to explain and share what he was trying to do. The public, then, made sense of it; it was no longer confusing, but understandable. Many did not like it (which was/is, of course, not required) but he did have *reasons* for playing like that. Now John Coltrane is considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time. What was his confusing experiment, by and large, is now considered standard. This example illustrates that the structure and sense of music in not based on metaphysical presuppositions, but a common and shared understanding of what is actually being played.

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strong foundationalism) which states what the religious belief must be. They give a lot of room for many divergent beliefs. So, thus far we can see that the reformists are in agreement with Wittgenstein in that a religious belief is indispensably contingent upon a unique context. They are both interested in investigating religious belief from the particular perspective of any given believer. They seemingly ignore such notions as what the essence of religion is. Both reformed epistemology and Wittgenstein would consider a Hindu's beliefs from within the context of Hinduism, and not see Hinduism against the backdrop of what all religion amounts to, whatever that may mean. All of the operative concepts would have to come out of a Hindu culture. They would both recognize that for this believer all of his religious considerations are bound to that culture which gives a very particular sense to what it means to be religious for him.

There are differences however. The reformists must know the particulars surrounding one's belief in order to see how it is held basically because they believe that religious belief is held basically in many different ways and in relation to many different circumstances. The Wittgensteinian must know the particulars just to understand the sense of the concepts that one has in one's context of belief, while not assuming that one's beliefs must fit a general paradigm. Wittgenstein takes the importance of contextual considerations further in saying that the meaning of "knowledge", and the "rational" are also contingent upon context. There is a remnant of the "craving for generality" problem in the work of the reformists. In some sense, they take rationality to be a contextually independent meaningful concept. Reformed epistemologists seemingly suggest that the rational is the foundational picture of knowledge, and the picture of knowledge expresses the essence of rationality for them. So, a certain kind of foundationalism is a meaningful picture of knowledge to be applied to all contexts of belief. Wittgenstein has no picture of knowledge in mind at all when it comes to rational belief, primarily because any general picture of knowledge will prove to be superficial. He is concerned with the logic of ordinary language. He merely wants to show that the meaningfulness of religious belief is internal to a context and not grounded in the metaphysical. As this is the case with what religion amounts to, it also applies to concepts of rationality. The reformed use of the foundational picture of knowledge expresses an intuition about how they see propositions working in a believer's life: some propositions will form the grounds of a belief system and the others will not.

But Wittgenstein still has more to say about the problem of a general form of propositions. If we take the concept of games it seems obvious enough that all the games that exist do not relate to one common essence of "gameness". Each particular game has rules and sense that are complete in and of itself without any necessary reference to other games. Some may wish to say that there are striking similarities between games, however, and wish to give a unifying principle. For example, chess and checkers, it could be said, have great similarity; so much in fact that there must be an essence linking them. But, the sense of chess and checkers can only be found in contemplating chess or checkers. The rules that govern both games cannot be fused into one another without great confusion and loss of identity of the meaning of either chess or checkers. We could say that they are both played on boards of alternating colored squares. But that certainly does not illuminate the sense of what is meant by either game; that is to say it is a superficial understanding of chess and checkers. The particular rules that govern each game (which yields its sense, particular characteristics, an understanding of how it is played in opposition to other games, or the objectives of it) are merely different or incommensurable to other games. We could say that a necessary characteristic of them is that they are both board games. But, again, even though this is true, it remains superficial and the identity of each particular game is not grasped by it. The way a game is played, its rules and the sense of it, is internal to the game itself. One does not consult chess in order to comprehend checkers. One learns how to play chess by being taught what *its* rules are.

In a similar fashion the beliefs in all religious traditions cannot be fused together in production of a universal essence of religiousness without distorting or ignoring the character of a particular tradition. All religious traditions cannot be identified as one homogeneous set ingrained in a common logic of belief. The grammar of a belief, or the description of the character of a particular tradition, brings about its clear understanding and identity. Only through its grammar can we comprehend the meaning of a belief.

I would like to offer an example of a thinker who has tried to link all religious traditions by a common principle. Take the American "mythologist", Joseph Campbell. In his book, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*[12] he finds support in Jung's notion of the "collective unconscious", and a general attitude toward

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[12]Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973).

religion in Freud,[13] to show that the heroes of religious traditions are linked in that their mythologies (narratives that disclose the tradition's teachings) revolve around an essential archetype of the "hero's journey". He shows how the Buddha, (in the oriental world) and Jesus, Moses, and Mohamed (in the occidental world) as well as Aeneas and Prometheus (in ancient Roman and Greek mythology respectively) - who represent only a few of the heroes that he focuses on in his book - all take part in a quest for truth in a manner that is structurally, or logically, the same.

I should comment on what he thinks he is doing in this project. In the preface of his book he quotes Sigmund Freud with approval, arguing that:

> The truths contained in religious doctrines are after all so distorted and systematically disguised...that the mass of humanity cannot recognize them as truth.[14]

For Campbell, as for Freud, the meaning of religious doctrine is so symbolically cloaked that it remains obscure, cryptic, and muted. Therefore what is needed, in order to attain the real meaning of them, is a deeper investigative attention. For Campbell we must clear up the manifest impression that religious teaching makes upon us. We must intellectually intervene and discover what is really being expressed in religious doctrine, because the latent obscurities are only being perpetuated by leaving religious communities to teach what they always have about the meaning of their sacred tales. Religious communities have always taught their stories at face value, so to speak. But, we must apprehend that which will help us reveal its true meaning by removing the fog that a religious doctrine is engulfed in, and which sustains it as an orphic phenomenon. Campbell writes in the introduction to his book:

> It is the purpose of the present book to uncover some of the truths disguised for us under the figures of religion and mythology by bringing together a multitude of not-too-difficult examples and letting the ancient meaning become apparent of itself...Once we have learned to read again their symbolic language, it requires no more than the talent of an anthologist to let their teaching be heard. But, first we must learn the grammar of the symbols, and as a key to this mystery I know of no better modern tool than psychoanalysis.[15]

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[13]The general Freudian attitude to which I am referring is that religious traditions express their beliefs in highly convoluted symbolic language, and that religious meaning is cryptically embedded within a tradition's use of symbolism.

[14]Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. James Strachey (The Hogarth Press, London, 1961), p. 44.

[15]Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973), p. vii.

The logical structure of the hero's journey (the truth that is hidden in the quest for illumination of reality by religious heroes), according to Campbell, involves four stages. The first stage is of the hero's self-motivation or a push to journey for truth. The second is of a barrier, difficulty, or task that the hero must get beyond, or resolve, to show his worth in order to receive illumination of the truth. Stage three is the enlightenment or attainment of truth, which is followed by the fourth stage; a return to the community to give the knowledge attained to the masses.

A straightforward example that Campbell provides is that of the young Siddartha Gautama's "hero's journey" in which he received "The Great Enlightenment" in the Buddhist tradition. Siddartha, who lived in his father's castle, was forbidden to go beyond its walls so he would be kept safe and shielded from the disease, decay and death that was the life of the common people. He was to be groomed as a princely warrior and member of the court. However, he had interest in religious and philosophical reflection and found princely life dull. Thus, the first stage, according to Campbell, came in the form of self-motivation. The curiosity that Siddartha had for what was actually beyond the castle grounds complemented his desire to pursue a life of contemplation. So he sneaked out to venture into the streets of the commoners. There he wondered how one could get beyond the death and suffering of life. He met gurus who taught him meditation as well as the "great renunciation" of worldly possessions and began to learn from them and contemplate life's suffering. The second Campbellian stage came when, during meditation under a bo tree, he was confronted by the three forces that are at work in human suffering: fear, desire, and loathing. Yet, Siddartha remained uninfluenced and undistracted. Through meditation he became detached from the worldly forces. Fear, desire and loathing no longer had an influential hold on him, thus the forces retreated and respected his knowledge and mastery of the entire cosmos. He remained in the lotus position while nature bade homage to him. This episode, in the tale of the Buddha, is usually referred to as "the unmovable spot".[16] This marked the third stage for Campbell because the young Siddartha transgressed the barrier to enlightenment and finally became the Buddha: the one

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[16]The most popular Buddhist statuettes depict this very moment. Normally, they depict the Buddha in the lotus position with his left hand open, palm out, and his arm rigidly extended in the air in a gesture of steadfast proclamation. His right arm is limply extended to the ground with the finger tips gently touching the earth. This cultural representation, truly in a sublime fashion, expresses a balance of principles that the Buddha is said to embody.

who possesses wisdom and truth. Thus, the fourth stage of his hero's journey was his venture with his five followers to preach his doctrine of enlightenment through the valley of the Ganges river.

It seems that trying to unify religious traditions in this abstracted, structural, or logical manner of the hero's journey is similar to pointing out that chess and checkers are structurally the same because they are played on boards of alternating colored squares. My disagreement with this methodology is the meaningfulness of the sublimation of the logical structure of the hero's journey as that which explains all religion. However, it is true that there is nothing necessarily logically negligent with universalizing religion by a single idea. The problem is in how far the meaning of a single idea can take us into the depth of being religious, given the multitude of its particular forms.

There are many concepts or ideas that we can concede as, more or less, blanketing religion. For instance, all religions profess beliefs that have a "saving" capacity for its devotees. This stands true in Christianity, for the Christian is saved from the sin of the world and death. Devotees of Hinduism, Buddhism, and to a certain extent, Jainism, are saved from earthly "flux" (the change of the world) or *samsara*, which recapitulates all life forms by virtue of the eternal life/death cycle. The Zoroastrian, by serving Ahura Mazda (the God of goodness) and "battling" Spenta Mainyu (the God of evil), will be saved from eternity in Hell upon death and the ensuing judgment of the individual. The Muslim will be saved from eternity in Hell if he dedicates himself to good deeds and is worthy of Allah's mercy upon death. Other forms of "saving" can also be found in the religions of the Dogon of Mali, Judaism, Peyotism, Taoism, the Bahai faith, Shamanism (particularly in Siberia, Korea, and the Americas), the spiritual exercise of Subud, Shinto, Scientology, Rastafarianism and Pocomania, Santería and Voodoo, as well as Wicca. We could also mention that a concept of "saving" would certainly be found in the ancient middle eastern religions of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria-Palestine, Persia and Egypt, as well as ancient Greece. Only a few of these religions that I will mention are of the Hittites, Phrygians, Canaans, the respective cults of devotion to Isis, Osiris and Horus, and the Dionysian Mystery cults.

Given this dizzying catalogue of saving religions we are faced with the problem of formulating one rigorous and deeply meaningful conception of what amounts to being saved by religion. If one has a sufficient grammatical understanding of the religions mentioned above one *perhaps* will think that the

concept of "being saved" greatly fits Christianity, but does not really fit other religions such as Scientology or Taoism. The aim of Scientology, as I understand it, is to rid one's psyche of recurring unpleasant memories which haunts a person and forces one to stagnate in life while one "comes to terms" with them. These unpleasant memories affect one's ability to progress and develop effectively by the virtue of a fully functional mental capacity. In that sense one could say that a person is saved from poisonous, non-discharged cathexes ("engrams" to the Scientologist). But as some critics have said, there really is no distinction between the goal of Scientology and any other form of psychotherapy. So, perhaps one would like to say that there is not a sense of being saved by Scientology, it is an issue of psychologically adjusting well, or being better off mentally, which Scientologists characterize as a kind of psychological purity (which is called, "being clear" or "going clear"). We must recognize that "being saved" may fit the experience of one follower of Scientology and not another. If one considered his life to be atrocious because of an abundance of "engrams", and was unable to conduct his life in any stable manner whatever, and then, after becoming involved in Scientology, the quality of his life was completely turned around, that person may be willing to use the concept of being saved. Another Scientologist may think that he certainly could have gone on in life, but that the methods of Scientology have *enhanced* his existence, yet they did not completely transpose it. To say in this case that he has been saved by Scientology would be an exaggeration.

