RETHINKING RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

AMBER L. GRIFFIOEN
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Abstract. This article uses recent work in philosophy of science and social epistemology to argue for a shift in analytic philosophy of religion from a knowledge-centric epistemology to an epistemology centered on understanding. Not only can an understanding-centered approach open up new avenues for the exploration of largely neglected aspects of the religious life, it can also shed light on how religious participation might be epistemically valuable in ways that knowledge-centered approaches fail to capture. Further, it can create new opportunities