Conversely, for the most part in Christianity, there is the sense that one is lost and ill-fated without belief in Christ. The non-Christian is captured by sinfulness and is doomed to death. When one acquires belief in Christ, is baptized and becomes a child of God, one is saved from that lamentable, absolute and eternal fate. The "doomed *or* saved" dynamic is not really fitting, in an absolute sense, for Scientology. For the most part, the sense of being saved comes in degrees because one develops into a better and better person by its beliefs and practices. The same could be said about Taoism in the sense that (as it is partly understood to be central to that belief) the flow or course of nature maintains the health of the world as well as one's "soul", if one relinquishes their will to it. The Tao, then, must not be hindered or obstructed by humans if things go horribly awry. For instance, if the hull of an oil tanker ruptures and spills its contents about a coastline

somewhere, humans may be inclined to develop a chemical solution that would dissolve the oil in the water, on the beach and rocks, to assist in an easy and effective clean up. Imagine that after using the chemical it is discovered that it caused sickness in people using the beach as well as killing enormous populations of sea life. The Taoist would argue that we ought to stop trying to affect nature and its course because it will only cause more, and possibly greater, problems. We ought to stop acting and allow the Tao to make the world (in this case the beach, rocks, human and sea life) aright. We may argue that a person is not strictly saved by the Tao, but lives in a greater form of purity if one lives according to its force and purpose. It becomes a question of living better or worse and not, as Christians see it, a question of either living in accordance to the will of Satan and being doomed, or to the will of God and being saved. We can imagine though that there could be a Taoist who, in particular circumstances, claims that she was saved by the Tao in a similar way that the Scientologist was saved by Scientology.

The point of these examples is to illustrate that the sense of a concept within a religious tradition, like being saved by it, is indispensably linked to knowing the details of that tradition, as well as the details of a particular group or individual within a tradition. In terms of epistemological beliefs, when a particular religious devotee knows that he has been saved by his religion he is completely informed and clear about what that amounts to. What this suggests is that the reasonableness of a belief is internally related to the details of its religious tradition. But, to ask one generally if he knows what is meant by being saved by religion he would have to ask, "For whom? The Muslim, the Dogon...? Which Muslim or member of the Dogon tribe?"

As far as Campbell's theory goes, no grammatical work has been done. He claims that there is "the grammar" that is hidden in religious symbolism which serves as the structure or order of what it means to seek truth for all people. But through Wittgenstein we can see that there is no one grammar of anything, but many and various grammars all contingent upon a context of belief within a particular tradition. The reason that Wittgenstein seeks the grammar of a concept's use in context is because, by that investigation, the details and nuances of what a particular religion means by being saved provides a deep, meaningful, and distinct

understanding of that concept. Campbell does not focus on a particular grammar internal to a belief in Buddhism. Instead, he focuses on the logical structure of the hero's journey as the metaphysical underpinning of all founders and devotees of religious traditions. His theory has nothing to do with believing anything while living within any religious tradition. As it is actually intimated by Campbell above, we ought not seek a religious understanding by any teacher in accordance to any tradition, but ought to seek an anthologist, a comparative analyst. Then we might have the latent logical structure revealed to us, the universal essence of attaining any religious truth.

It is philosophically important to note that Campbell's view boarders on the nonsensical. I say nonsensical for the following reason: imagine that we discuss with a monk of Theravada Buddhism the manner in which Siddartha Gautama consistently followed the path of the hero's journey, thus fulfilled all of the universal stages set out before us by Campbell. Furthermore, we make it clear to the monk that the reason we have interest in discussing Siddartha with him is only because he serves as a good example, out of many, to illustrate that his religious quest for truth is structurally the same as all religious quests for truth. Most likely his response will be of disdain to our question because we basically do not want to talk about his Buddhist beliefs, but what underpins them and makes them the same with Christianity, Islam and the rest. More so, I imagine that our monk would be a little frustrated because in talking about his beliefs in the Campbellian way we do not take the Buddha's journey towards the kind of truth he attained *seriously* at all. For the monk, Siddartha was not following a universal logical course as Campbell sees it, but saving humanity from the despair of death in a distinct and particular way. Campbell is nonsensical in that, in focusing on explicating his theory of religion, he loses the sense of precisely what is meant by the journey of a particular hero for a whole particular religio-cultural tradition.

In his theory, Campbell ignores obviously fundamental and all important distinctions between Buddhism and Christianity. The concept of the soul as well as the Divine are very much at odds with each other. Because of this, certain spiritual issues arise in the life of the Buddhist, that do not (or they arise differently) in the life of the Christian. The Christian has a *personal* or *unique* relationship with God. God saves each of his children in a unique manner. God takes an active interest in the particularities of each of His children's life in order to guide him in sanctity to eternity in heaven. In Buddhism the devotee does not have a personal relationship

with one God. The Divine is the dispassionate creative energy that the universe is imbued with. The Buddhist strips his personality down to grasp that which is essential about him. He discovers through meditation that he can identify his essence with what is essential about all creation. God is not out in the heavens, as He is traditionally considered to be for Christians, but within each and every life form. The creative energy in one person is identical to that which is inside another person,[17] plant or animal. If the devotee discloses the creative energy in himself and identifies it with all other living things, thus the source of the universe, then he is on the path to "salvation".

Furthermore, for the Buddhist the Divine is beyond the ordinary sets of conceptual opposition such as Good/evil, moral/immoral, male/female, and so on. In the Christian tradition one could identify the attributes of the Divine as fitting the first term of each of the above sets of conceptual oppositions. This is not the case in Buddhism. The Divine in this tradition "just is". One cannot call it a name, nor identify it as having particular attributes, because it is beyond any scheme of conceptual opposition. This is completely unlike the Christian tradition, which has a gender-marked Divinity, and which follows particular moral teachings and public denunciation of immoral acts and practices. Christianity has a long monastic tradition that involves contemplating the *passion* of Jesus. It is a tradition of believers who are moved to feel guilt by considering one's sinfulness and forgetfulness of the Divine. All of this is seemingly non-existent in the classical, or purest understanding of the Buddhist tradition.

I do recognize that there are exceptions to the above that could be found in some communities of Buddhists. Recognizing this involves being attentive to the different forms of beliefs and practices of the religion. The most obvious one would be a whole system of morals seemingly being religiously observed through the principle of compassion. Traditionally, the Divine in Buddhism takes no sides in moral debates, but some Buddhists seemingly do by their reverence for compassion. For some, rejection of the religious significance of moral actions over immoral ones would not be the case unconditionally. In Christianity morality is closely linked to the passions of being religious. Christians are *moved* to act morally. If a Christian loves his neighbor, we are told that God is with him in that action. Buddhists particularly aim to cease being moved to act in the world by our

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[17]This belief gives rise to a uniform manner by which to greet another. The Buddhist places his hands together, as if to pray, while deeply genuflecting toward the other. This is meant to express

passions. We see this in the story of Siddartha when he reaches enlightenment and becomes detached from the concepts of fear, desire and loathing. Fear and loathing repel one away from that which is feared or loathed, and desire draws one toward that which is desired. The Buddha, nonetheless, remains in "the immovable spot". This is the reason why many westerners who spend time in Buddhist societies have the impression that they are extraordinarily stoic. Yet some Buddhist communities (the two Tibetan communities led by the Dahlia Lama and the Karmapa Lama could serve as examples) adhere very closely to the principle of compassion as a high moral standard which is congruent with their religious beliefs. They aim to show compassion to all life forms that are inevitably faced with confronting the fear and death of the world like all of the members of their community.

There are fundamental differences in language that must be made apparent. Instead of following Campbell's method we should focus on identifying different meanings in religious contexts so we do not lose sight of a concepts particular use. Campbell sees the profundity of religious traditions in acknowledging that they are all the same in an unconscious, Freudian or Jungian, way. For him, they are all equal manifestations of the universal and unconscious archetype of the hero. I am not concerned with discerning if he is correct or not, but simply wonder as a rhetorical question: how meaningful is it to all of the different forms religion takes?

Campbell writes about his theory:

> We shall have only to follow, therefore, a multitude of heroic figures through the classic stages of the universal adventure in order to see again what has always been revealed. This will help us to understand not only the meaning of those images for contemporary life, but also the singleness of the human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom.[18]

What is it *exactly* that has always been revealed *by* the "universal adventure"? Perhaps we concede that there is an uncanny similarity in the salvation stories of a lot of religions and mythologies that seemingly fit the dynamic of the hero's journey. It is true, as Campbell's second stage has it, that many founders of religions underwent great tests of their worthiness to receive Divine knowledge in similar ways. Let us cite some examples: the Buddha's test under the bo tree; Jesus

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respect for the Divinity within the other person.

[18]Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1973), p. 36.

was tested by the Devil in the desert; Moses had to conquer his fear in order to ascend the forbidding summit of Mount Sinai, face Yahweh, and receive the Torah; Aeneas (as recounted in epic detail by Virgil in *The Aeneid*,) had to find a way to gain entrance to the underworld of the dead which was guarded by the ferocious three-headed dog, Cerberus; and in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Arjuna received Divine wisdom concerning social duty (*Dharma*) by the God Krishna, when with great trepidation he prepared for battle against his own family and friends. We can see that there are some similarities in the stories. Nevertheless, we must recognize that the similarities are superficial. It is not clear at all what the multitude of religious heroes, together and in unison, reveal. And quintessential differences found in the language of the tales are conveniently erased. The Buddha has revealed the way to escape from suffering and death through a particular form of meditation and ascetic practice. But, what that message amounts to, what it deeply involves and is inextricably bound to, is knowledge of a particular form of metaphysics (a particular grammar of the "Divine", "afterlife", "God" etc...) which is indispensably linked to its tradition and differentiates it from the Christian or Muslim forms of the concepts. What is meant by Buddhism cannot be grasped by saying that it is one out of many manifestations of the hero's journey, and what is being revealed by Siddartha, at the end of his heroic journey (with all of its richness and peculiarities), cannot be meaningfully extracted from the purely logical formulation of that journey. Gautama Buddha is not one of a kind; one "religious hero" out of a multitude of heroes. The same superficiality awaits us when attempting to explicate the "singleness of the human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes and wisdom."

For precision, exactitude, depth of meaning and distinctions proper to philosophical investigations on concepts, Jacques Derrida nicely states what ought to be considered an undeniable intellectual platitude:

> What philosopher ever since there were philosophers, what logician ever since there were logicians, what theoretician ever renounced this axiom: in the order of concepts (for we are speaking of concepts and not of the colours of clouds or the taste of certain chewing gums), when a distinction cannot be rigorous or precise, it is not a distinction at all.[19]

If it is not distinct, it is not a distinction. Campbell is entrenched in a difficulty when he tries to make the concept of religion general, dismissing the

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[19]Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Ill, 1990), pp. 123-124.

precision and rigor that one must have to characterize religion as it is to its particular believers (or indeed, how it is). Here is one theoretician who renounces this axiom that Derrida rightly asserts as central to philosophy. Since it is clear that Campbell has abandoned the quest for distinction between the different grammars of religious belief, his views can offer very little to us except a box in which to file indistinct concepts. His thesis about the essence of religious belief is as superficial as asserting that religion saves. By seeking the grammar of beliefs we will evade the desire to sum up all religion, and inevitably produce its shallow results.

Apropos to Campbell's species of reflection on religion, Wittgenstein writes:

> Philosophy puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything- since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us. One might also give the name "philosophy" to what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions.[20]

Wittgenstein rightly claims that the sense or logic of a context of belief is already in order, and does not need foreign theoretical intervention. Contexts of belief lie open to view if we are dedicated to understanding what sense there is within any particular religious tradition. But we must cease with forging universal logical structures for them. All of the details to understand what a religious belief means is easily accessible to us. We must make it explicit that we can see in a religious tradition what concepts are there and operative within it. Can we say that the concept of the stages of the hero's journey is operative in each religion? Campbell intends to explain religion by making us see concepts that certainly may not be operative in the life of a particular religious believer.

However, we must note that there may be uniform structural features for the life of a group of religious devotees. The stages of life in Catholicism, for instance, are marked by five of the seven sacraments: baptism-birth, confirmation-adulthood, marriage and holy order-vocation, extreme unction-death. To say that there is an idealized structure (for the path of a religious life, or acquiring religious knowledge like the hero's journey) for all people the world over is nonsensical. Earlier I discussed the problem of metaphysical investigations into essences. Campbell, in a similar fashion, has tried to describe what the essence of religiousness is, e.g. what all seekers of truth will endure. The way one uses a concept, and the sense surrounding it, is particular to the manner in which it functions in a context. When we read the synoptic gospels of the Bible, the

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[20]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), §126.

Bhagavad-Gita, the Pentateuch, stories depicting the enlightenment of the Buddha, the Aeneid, the Koran and so on, we notice that what Campbell wants to make explicit may not have a serious baring on the sense of those texts. He has theoretically intervened in those texts, and many others, to explain what he thinks is hidden from us. But, as Wittgenstein says what is hidden from us is of no interest. Campbell's theory is not, in any way, necessary for the logic, or sense, of religious belief. In this connection we can recall the difference between the search for the ideal tempo of a melody and the way it is actually played by a musician. The ideal tempo is not hidden inside each variation of a melody, all we have are the many forms that the melody takes when it is actually played. By focusing on what Campbell thinks his theory explains about the essence of religion we lose the intricacies of traditions, and their natural and original sense. The price to pay for homogenizing religion is a constrained sense of the religious, which blanches grammatical differences, offers shallow assertions, and ultimately, will mischaracterize some religious beliefs.

Thus far we have seen the general sense of Wittgenstein's criticism against the possibilities of a meaningful and unifying principle of all religious belief, thus the importance of keeping a keen eye on the particulars of a tradition. We can see for our purposes that reformed epistemology will not have much to disagree with regarding this view. They also expressly recognize a plurality of beliefs as possibly being rational, rather than of a single concept. For them, all religious believers will have belief in God in the foundations of their noetic structure. They are fond of Calvin's statement that "The testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason", and so am I. So, for Wittgenstein and the reformed philosophers what one's soul professes, in concert with the tradition that surrounds it, is the rightful context wherein any investigation of rationality must take place. I imagine the foundationalist would also agree with reformed epistemology, in that *if* a religious belief is rational it will have the belief in God in its foundations. However, the foundationalist's difficulty is in seeing how any religious belief could be properly basic and rationally held in the foundations of one's noetic structure. Nevertheless, both Wittgenstein and the reformed epistemologist concur that rationality can be found in many diverse religious contexts. Furthermore, they both reject the classical foundationalist's assertion that rational religious belief is a very narrow domain and unified by a single idea.

In order to deeply compare and contrast the reformed and Wittgensteinian view we must look at Wittgenstein's understanding of the grounds of rational belief. We saw the reformists point to particular experiences that enact a basic belief in God. This basicality of a particular proposition is the foundation for one's religious belief, and thereby rational, and in no need of argument to promote that claim of reason. Wittgenstein, however, has a slightly different view of the basis of religious rationality. He views foundational beliefs to be held fast by the sense that they have in our lives. This, of course, is similar to the reformist view in that the sense of the basicality of a belief in God is contingent upon the environment in which it is enacted. However, there is no appeal to a formalized "noetic structure" for Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein does speak of contexts and the interconnectedness between concepts within them, but it is an over-simplification to say that he considers contexts of belief to be a clearly mapped out structure in the way that the reformists do. For Wittgenstein, contexts of belief are often very raggedly connected, and if one is not paying attention one could miss the connection between concepts. It is not explicit in the work of the reformists, at least not to my knowledge, that noetic structures are thought of as the pyramidal structure of rationality as the foundationalist has it. However, I get a sense that they do think of them as similar, if not synonymous. What I understand as foundationalistic about the reformists project is the view that rational beliefs do have grounds, and rational belief systems (noetic structures) are organized with non-basic beliefs resting on top of basic ones. Even though the reformists have rejected foundationalism, I think that they have held onto these two aspects of it which they hold as right about the rationality of belief. But, we will see later that for Wittgenstein the grounds of belief are not where an investigation into rationality ought to be focused. Also, the propositions in our belief systems are intricately interwoven in a very tattered manner (much like the individual strands that, woven together, form a strong rope) that is not as crystalline and pristine as the reformists suggest. Ultimately I intend to illustrate that Wittgenstein and the reformists share many common ideas and assumptions regarding the character of foundational religious beliefs as well as the importance placed on the context of those beliefs. By showing how much they do share about the rationality of religious belief we will be able, later on, to clearly distinguish the substantial issues which differentiate them.

III. The "Grounds/Foundations" of Religious Belief and the Ideal of Philosophical Analysis

I will state at the outset that Wittgenstein's view of foundational propositions is loosely comparable to the reformists in that they are the grounds of a belief system for which we cannot argue, nor logically prove. Later on in this discussion we will see why I say that it is loosely comparable. For now we can say that they do share certain assumptions about the nature of rationality and knowledge. We cannot argue for a particular rational belief with Wittgenstein primarily because foundational or basic beliefs are the basis from which we reason about the world. Therefore any argument given about X will stem from basic beliefs; and, since we cannot reason beyond them, we cannot provide reasons for them. Basic beliefs do not rest upon reasons nor evidence. We saw with the reformists that there are certain circumstances that evoke an instantaneous belief in God by virtue of an experience at a particular moment. In this sense, the belief in God in those circumstances is a basic one. In somewhat of a similar fashion, Wittgenstein sees ground-level or basic beliefs as those propositions that one cannot doubt, and yet for which one cannot give argument. We saw in the first chapter the arguments by Norman Malcolm (a student of Wittgenstein's) which stated that we cannot discover in our minds whether we merely believe something or know it. This is because he learned from Wittgenstein to focus on the ordinary use of "know" and "believe". This focus revealed that the distinction partly rests upon one's attitude toward the beliefs one can doubt, and the beliefs one cannot. The distinction does not rest upon logical discovery. We know something when we cannot imagine what could possibly count against it rather than it being a case of discovering and distinguishing knowledge from mere belief by one's mental processes. The grounds for belief work in a closely related way. They are comprised of the propositions that we know in the strong sense. Wittgenstein writes:

> What would it be like to doubt now whether I have two hands? Why can't I imagine it at all? What would I believe if I didn't believe that? So far I have no system at all within which this doubt might exist.[21]

> I have arrived at the rock bottom of my convictions. And one might also say that these foundation-walls are carried by the whole house.[22]

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[21]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), §247.
[22]Ibid., §248.

The first paragraph reveals an important idea. When it comes to basic beliefs (as "I have two hands"), the concept of doubting (that which accompanies reasons for not believing a proposition) is non-existent. There are no reasons to doubt, it is senseless in this context. Indeed he states that he has no existing system of beliefs in which such a doubt might exist, and this is the very bottom of his convictions. Wittgenstein continues by implying that his convictions are carried in a structure or system of beliefs. The last sentence of the last paragraph implies another important idea. The basis of his convictions do not rest upon foundations. Analogously, it is the entire structure of a house which shows the importance and stability of its foundations. What can be drawn from this is that it is not a single basic proposition, in isolation, which we can hold with certainty and trust that it will support or buttress our belief systems. Conversely, our belief system gives the sense of certainty to our basic propositions.

A. "God exists" as a properly basic belief

What a basic belief actually is, and how one functions in a belief system, is viewed differently by the classical foundationalist, the reformed epistemologist, and Wittgenstein. For classical foundationalism, a basic belief is rational because of its particular internal rational attributes: it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses regardless of the context in which it is held. From propositions endowed with one of those three characteristics, so goes the argument, we can build a rational belief system. The reformed epistemologist can accept a vast plurality of rational beliefs because he sees the basicality of a particular belief as inseparable from the context in which it comes to the mind. A basic belief need only be descriptively basic.

We saw in the last chapter that "God exists" is not a properly basic proposition for the reformist. Basic propositions are ones like, "God is to be thanked and praised" in moments of contentment. It seems undeniable that the proposition, "God is to be thanked and praised", logically entails that "God exists". So, "God exists" is fundamental for the belief that "God is to be thanked and praised". "God exists" is really the basic belief. However, the reformists still speak of "God is to be thanked and praised" as properly basic even though they recognize that "God exists" is more fundamental. Any particular proposition that is characterized in terms of holy reverence, or devotion to God, logically entails that

that person firstly, and necessarily believes that God exists. Reformed epistemology's starting point for arguing for a rational religious belief is their focus upon analyzing a *particular* experience of holding beliefs in a way that is descriptively basic. A proposition of this sort will rarely be "God exists". If "God is to be thanked and praised" is truly basic, then no other belief can be more fundamental. It cannot rest on another proposition. It think that it is incongruous to see that belief as the grounds for one to believe in God in the first place. If one does not firstly believe in God's existence, then one cannot believe that He could be an object of praise. "God exists" must be the primordial proposition: it must come first. This issue in my view creates a substantial source of ambiguity in their work. There must be a way that even when a person holds "God is to be thanked and praised" in experience, the proposition "God exists" is, in at least some implicit sense, its basis. Wittgenstein shows that basic beliefs are implicitly informing our belief systems and rarely (but they certainly can be) formulated on the level of consciousness. Therefore, the proposition that "God is to be thanked and praised" logically entails the basic belief that "God exists". To understand the details of Witttgenstein's view, we must take a closer look at how a basic belief functions in a belief system.

B. A basic belief and its belief system

For Wittgenstein, as I understand his remarks, a basic belief and a belief system are established in cooperation with each other. Another way of putting it is that a belief system, together with its basic beliefs, come into being simultaneously. A belief system and its basic beliefs are inseparable. If you have one you have the other. Instead of focusing on a basic proposition for rationality in the style of classical foundationalism, we ought to focus on the system in which that basic belief takes part, and how it moves or operates around it.

The above is nicely illustrated by Wittgenstein when he writes:

> I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can *discover* them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.[23]

To begin we need to discuss what he means by saying that he does not *explicitly learn* the propositions that stand fast for him. It is with this idea that

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[23]Ibid., §152. Wittgenstein's emphasis.

Wittgenstein focuses on concept formation. For Wittgenstein our beliefs spontaneously come upon us by virtue of our behavior in the world: often by meaningful communal practices or rituals. For instance, Wittgenstein notes that we never explicitly learn the proposition that chairs exist in the world. As a young child, perhaps our father asks us to stand on a chair to retrieve an object off of a high shelf; that we ought to bring the chair in from the other room for him; that, as a child, we ought to sit still in the chair and stop annoying others with our frantic movement and so on. I suppose, given these examples, that it could be said that we implicitly learn that chairs exist. But the point is that the abstract proposition, "chairs exist", never (or rarely if ever) occurs to us as an object of our knowledge which we are explicitly taught. It is fundamental to being in the world. It is nearly as absurd as being taught that I am alive. I know that I am alive, I must be in order to write this thesis! In the same way I know that chairs exist; they must exist because I sit on them when I write this thesis. It is not something that requires instruction. What the above implies is that basic beliefs say very little to us when they are isolated in the same manner than a logician who isolates, then analyzes, propositions of logic. Furthermore, if basic beliefs say very little to us when they are isolated, they cannot offer us much if we focus on them in epistemology.

If I doubted basic beliefs like "chairs exist", or "I exist", I would intellectually collapse and be submerged in such a chaotic state from which I could never rise again. However, that is not a pragmatic statement! I do not mean to say that it is extremely prudent of me to accept that chairs and I exist, or else I would not be able to psychologically contravene the strain of the ensuing confusion. I mean to say that if I could not accept that chairs and I exist I would not know what it means to know anything. If I ought not accept that chairs exist, what proposition of knowledge ought I accept as true? The notion of truth and knowledge vanishes if these propositions can be doubted. This understanding of basic propositions, how they are axial in our behavior, inscribes the dawning of the very concepts of truth and knowledge.

On knowledge being grounded in a context rather than on a particular kind of proposition of logic Wittgenstein says that:

> The child learns to believe a host of things. I.e. it learns to act according to those beliefs. Bit by bit there forms a system of what is believed, and in that system some things stand

unshakably fast and some are more or less liable to shift. What stands fast does so, not because it is intrinsically obvious or convincing; it is rather held fast by what lies around it.[24]

I would like to further illustrate this point, that a basic belief implicitly functions like an axis of meaningfulness, and also that it seems idle or trivial for an epistemologist to isolated one for analysis. I will consider the proposition that "the earth is older that I am", and show that it is grounded in my actions and daily practice. During my visit to the War Rooms Museum in London I saw the bunker-like facilities in which the British government, headed by Churchill, convened to discuss national and allied strategy during the Second World War. I saw the consultation room of the cabinet ministers and military officers. Within it were the original chairs, decor and so on. In the "Maps Room" were aged maps and documents from the early forties with faded, blotched ink. All of it was left as it was after the war and before my existence. What sense is there for me to abandon my grandfather's stories of the war, my history courses on this period, etc. to think that the War Rooms Museum is just a clever hoax and my grandfather and history professors to be in collaboration, maliciously deceiving me, laughing at my expense? The War Rooms Museum has sense and is logically connected to what I had been taught by my Grandfather and history professors as I grew older and learned more about historical developments and my current generation. All of this logically entails that the earth has existed longer than I have. I do not know what it would mean to think otherwise. The very notion of investigating this proposition for its rational merits in general comes into conflict with any notion of sense. What would those merits or demerits be like? Everything around me (parents, grandparents, the conceptual use of "heredity" in all of its forms, history and geology books, technological developments, evolutionary theory, graveyards, paleontology, archeology, documentaries on past art movements, museums virtually of all kinds, and so on) indicate that this proposition is true. Furthermore, those parenthetical examples above require that I accept that the earth is older than I am or else I would not understand them. This proposition is part of knowing what those examples entail, indeed, what they amount to.

In order to bring the reformists into the discussion on the role, nature, and sense of basic propositions, we can consider Plantinga's seemingly contradictory remark:

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[24]Ibid., §144.

I know the propositions in the foundations of my noetic structure, but not by virtue of knowing other propositions; for these are the ones I start with.[25]

Plantinga is correct in terms of being consistent with foundationalism. He is also correct, for the most part, when we look at his examples of basic beliefs. If we take his example of holding that "God disapproves of what I have done" in a moment of guilt, we see that that *experience* requires that proposition to be the primary one which is *recalled to the mind*. In other words, that proposition is basic in that moment concerning one's feelings. But, we can see *logically*, concerning this person's form of life (she presumably being a Christian) that her basic belief is that "God exists". If God did not exist in the first place, she would have no reason to feel guilt. At least, to be precise, she has no reason to feel guilt before God if she does not think that a God is there to care about her offensive behavior. The reformist asks us to see the basicality of a proposition like "God disapproves of what I have done" when it is the basis of a person's circumstantial feelings. Logically, or epistemologically, we have seen that it is not really her basic belief. Imagine that I see a woman who is overwhelmed by guilt because God disapproves of what she has done. Imagine that I ask her to tell me what the ground of her grief is, and she tells me that "God exists". I would be very confused indeed. Logically it is her basic belief. It is the ground of her Christian form of life regardless of what experiences she may have or how she may express it. But, in her circumstance of feeling guilty before God the proposition, "God disapproves of what I have done", is the belief that she starts with. It is descriptively basic for her.

I think that we ought not focus on momentary experiences of holding beliefs. We should follow Wittgenstein and refer to our form of life when considering issues of rationality. This way we may focus on all of the propositions of belief we hold. A form of life impels one to think, believe and behave, in a particular way throughout all of that person's experiences. The truly basic propositions in a form of life are second nature to that person and rarely questioned. They act implicitly, thus we, normally, do not start with beliefs that are truly basic for us in experience. By focusing on all of our beliefs which hang together and make sense of our world, and seeing what is foundationally implicit for those beliefs, we can evade this

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[25]Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief In God Rational?", in C. F. Delaney (ed) *Rationality of Religious Belief* (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1979), p. 13.

difficulty that the reformists face concerning the ambiguity of what is and what is not truly a basic belief.

With regard to what has been said thus far let us consider the following remark by the Wittgensteinian D.Z. Phillips where he has the proposition "God exists" in mind as being properly basic for the reformed philosophers:

> Unlike the Reformed philosophers, Wittgenstein would not say that one could start with [basic] propositions, because the propositions have their sense, are held fast, by all that surrounds them. So before we can be sure of the ways in which we think and behave, we do not have to start from these propositions. How could we since the propositions have their life in the ways we think and behave... On the contrary, they are taken for granted, rarely formulated, and taken out of the traffic of discourse as far as any doubt, conjecture or proof in relation to them is concerned.[26]

We can see that Phillips draws the distinction between what a basic proposition is for the reformists (how it is the focus of their investigations) and how a basic belief is implicit for Wittgenstein (how it ought not be an epistemological focus). We do not logically start with what are truly basic propositions. The reformists start their investigation by considering how we act and behave, i.e. particular circumstances of believing. We have seen that those beliefs are rarely the fundamental ones. We can also see that since basic beliefs are held fast by all that surrounds them, we ought to consider the entire system when making a claim of rationality while nearly ignoring what are our truly basic beliefs.

C. Reformed epistemology is *not* a Calvinist philosophy: the Wittgensteinian and reformist philosophical ideal

While devoting this section to the explication of Wittgenstein in the light of reformed epistemology, it is important to dispel a common Wittgensteinian assumption about their project. Wittgensteinian philosophers are interested in a mode of inquiry that is not theoretical in nature. Theoretical philosophers normally argue for the acceptance of a system of particular ideas. Nothing is further from Wittgenstein's mind than logically supporting a particular system of belief. Wittgenstein says of his philosophical goal:

> My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them.[27]

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[26]D. Z. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism* (Westview Press, London, 1995), pp. 40-41.
[27]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984), p. 2.

Philosophy must not intervene in the meaningfulness in human lives. The task is to provide a logical mode of inquiry that will allow for the natural voicing of different passions, as they are bound up in various grammars of belief. This way they can be investigated in a manner that is conceptually nonviolent. The necessity for this is obvious. Wittgenstein was interested in showing the variety of conceptual grammars in use to illustrate that logic is internal to a context of belief. This, furthermore, gives rise to a particular attendant concept of knowledge. Ultimately we must not begin our inquiry in applying a theory of what the necessary and sufficient conditions of religious belief must be, nor in applying a theory which has incorporated essential conditions of knowledge into it.

The context of our beliefs is where we use the concept of knowledge pertaining to God, right/wrong, ethics, rationality and so on. If the traditional philosopher claims that S is essential to belief P, we can show that that may not be the case for others in differing contexts. This is comparable to Campbell's work. We saw that his quest for an essence of all religious belief distorts the sense of many divergent grammars of religiousness. We lose the particular sense of the divergent and often incommensurable forms of religious belief. His theory is intolerant to some differing grammatical expressions, while being ultimately false in other contexts.

Some Wittgensteinian philosophers see the work of reformed epistemology by the same light as I see the work of Campbell. Campbell, who is aided by the theories of Freud and Jung, argues that religion is unified by a few particular ideas. Since all religion can be distilled to a few fundamental concepts for him, it is theoretical. We saw that some devotees of a religion may conform to his theory while others may not. I concluded the discussion of his work by showing that there is no epistemological obligation for a devotee to comply to his theory.

Is there a theoretical force in the work of the reformists? Do they argue for a very particular form of religious belief? Some philosophers maintain that reformed epistemology emphasizes the work of John Calvin, and his like-minded theological commentators, to such an extent that their philosophical thrust ought to be characterized as Calvinistic. Thus, all forms of belief must be measured in relation to Calvinism. It has been thought that the notion of the Calvinistic God so permeates their work that it characterizes everything they discuss, including reason. They are Protestant Christian philosophers who are interested in showing that their belief can be held rationally. Their epistemology is theoretical in nature

because it surrounds a particular view which expresses the one and true human reality for them. D. Z. Phillips is one philosopher who affirms this view in writing:

> What is being proposed is an epistemology, a mode of inquiry, which is itself religious in character. Since epistemologies are regarded as theories or hypotheses about the nature of reality, which are either true or false, reformed philosophers cannot tolerate a plurality of noetic structures. There is an issue of correctness or incorrectness involved. There can be only one true theory of knowledge. It seems that, according to the reformed philosophers...they trust that the only true theory of knowledge is not only religious, but Christian; not only Christian, but Protestant; not only Protestant, but Calvinistic.[28]

I think that Phillips' remark misrepresents the whole tone of their reflections. It is true that the reformists have a particular view of rational belief. Their view is conceptually tied to the foundationalist model. They argue that it is the logical structure by which all kinds of beliefs must be analyzed. I concur that this is an issue that deserves critiquing. But, I think that Phillips' view is wrong because he attaches Calvinism to their position about rational belief. One problem with the reformists point of view surrounds the sublimation of the foundationalist picture of knowledge, and I think that leads them in a bad direction when seeking the rationality of belief. However, the crux of reformed epistemology can be grasped with or without consideration given to the Calvinist religious perspective. Is it true that the reformists cannot tolerate a plurality of noetic structures because they are Calvinistic? The reformists do have one idea of what a rational belief entails. We clearly saw in the last chapter that they can "tolerate" a vast plurality of noetic structures. In fact they must accept an enormous domain of religious beliefs, a domain that apparently has no limits. In my mind, any kind of belief could be conceived as rational by them. Their concerns, nonetheless, are strictly logical and not actually religious in nature at all. They have claimed that they are not interested in making an atheist convert to any religious view. An atheist is rational as long as his noetic structure conforms to their understanding of the foundationalist model.

In the same essay that the above quotation can be found, Phillips defends himself from the criticism of a critic who lumps him with Plantinga, claiming that their work ought to be characterized, exclusively, as Christian philosophy. Phillips writes of his own work:

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[28]D. Z. Phillips, *Faith After Foundationalism* (Westview Press, London, 1995), p. 97.

...I do not conceive of it as the work of a Christian philosopher or a Christian scholar. Hopefully, it is the work of a philosopher endeavoring to become clear about a cluster of beliefs which have been and are extremely important in the lives of men and women. The aim is not to persuade people to believe, but to understand the character of their beliefs. The aim is not to persuade them that there is a God, but to see what it may mean to be so persuaded. ...Plantinga's concerns are the concerns of a Christian philosopher asking whether Christians have a right to believe what they say they believe.[29]

His clarification of what he is engaged in, as opposed to the project offered by the reformed philosophers, spawns an irony. What Phillips says about his own work is epigrammatic of the intentions of the reformist's work. His characterization of the reformist's work is, as we have seen, not entirely accurate. Plantinga's concerns are not about persuasion. Plantinga's aim is not to persuade another to believe in God. He seeks to understand the character of beliefs, which are important in the lives of women and men. The reformists do admit that they can show how one may hold the Christian belief rationally. However, they can show how one may hold an atheist belief rationally also. But, even if a philosopher asks if Christians have a right to believe what they do, and seeks to give an answer, does that necessarily mean that the philosopher must be a Christian philosopher? I must admit that I am not completely clear on what is bound up with a philosopher having "Christian concerns." Is it the concern to promote the faith to all humanity? The promotion of the logical acceptance of the faith in some academic circles? Or a desire to produce a theology rather than the results of a disinterested philosophical investigation? Regardless of what that label may indicate about their work, we have seen that the reformists are interested in the rationality of atheism as well. Most people in the academic world seek a rational understanding of religious belief rather than atheism. Can we seriously allege that the philosophical concerns of the reformed epistemologists are Christian? Many of their examples are drawn from Protestant Christianity, but their epistemology is not.

We ought to resist mischaracterizations by paying close attention to the character of the philosophical presentation. The reformists are not interested in isolating basic propositions of an abstract nature, regardless of the context in which they may have a role. Also, they cannot be characterized as Christian philosophers who are seeking to persuade another that their own religious perspective is the correct one. There are great similarities in the work of Wittgenstein and reformists, especially in considering the importance of contexts of belief and their

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[29]Ibid., pp. 95-96.

particularities in their respective work. But we cannot be lulled into thinking that reformed epistemology is really an American version of Wittgensteinian thought. It must be clear that the interests of reformed epistemology concern the logical status of basic beliefs. They intend to accurately express that status as the starting point of all rational structures of belief.

If there is to be any criticism of their work from my view, it would be connected to their assertions and presuppositions surrounding their foundational focus.

IV. Showing Contra Saying Logical Structure

There are few continuities in Wittgenstein's thought throughout all of his philosophical output. But, there is one notion that seems to have stayed with him from the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to *On Certainty*. This idea concerns the expressibility of logical form. He questions the possibility that propositions which express logical principles can be meaningful. These are propositions such as "there is an external world", which expresses a basic logical principle. For instance, that the earth has existed long before my death, is meaningful when it is logically connected to activities in my life, such as learning history, geology and so on. As a proposition of logic, the question of its truth, isolated from my behavior in the world, cannot be determined because it expresses nothing. Wittgenstein wanted to free philosophers from the idea that there is an Archimedean criterion of rationality to which we can appeal as a context-independent, yet meaningful, concept. Perhaps it can be stated that where reformed philosophers do share similar ideas about the importance of context with Wittgenstein, a substantial difference is that the reformists hold onto the foundationalist's focus on basic beliefs as a key to explain all rational systems of belief. Wittgenstein does maintain that there are "basic" beliefs, but they ought not interest us epistemologically. I sit in a chair which *shows* that I believe in the existence of an external world. Basic beliefs are not grounded in a metaphysical, static, rational structure, but they are tacit and implicit in my activity.

With such metaphysical structures of rationality in mind as that which is the ground for belief, Wittgenstein says "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness

of our believing."[30] His remark is elliptical in the sense that he does talk of the grounds of belief, but at the end of his analysis we must toss aside any assertion of a logical structure that can be identified as being paradigmatic of the rational man's belief. Perhaps the "ground of belief" for Wittgenstein is like some concepts formulated by Jacques Derrida[31] that must be used "under erasure". That is, we use the idea to get a clear understanding of our ordinary use, or the sense, of concepts, but "grounds of belief", and all other concepts that surround and aid in Wittgensteinian analysis, ought not be understood as necessary postulates for rational belief systems, as if they served as metaphysical entities. Such philosophical concepts merely aid us in becoming clear about where our beliefs, and their justification, come to an end. When philosophizing we may discuss what the grounds are for another person's belief P, meaning from what proposition does the conviction in belief P come. To be strict, when Wittgenstein speaks of the ground of belief he means to refer to that which we believe in unwaveringly, that which makes sense of our actions. Basic propositions ought to serve us philosophically as reminders about the limits of sense. They explicitly clarify from where the sense of the logic of our beliefs come, which is not normally considered at the level of consciousness.

The following quotation from Wittgenstein is of particular interest to us because it shows a shift in focus from that which is central to the reformists project. He writes:

> Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; - but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part: it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.[32]

The reformists advocate seeing a rational belief in terms of a single proposition which is immediately recalled to the mind in a permissible circumstance; it is immediately apprehended as true. For Wittgenstein, we must only seek the clarity of the logic of our language, e.g. making sense of the concepts that we use. Basic propositions ought not be the locus for investigating rationality,

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[30]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, London, 1972), §166.
[31]Some of Derrida's philosophical concepts, such as "Différance", "Supplément", "Pharmakon", and "Hymen", are notoriously frustrating for many because they function in this way. Nonetheless, they must not be thought of as part of an essential metaphysical structure of reality; that is, in the fashion of G. W. Leibniz's "Monads" or A. N. Whitehead's "Actual Entities". These concepts used by Derrida and Wittgenstein only aid one to conduct certain analytical strategies for considering logical issues about reality. They are used to provide clarity and precision about the beliefs that we already have about reality.
[32]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, London, 1972), §204.

what ought to be is the sense in forms of life. This is because, as we have just seen, the ground of belief (which provides the limitations of sense in a context of belief) is the activity in a language-game. I think the reformists would agree with this point because their concern is with ordinary circumstances in which a belief can be held basically. However, we do not need foundationalist imagery and metaphorical structures of belief, but detailed descriptions of the sense in forms of life. For Wittgenstein the structurality of a form of life could look like anything and whatever it looked like would be inconsequential.

The foundationalistic attitude that remains in the reformist's work surrounds their focus on the inherent rationality of holding basic beliefs. Once the basicality of a belief is apprehended we can insure that the corresponding non-basic beliefs will form a rational noetic structure. As we have seen, for Wittgenstein it is quite different. When we look to the non-basic beliefs which we acquire we see that they show what is logically basic for them. We cannot be said to consciously apprehend, and then hold, "God exists". One may experience a moment of wanting to praise and thank God and think that "God is to be thanked and praised", but the truly basic belief, which is implicit, primordial, and yet has its sense by these kinds of experiences, is "God exists". The proposition is the hinge on which turn other beliefs such as "God is to be thanked and praised". True basic beliefs cannot be explicitly interrogated like propositions of logic (they cannot be said), because they are implicit in the meaningfulness of our actions. Imagine a man who is playing a violin says that one of his basic beliefs is that "there are physical objects". This proposition would ordinarily strike one as idle. An ordinary response could be that this proposition is painfully obvious and perhaps not worth saying. Therefore, we may rhetorically ask, what does it say? Concerning the idleness of logically analyzing basic propositions Wittgenstein says:

> We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground![33]

The rough ground is the language we use in our ordinary activity. It is where basic propositions are seemingly unnoticed because they are implicit hinges of meaningfulness. They are only of interest to us epistemologically in as much as they can be described as serving in this capacity. To focus on basic beliefs creates

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[33]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), §107. Wittgenstein's emphasis.

problems because there is very little we can do with them. If a basic belief is made explicit, when it is used implicitly as a hinge of meaning in a context, it can say nothing. Implicit logic can only be described. Wittgenstein writes about the grounds of a belief not having an explicitly rational proposition:

> You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable).
> It is there – like our life.[34]

Generally speaking, we must accept this notion that belief systems, in the end, are not based upon rational grounds at all. One's belief system may be similar to another, yet foreign to others. There are many similarities with the Christian and the Jew. However, the Christian and the Peruvian Shaman have virtually no similarities. A particular belief may be incomprehensible for one person to hold in his life, yet another finds the same belief to be central to his own existence. One can only say that a belief which is personally impossible to hold is simply there in the life of the other. As an example of the extreme conceptual gulf that often exists between two people, we can look at the work of the American poet, Albert Goldbarth, who nicely expresses this reality concerning his impression of Jewish worship. He writes that orthodox Jews:

> ...softly rock their prayer as if each slowdanced in place
> with an angle, and listening as their opaque wall of Hebrew,
> uttered brick by brick, rose out of the room to somewhere
> I could never believe and they could never not.[35]

Or again, in considering Judaism and Moses' revelation at the burning bush, he writes:

> Elijah this.
> The Children of Israel that.
> And Moses. Moses in the Bulrushes, Moses
> blahblahblah...
> ...every night I'd read another chapter
> in those actionful schlock-epic books by Edgar Rice Burroughs,
> the ones where Mars (Barsoom, the natives called it) is
> adventured across by stalwart Terran John Carter, Jeddak
> (warrior-king) and husband of the gauzy-saronged and
> dusk-eyed Dejah Thoris, Princess of all those red-duned climes.
> It made more sense to me
> than God in a great bush of fire.[36]

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[34]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, London, 1972), §559.
[35]Albert Goldbarth, "The Dynamics of Huh", in *Heaven and Earth: A Cosmology* (The University of Georgia Press, Athens, GA, 1991), p. 9.
[36]Ibid., "The Nile", p. 15.

There are differing belief systems that are equally rational, and the reformists would not object to this notion. The structure of rationality does not start with basic beliefs, but an a-rational action and reaction which elicit particular forms of behavior. Because of this the structurality of a rational belief system is quite untidy. The propositions of a belief system are all bound together by many intricate logical connections. Taken separately, each proposition performs some particular logical function in a language-game. Meaningfulness is achieved by assessing logical connections.

Am I asserting that there are no rational grounds for our beliefs because rationality in general cannot be accounted for? To say that would be to misunderstand the nature of meaning that I am trying to show. Of course there is rationality. But what amounts to rationality, like what amounts to God, is determined by the use of the concept in a particular context. Wittgenstein questions a standard philosophical assertion, an intellectual assumption that has been around for ages. We hear post-enlightenment philosophers wanting to affirm the rationality, for instance, of a basic belief like "There is an external world", as if the proposition fulfilled necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge. If rationality can be affirmed then it can serve as rational grounds for empirical beliefs. The ethos of this kind of project requires us to ask how we can really be sure of the rationality of a belief. The problem of this kind of question is that it tries to say that which can only be shown. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein focuses on the logical proposition, "I know that that is a tree". This is a proposition equivalent to "There is an external world". As it is external to any activity in a particular language-game, what can one make of it? Because we cannot make anything of it, how would we analyze its logicality? We must show its logicality. Once we think of ordinary contextual uses for such statements, says Wittgenstein, its logic becomes clear and precise. Therefore, we must show the logic of those propositions by describing the particular role that they play in a language-game.

Let's look at what role the proposition, "I know that that is a tree", may have in a language game. Imagine that I am walking with my brother at night around the city center of Rouen, France. Upon reaching the cathedral he notices what he gathers is a bizarrely placed, ornate pillar-like structure protruding out from the

cathedral's western wall. When he questions me about it I say, "That's a tree. It is caught in the shadows of the street lamps and seems as if it is part of the building, but it is a tree." He then says, "Are you sure? It looks like part of the structure to me." Then I finally reply, "I know that that is a tree. I have lived in Rouen for over a year now and have walked next to the cathedral a hundred times while noticing that tree." We can clearly comprehend the logic, or sense, of "I know that that is a tree" as it is expressed in this particular performative utterance. One cannot comprehend what that proposition means, the logic of it, apart from a particular context in which it is used.

Wittgenstein called propositions of logic which are abstract and dislocated from any contextual use "pseudo-propositions". They look like meaningful propositions for the logician, but when they are analyzed by Wittgensteinian eyes, we notice that there is very little that we can do with them as propositions of logic. We saw earlier that concepts about religion, God, salvation and so on, have no essence. These propositions can only be understood by comprehending their role in a particular context. We must investigate a context of belief in order to see what really amounts to propositions of logical form.

Concerning this issue Wittgenstein writes:

> 'A is a physical object' is a piece of instruction which we give only to someone who doesn't yet understand either what 'A' means, or what 'physical objects' means. Thus it is instruction about the use of words, and 'physical objects' is a logical concept (like colour, quantity...). And that is why no such proposition as: 'there are physical objects' can be formulated.
> Yet we encounter unsuccessful shots at every turn.[37]

Wittgenstein shows that "A is a physical object" is used in the language-game of instruction. It informs a person that A is equivalent to physical objects. A is connected to physical objects by the logic of equivalence. By that connection we can comprehend the sense, or logic of this piece of instruction: A is equivalent to physical objects. It instructs one how to use the concept of physical objects. But, "there are physical objects" has no logical connection to anything, it is nonsense as a proposition that is isolated from any context of its use. It has no role, nor does it make a move in a language-game. Its logic is indeterminate.

Wittgenstein argues that the logic of a basic belief is not the ordinary concern or focus for the believer, therefore, it ought not be for philosophers. We

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[37]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Harper and Row, London, 1972), §36.

see through Wittgenstein, that no reasons remain for the reformed epistemologist to consider the foundationalist picture of knowledge to be tenable as that which expresses the rational ground of belief. Given that the ground of logicality can be shown to be uniquely circumscribed in a context, they ought to give up their attachment to the spirit of foundationalism. The rationality of belief systems does not originate from any one proposition as the foundationalists and reformists assume. If we look at the activity in a language-game we may comprehend how it is logical. For this reason Wittgenstein writes:

> Am I not getting closer and closer to saying that in the end logic cannot be described? You must look at the practice of language, then you will see it.[38]

The logic that one will see in the practice of language is not grounded in a single proposition. We cannot describe what may be the logical grounds for belief, because there are no logical grounds. Wittgenstein also writes that, "Logic must take care of itself."[39] We cannot formulate what a rational belief must be like. We must look to the internal logic of a language-game and see it.

V. On Conceptual Intelligibility and the Limits of Rational Belief

A. Standing at the gates of irrationalism: the case against Wittgenstein and the reformed epistemologist

The criticism of not being able to argue against superstitious beliefs stands as an insurmountable obstacle for the reformists, while it can be dispelled with Wittgenstein and other philosophers influenced by him.

The argument persists that the grounds of religious belief (and by implication, beliefs in general) are not rational nor non-rational, but are subject to a contextually circumscribed form of rationality. Some would say that this presupposes a kind of laissez-faire anti-epistemology, and that anyone who holds the statement would have to accept all forms of belief systems as philosophically legitimate, including those which incorporate obscure superstitious propositions. If we merely look at the sense of beliefs in a context, we can call it rational regardless of what superstitious beliefs may be held within it. They would argue,

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[38]Ibid., §501.
[39]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks - 1914-1916* (Basil Blackwell, London, 1961), §2.

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any belief can be held rationally if we can appeal to the internal logic of the particular language-game in which it has a role.

Reformed epistemology faces a similar accusation. As I see their project, *any* belief can be called basic if one can describe how it is the base of a belief system in an experience which calls it to the mind. If we can do that, we can claim that we hold the basic belief rationally.

Others may object to the Wittgensteinian view that religious beliefs are a-rational and subject to contextually circumscribed forms of rationality by claiming that it is *merely* concerned with the everyday distinction between sense and nonsense. Though this may clarify and elucidate already held beliefs, its dominant characteristics for some traditional philosophers are that of barrenness, impotence, and inadequacy in light of the "first philosophy" espoused by Descartes. For many it seems to be a kind of an "I'm OK, you're OK" anti-intellectualist fiddling while Rome burns. The critic impatiently demands, "I want the truth of religious belief! Does God exist, or not!?"

It is commonly thought that for Wittgenstein the philosopher must completely cease arguing for the rationality of particular beliefs and against others. Henry Staten writes that some critics of Wittgenstein's work - who concentrate on his unorthodox dedication to the description of language-games - see it "...as though the price of describing were that we have to give up saying anything interesting."[40] John Ellis, concurs that this view of Wittgenstein's work conjures up a moribund, ho-hum, intellectual world, where:

> ...no one would be able to argue the case for a specific viewpoint with well-formulated argument and relevant evidence...because all viewpoints and "pictures" would have been declared in advance to be equal, with none, however compelling, to be judged superior, and none, however absurd, to be dismissed.[41]

B. Is *any* belief potentially rational for Wittgenstein?

The criticism that Wittgenstein advocates a laissez-faire epistemology, and that his view is powerless and unproductive because he is *only* concerned with the sense and nonsense of a language-game, must be dispelled.

We gain more from describing the practice of language than merely an understanding of the particular logic of a language-game. Attention to language

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[40]Henry Staten, "Wittgenstein and the Intricate Evasions of 'Is'", *New Literary History* (Vol. 18: 281-300, 1988), p. 285.
[41]John M. Ellis, "Playing Games With Wittgenstein", *New Literary History* (Vol. 18: 301-308, 1988), p. 304.

also reveals that some beliefs make use of concepts in unclear and puzzling ways. When this is evident the philosopher cannot offer a believer a different belief as a better alternative to cure the confusion. The philosopher can call attention to the confused belief and question the reasons that the believer has for holding it. This will prevent just any belief from being held, and possibly motivate a person to investigate the depth, coherence, and sincerity of his form of life.

What does the existence of superstition show us philosophically? Consider the well known superstition that if I break a mirror I will endure seven years of bad luck. What is puzzling about this belief is the assumption that there is a causal connection between breaking the mirror and the seven years of bad luck. The concept of causation in this belief is the root of the confusion. It is senseless to think that a physical action can cause a seven year period of bad luck. What can be said about superstitious beliefs is that they express a shallow conceptual grammar. If a person announced in a crowded room that the mirror which I just broke caused me seven years of bad luck, I should expect to hear some laughter and joking. This is a common reaction to superstitions because most people do not take them seriously. If a person is serious in saying that I will have seven years of bad luck because I broke a mirror, most people would wonder if the person really understands the idea of cause and effect.

Everyone learns the concept of cause and effect by the important role it plays in our ordinary experiences. We see effects from corresponding causes a thousand times a day. We see cause and effect in the sun rising, water boiling, flags waving in the wind, etc. We know that a frozen lake is slippery, and if a person walks on one he can easily lose traction and fall. It is difficult to think of an ordinary experience which would introduce a person to the belief that breaking a mirror causes one seven years of bad luck. Presumably most people have broken a mirror at least one time in their life, and nobody is known to have suffered such a fate as a result. We can imagine that this superstition perhaps began because mirrors are valuable, and parents told their children that if they broke one they would have seven years of bad luck. This involves trying to prevent the destruction of one's valuables by careless children who tend to play recklessly around them. People joke about the superstition, but if someone actually believed it I imagine that questions concerning his seriousness, or even sanity, would arise.

That one accuses another of believing a superstition has no greater currency than in religion. Some philosophers call some religious believers superstitious, as

some religious believers call other religious believers. My task is to show that Wittgenstein can distinguish between religious belief and superstition, and that superstitious beliefs ought to be dismissed. Can Wittgenstein accept *any* religious belief as sensible by appeal to the internal logic of the language-game in which it has a role? The method of analysis that Wittgenstein prescribes involves being clear on the relationship between contexts of belief. What logical ground is there *between* them? Do language-games overlap? What will be revealed by a grammatical clash between two different language-games which share a common context? For instance, do empirical or historical truths (which are determined by an investigation in search of facts) conflict with some religious beliefs? If there is such a conflict in a context, will it reveal that a belief is fantastic, unintelligible, or superstitious? If a conflict occurs between two language-games that overlap, will consequences pertaining to the meaningfulness of the language-games be apparent?

In the beginning of the essay *Religious Belief and Language-Games*[42], D. Z. Phillips notes some misgivings that he has had about the way that he has discussed religious language-games in the past. His misgivings arise from speaking of religious language-games as if they were completely cut off from other forms of social life and propositions of knowledge that are not marked by a religious grammar. I do fear the same characterization of language-games by what I have said in this chapter. This characterization of language-games begins to take form when a philosopher so concerns himself, at times exclusively, with challenging a general form of propositions. By introducing the concept of language-games to perform this task, they readily seem as if they were esoteric, arcane, and cryptic for those who are not within the language-game. So, religious language-games look as if they conceptually encapsulate and shelter those in it; that the people within them seemingly are not a part (nor privy to the sense) of non-religious language-games. Thus, the picture of society that we are left with is one where every person, or particular community, is detached from all meaning except that which rests in their own impervious sphere of religious understanding.

When the Christian and atheist eat ice cream on a hot summer day don't they both believe for the same reasons that, if not eaten quickly enough, the ice cream will eventually melt? This commonplace experience illustrates that there are some propositions of belief which are shared in a common context. This context is one where all people know what happens to ice cream in the sun regardless of what

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[42]In D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (Macmillan, London, 1993), pp. 56-78.

religious beliefs they hold. It is difficult indeed to imagine a person who does not have this belief about ice cream. But, this kind of discussion must be done with great care, because the risk of diminishing what particular criteria of meaningfulness there is in a context of religious belief by overemphasizing various criteria of non-religious contexts of belief is considerable.

For Wittgenstein the concept of God cannot be reasoned about by a transcontextual criterion of meaningfulness. There is not one grammatical form of belief which is the common denominator for all forms of belief. Therefore, we can question the breadth of meaningfulness in Professor Steven Hawking's proclamation that God does not exist. His research in theoretical physics show that the universe has been imploding and exploding eternally. From this he concludes that there is no God. But his concept of what God must be is far too narrow. To be strict, for Hawking, we can only conclude that there is no God that began to construct the world on such and such a date in the universe. Objecting to the breadth of meaningfulness of his belief involves distinguishing the grammar of God from the grammar of physical research. However, imagine a Christian who believes that the world was literally created by God at a particular time within seven days. If Hawking is correct about the fact that the earth was never literally created by God, then the Christian's belief is wrong. This is because two language-games (physics and Christianity) are logically related to one another in one context. The Christian and Steven Hawking have beliefs about the *physical origins* of the universe. Both of them cannot be correct. Hawking's belief about the physical origins of the universe *contradicts* the Christian's belief. We must seek to understand who has the grammar of belief which is congruent with the logic of determining the *physical* origins of the universe. It is Hawking's belief which makes intelligible moves in the language-game of physics.

However, there would be no contradiction between the Christian and Hawking if the Christian believed that the creation of the universe is, for instance, an expression that the universe is imbued with Divine purpose. If that were the case the meaning of their respective beliefs would be incommensurable. While working within the field of theoretical physics Hawking is, of course, not equipped with methods of investigation that could determine what that Divine purpose is, or that there is no Divine purpose at all. Hawking's belief is properly empirical, and the Christian's belief is properly devotional. Hawking's belief properly has the

grammar of physics, and the Christian's belief properly has the grammar of religious worship.

The concept of God does not have the identical grammar as physical concepts. Why is it that the Christian and atheist both believe their ice cream will melt if they leave it in the sun, yet they do not have the same beliefs regarding holy reverence? Knowing the ontological status of objects in the physical world (facticity) involves a different grammar than knowing God. For instance, I may not know where my keys are, but I can find them in a way that will *not* help me find God. To know the physical world involves an investigation into physical realities. But the key term is the grammar of "realities". When a religious believer speaks of Divine reality, it cannot amount to the same thing as physical reality. The ancient harbor of Alexandria in Egypt - which was only speculated about by references to it in the fourth book of the Odyssey by Homer - was recently investigated and found, and its reality confirmed. This kind of investigation is nonsense in confirming the reality of God. Hawking's belief assumes that God is like a theoretical physical object which awaits discovery. God, however, is not a theoretical physical object to be discovered along with black holes, superfluidity, absolute zero, or blackbody.

I also agree with Phillips' dictum that "religion must take the world seriously."[43] A religious believer cannot encounter events in his life and have fantastic beliefs about them. I am not presupposing a transcontextual concept of what amounts to fantastic and acceptable beliefs. The acceptability of beliefs, in certain contexts, are uniform and already agreed upon. There are structures of intelligibility which are already in place and function in ordinary discourse. There is a difference between one not accepting the Christian faith and one not accepting the fact that ice cream melts when it is exposed to the sun. Only people who have a particular disposition to Christianity are moved by it and accept it, but that ice cream melts is an empirical fact and is not a matter of personal disposition towards the proposition. All people who have eaten ice cream on a hot summer day know that it melts in the sun. What if the language-game of religious expression and empirical fact overlap? Problems arise if one expresses religious belief P and it contradicts his own, and everyone else's, non-religious beliefs. To paraphrase Phillips, he would distort and violate what everyone already knows. A religious belief which contradicts empirical propositions that we all share and which are expressed in our actions is a violation of what we know.

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[43]Ibid., p. 70.

I want to consider a fine example that Phillips offers about religious believers confusing what we already know and not taking the world seriously. Imagine a religious believer who speaks of death as if it were a sleep of long duration. This is problematic talk because we know what sleeping is. Normally it is a daily occurrence to rest one's body in order to be invigorated for another day. We all know that we can say "see you in the morning" literally. We all know that sleep is a temporary resting of the body, and the temporality of it is essential to everyone's understanding of the concept. Likewise, we all know that death is that which is caused by the permanent ceasing of physical operations and not resting them for further use. We all know that for the dead there will not be another day, and we will not interact with the dead when they "wake up". We all know that there is no temporality to the concept of death, it is forever. All of this is obvious to everyone. If anyone contradicted me on these statements above, and argued the opposite, I would not consider that person as merely having a different grammar of belief, but I would seriously wonder if he is human at all. A religious believer cannot be serious if he holds that death is sleep of long duration. Some would say that this belief is a superstition because his belief contradicts what everyone knows is true.

I must use another example of a religious belief that reveals conceptual confusion. Certain literal readings of scripture seem to clash with established historical truths. I have in mind the view that the book of the apocalypse (*The Revelation to John*) depicts a future event, moment by moment, that will come to pass. This view holds that in a particular time in the future Jesus will be in the physical form of a wounded lamb, with seven eyes and seven horns, amidst the throne of heaven where God will sit. The lamb will clasp a scroll which has seven seals on it, and begin to break them in succession. When the first four seals are broken the horsemen of the apocalypse will be called to ride into the world and usher in the last days. The souls of the martyred will cry out with impatience when the fifth seal is broken, as they remain fettered under the altar of heaven. When the sixth seal will be broken the earth will literally endure the havoc of a great earthquake. Stars will literally fall from the sky and then the sky itself will split in two "like a torn scroll."[44] The moon will turn black and the sun will become like blood, while the rich and powerful run for the caverns in the hills. The breaking of the seventh seal will prompt seven angels to blow trumpets in succession which

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[44] 6: 14.

will cause various things such as "something like a large burning mountain"[45] literally being hurled into the sea. A third of the seas will turn into blood, and then a large star named "Wormwood" will fall into the sea making a third of the water bitter, and so on until the final end of the ages.

A fact that makes this belief unintelligible is that we know the reasons and intentions for the composition of *Revelation*. The book is not an oracle which depicts future historical affairs. Neither is it the only book of its kind. It was not written down during a prophet's communion with God. We all know, or can study the research of eschatologists and biblical historians to find out, that apocalyptic literature (which seemingly always involves surreal images and events) was extremely popular in Jewish and early Christian communities, between 200 B. C. and 200 A. D., the time frame in which *Revelation* was written. Apocalypses were composed to serve a people as resistance literature to meet a crisis.[46] *Revelation*, itself, suggests that its origins stem from such an historical crisis. Chapter 17; verse 9 clearly indicates that the historical crisis involved the persecution of the early church by Roman authorities. The "harlot Babylon" symbolizes pagan Rome, "the city on seven hills." Chantal Reynier writes that, "The author, John, who finds himself in exile on the island of Patmos (Ap 1; 9), invites his reader to contemplate, in faith, the victory of the Lamb."[47] Reynier elucidates the sense of *Revelation* by making it explicit that the document comes from a member of a struggling and suffering Christian community.[48] The book is meant to support those suffering for their faith. Again he writes, "In this situation [of Christianity being a threatened minority religion], the Church, however persecuted and wounded she may be, can

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[45]8: 8.
[46]A detailed historical explanation of the sense and purpose of apocalyptic literature is included in the introduction to "The Revelation to John" in the *New American Bible* (Catholic Bible Press, Atlanta, 1987), pp. 1426-1427. Also included in the above volume is a very helpful and sober general introduction to historical truths in the Bible; it offers scholarly discussions of what, in the Bible, are facts and what are articles of faith, devotion and worship. This introduction, for the most part, sheds a lot of light on the meaning that one can justifiably have about apocalyptic literature. The introduction is comprised of the following four essays: "The Purpose of The Bible", by Eugene H. Maly, pp. vii-xiii; "The Bible and History", by Paul Jurkowitz, pp. xiv-xx; "How the Bible Came About", by Jerome Kodell O. S. B., pp. xxi-xxvii; and "How to Study the Bible", by Orlando R. Barone, pp. xxviii-xxxii.
[47]Chantal Reynier, *Le Christ au Cœur de L'Histoire*, (Bayard Éditions/Centurion, Paris, 1999), p. 164. My translation. The original French is: *L'auteur, Jean, qui se trouve en exil dans l'île de Patmos (Ap 1, 9), amène son lecteur à contempler, dans la foi, la victoire de l'Agneau.*
[48]I recognize that there is some debate about who the actual author of the book was. Some claim that it was John, while others point to evidence which suggests that it may have been written by his followers. Even if John's followers were the authors, thus it can be proven that John did not actually write it while living in exile on the island of Patmos, I contend that the meaning and point of the text remains unchanged.

say: 'Amen, come Lord Jesus!' (Ap; 22, 20)."[49] *Revelation* is worship of the meaningfulness of Jesus' ministry. This is expressed by a suffering exile who has a faith which tells him that the truth of Jesus' teachings could never be eradicated by powerful earthly regimes. One may have to hide in exile from persecution, but *Revelation* teaches that the kingdom of God will one day be triumphant over the entire world. All of the above historical facts about *Revelation* comprises relevant evidence for one to dismiss their belief that the book is intended to foretell a future event.

There are other apocalyptic books in the Apocrypha or the Pseudepigrapha[50]. What would be the evidence for us to believe that the book of *Revelation* will reveal historical accuracy while the others will not? What would comprise this evidence? Because we are speaking of belief in a future factual event, it is relevant to ask what evidence there is to suggest that it will come to pass. The sense of the images and events expressed in *Revelation* are conceptually bound to the synoptic Gospels and John. *Revelation* also shares certain attitudes about martyrdom, and the faith of the persecuted, with some of the letters of the New Testament. This particular apocalyptic book is theologically harmonious with the whole of the New Testament. This text was chosen, I imagine, for this reason. *Revelation* is a

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[49]Chantal Reynier, *Le Christ au Cœur de L'Histoire*, (Bayard Éditions/Centurion, Paris, 1999), p. 164. My translation. The original French is: *Dans cette situation, l'Église, si menacée et blessée qu'elle soit, peut dire: "Amen, viens, Seigneur Jésus! (Ap 22, 20)."*

[50]"The Apocrypha" and "the Pseudepigrapha" (being Catholic and Protestant terms respectively) are roughly synonymous. Here I wish to clarify their use generally and explain how I am using them. The writings that belong in this domain are not agreed upon by Catholics and Protestants. For the most part these writings are from the late Jewish and early Christian period (200 B. C. - 100 A. D.), thus intertestamental and extracanonical. Some of these writings were modeled on canonical books that were (for the most part) not preserved in their original Hebrew or Aramaic, *or* books that express forms of belief that are considered outside of orthodoxy. The Roman Catholic Church follows the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) which includes more extracanonical books than the Hebrew version. After some Protestant scholars and leaders (namely Martin Luther) realized that the Vulgate (the Latin version of the Old Testament) was not as close to the original texts as could be (the Vulgate reached a point in the 16th century of being translated from transliterate translations of the Septuagint), they began translating it directly from the Hebrew in an effort to comprise an Old Testament that was closer to the original. What resulted is that, for example, *Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)* and *The Book of Wisdom* remained canonical books for Catholics, yet were placed in the Pseudepigrapha by Protestants because they were part of the Septuagint. Furthermore, books like the Gnostic gospels of Mary, Thomas, and the attending apocalypses of Gnosticism, belong to the Apocrypha for Catholics as well as Protestants because they express forms of belief that both consider to be outside of orthodoxy. So, I am using both terms (Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) in a confined sense to serve my particular purpose. I wish to use them to connote books that are not collected in the Catholic or Protestant Bibles. These are books that are not central to any particular standard form of contemporary Christian communal life. The following are some non-canonical apocalypses of the New testament : *The Apocalypse of Paul, The Revelation to Stephen,* the first and second book of *Esdras,* and *The Revelation to Peter.* The following are some non-canonical Apocalypses of the Old Testament: Chapters 14 and 15 of the first book of *Enoch,* the fourth book of *Ezra,* and the second book of *Baruch.*

devotional expression concerning God as the final judge, creator and sustainer of all life on earth. The text teaches that regardless of the persecution that one may suffer at the hand of authorities and powerful adversaries, God's kingdom will reign victoriously in the end. It expresses devotion to God, in that a Christian's life begins and ends with Him, regardless of what may be suffered. The meaning of *Revelation* is sensible within the language-game of religious devotion, and not the language-game of determining future historical events.

This sense of apocalyptic literature is also bound to another historical fact about the beliefs of some of the first generation of Christians. It is known that in early Christian communities (from the resurrection to 30-40 A. D.) there was no documentation about the life and teachings of Jesus.[51] Jerome Kodell tells us why:

> In the first years after the resurrection there was little thought given to writing down a Christian library. Some of this was undoubtedly due to the example of the Lord himself who, like the rabbis of the time, taught by the spoken word, which in turn was remembered and discussed by disciples. There was no need for writing while the apostles were still alive to clarify or verify anything uncertain. Because his followers expected Jesus to return soon, any permanent writing of his teachings seemed unnecessary, and perhaps even faithless.[52]

I want to focus on the content of the last sentence as a reason why there was a delay in the documentation of Jesus' life and teaching. Some first generation Christians, then, believed that since Jesus was to come soon there was no need to write anything down because the end of salvation history would arrive, roughly, within their own (or their children's) lifetimes. Anyone who reads the New Testament will see that Jesus often taught that the end of the world was imminent by his second coming. At the time of his second coming, judgment would ensue, and the children of God (those who professed Christ) would be separated from those who did not. Those who did not profess Christ would suffer greatly for eternity, and those who did would join the Father in Heaven. In this sense these people interpreted Jesus' words as a prediction for a future historical inevitability. However, the second coming never did arrive; therefore, there must have been, presumably, a dramatic conceptual shift for these particular Christians. The meaning of what the second coming amounts to, what beware "the thief will come

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[51]There is evidence that some communities in the first decades documented hymns, psalms, and prayers, but no narratives about the life and teachings of Jesus. In 30-40 A. D. some sayings of Jesus were documented which were eventually written to form a chain of episodes. These writings are called "Q" (from the German *Quelle*, "source") and can be traced in the Gospels of *Mathew* and *Luke* (both written around 80 A. D. and intended for Christian communities of divergent cultural bases).
[52]Jerome Kodell, "How the Bible Came About" in *New American Bible* (Catholic Bible Press, Atlanta, 1987), p. xxv.

in the night"[53] means, and so on, had to take on a different sense for them, because Christ's second coming could no longer be understood as an historical event that would take place within 80 years of his resurrection. Another meaning of Jesus' words developed because of this historical fact: that, generally, as Christians, we must always live *as if it were* the last days, and we were to meet God face to face. 2,000 years after there is no sense in thinking that the apocalypse will take place shortly. The Christian must beware that the thief will come when he least expects it. This no longer means that we must always be faithful to God *because* the world is to end soon, bringing Divine judgment to all, but the exact time is not known. This expresses a human reality that we often are forgetful of God, we are fallible in this way. To be faithful we must always try to keep the knowledge of God at the forefront of our lives in order to prevent the appearance of the thief. The thief, then, represents the forgetfulness of serving God and his kingdom, which can be exemplified in serving our self-interests in the world, e. g. various actions that evoke vanity, arrogance, gluttony, lust and so on. Vanity, arrogance etc., often represents the path to death, destruction, and not eternal life, in the New Testament. For many, to serve our self-interests in the world amounts to serving the will of Satan, and not the will of God. Therefore, to be certain about the truth of some religious beliefs while rejecting others is rooted in the clarification of what everyday experiences can mean.

The Anglican theologian, John A. T. Robinson, well canvasses the above concerning the service to the kingdom of God and eschatological expressions, by writing:

> What the Christian faith provides is not a blue-print for the future of man...Its assurance rests in the fact that the whole of life is *response*, that the initiative - whether in the Beginning or the End - does not lie with us. It speaks of an evocation, a trust, an endurance, by which, in freedom, men find themselves impelled and drawn on. It points to those whose whole way of life betokens a "beyond" that will not let them rest...[54]

Religious beliefs arise from our actions and reactions to life's experiences and events. That over 2,000 years ago a person named Jesus of Nazareth lived, taught, caused reactions from the society in which He lived, and was executed by the government, is not in question. Richard P. McBrien writes that:

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[53]The thief is often represented as the second coming of Christ in the Gospels. This means that the end of the ages will come when one is inattentive and least expects it.
[54]John A. T. Robinson, *In the End God* (Harper and Row, New York, 1968), p. 139. Robinson's emphasis.

...he is called Jesus *Christ* and not simply Jesus *of Nazareth* because a certain meaning or interpretation was given to otherwise bare historical facts of his existence some two thousand years ago. It is clear, in fact, that a special value was placed on the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth even during the first century of Christianity, immediately after his death by crucifixion at the hands of the local Roman government and at the instigation of the local religious establishment.[55]

The people who surrounded Jesus from the days during his ministry to his death had an enthusiastic reaction to Him. A Christian today finds himself in the position of Pontius Pilate when he asks Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?", and Jesus says, "You say so." A Christian says that he is, and this elicits a particular form of behavior, and it evokes certain views about the course and attitude one ought to have in life. How one responds to the question must be grounded in earthly existence or ordinary experiences. The belief that the book of *Revelation* predicts historical events is not grounded in the common historical facts which describe and clarify the actual intentions of the book's author. Learning historical facts of this sort is an ordinary experience, it is relevant, and it ought to be taken seriously by those who want to hold an intelligible belief about *Revelation*. A belief which is confused, because it is comprised of two overlapping and contradictory language-games, often reveals that it is not grounded in an ordinary experience. Superstitions often appear to be fantastic for this reason.

When showing that religious belief is grounded in ordinary experiences we must be careful not to present it in a reductionist fashion either. Believing in God does not necessarily mean affirming a code of ethics that is appreciated because it is expressed in the poetic language of scripture. This would suggest that religious belief is strictly an earthly affair, and that Christianity is seemingly a kind of aesthetic lifestyle. Believing in God normally involves holding beliefs in the center of one's existence which tell one what it means to be most human. The Christian worship of the Divine most often expresses attitudes about what to hope for, what to trust in, what truth is, how all the world would be made aright if everyone loved their neighbor, etc. Being religious is not the mere appreciation of an aesthetic way of life that may be abandoned without much difficulty. For some devoted Christian believers the difference between living with faith in Christ and not having faith in Christ, is equivalent to knowing what is real and what is an illusion.

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[55] Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (HarperCollins, New York, 1981), p. 391.

Since being religious is rooted in everyday experiences we can call attention to religious beliefs that contradict what everyone knows. When we investigate the beliefs of a person who affirms a factual reading of the book of *Revelation*, for example, we ought to raise questions about the depth of his affirmation or the sincerity of his beliefs. We ought to raise questions about the breadth of meaning of a theoretical physicist's belief that there is proof that God does not exist because the world was never actually created. The Christian who holds that God did empirically create the universe can also be asked how his belief logically connects with his ordinary life as a Christian. Does his belief that God created the world have the same grammar as the common belief that watchmakers create watches? If so, what would he mean by believing that God created the world? All of these questions come from investigating grammatical conflicts between overlapping language-games. They all show that a concept is being used in an obscure fashion. A devotional religious belief is made to function like an empirical, or historical, belief; and vice versa. If one has a belief which is historical in character, for example, his reasoning about that belief must play the rules of the language-game of historical facts. These grammatical conflicts can be found on the rough ground of ordinary discourse along with the criteria which discerns if a belief is unintelligible or not.

This issue is complicated and requires delicate consideration. A careless investigator could easily misrepresent religiousness, or the beliefs of the religious. He either risks representing religion in a reductionist fashion, or as if it were esoteric. Of course, I do not claim to be the exemplary investigator. I have tried, and I hope that to some extent I have succeeded, to preserve the natural voice of religious beliefs and religiousness throughout my critique. My essential goal, nevertheless, was to elucidate a domain in which we can philosophically critique religious beliefs, and dismiss those which are superstitious and confused.

VI. Conclusion

In this comparative study we have seen that even though the focus upon foundations may seem epistemologically tempting for securing a rational base for a belief system, problems arise from it, notably a confused notion about what a basic belief actually is. Wittgenstein and the classical foundationlist agree on what

a basic religious belief is. However, they have opposing views about its epistemological importance. They agree that "God exists" is a basic belief for a religious believer. Where that belief must be the epistemological focus for the foundationalist, Wittgenstein shows that it ought to be ignored because it expresses nothing and only acts implicitly in our belief system.

Philosophically speaking the reformist occupies a place in between the foundationalist and Wittgenstein. The reformist holds that we can describe some basic beliefs as acting like the foundations of a belief system in a momentary circumstance. It is nearly Wittgensteinian in that the reformist seeks to *describe* the logic of basicality in *ordinary circumstances*. However, the reformist's focus upon basic propositions is a feature of foundationalism. The reformed epistemologist departs company with Wittgenstein and the foundationalist when he suggests that "God is to be thanked and praised" is *properly* basic for a religious believer. With Wittgenstein we responded that even when one apprehends "God is to be thanked and praised" in a conducive experience, the truly basic belief is "God exists". The latter is logically prior to the former. Yet, "God exists" is an axial proposition and meaningless in its isolation, thus it gets its sense from a Christian knowing that "God is to be thanked and praised". This suggests that truly basic beliefs ought not be focused upon for rationality. If they are isolated from any use in a context, they have no logical function in human discourse, hence no logical or rational role.

We also saw that if we follow the reformist's neo-foundationalist views much of what is nonsensical in ordinary discourse can be justified by them. By focusing on the sense in ordinary discourse, and the conflicts in overlapping language-games that often arise, we may effectively guard against irrationalism, and by extension, superstitious beliefs.

We can imagine a person (individually, or instructed and urged by a community) who reads the book of *Revelation* and is overwhelmed by a sense that all which is portrayed in it, will literally occur. This belief is descriptively basic and can support non-basic beliefs in a rational noetic structure. The reformists must concede that it is justifiable within their view of the rationality of religious belief. It could be imagined as a permissible belief within a religious community. But Wittgenstein leads us to the rough ground of ordinary discourse where we are confronted with other information, such as historical facts about the composition of the books in the Bible. When looking at historic facts that surround the composition of *Revelation* the clear sense of what a literal reading of the book

amounts to, dissipates. To say that book was written to depict future events is simply not true.

Wittgenstein's primary concern is how do we make sense of our world. His concern is with the clarity of using all of our concepts together. Once we have clarity about our operative concepts, we can understand our world. Understanding our world amounts to knowing the grammar of history, physics, mathematics, commerce, art movements, as well as religious belief. History, physics and other subjects, are grammatically distinct from one another, yet there are important relationships between them which we notice in seeing them being used in disjunction to one another. Clearly distinguishing between what is factual from what is devotional by focusing on the logic of our language does not have a central place in the work of the reformists. If the reformists would follow Wittgenstein in this direction, then they too would be able to distinguish superstitious beliefs from intelligible ones and not allow just any belief to be deemed rational.

By traveling down the main avenues in traditional epistemology, and then investigating the crux of reformed epistemology, we have seen that the best responses to the issues surrounding reason and religious belief culminate in the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. With the aid of Norman Malcolm I showed that the Wittgensteinian view is much more preferable than the views of traditional epistemology. It is Wittgenstein's work that also shows why the reformists ought to give up their remaining foundationalistic views. Even though the reformists are on the border of investigating the rationality of religious belief along with Wittgenstein and share many ideas with him, the distinction between their projects leads to results that are qualitatively different. Reformed epistemology cannot keep the gates of irrationalism and obscurantism from swinging open. It is with Wittgenstein that we notice that not just anything can be believed intelligibly. The very idea of philosophy being intimately bound to the passions, concerns, and seriousness of the lives of men and women is at stake in the reformist's work. The theist and atheist alike must take the understanding of the world that they inhabit seriously. A good point of departure can be found with Wittgenstein.

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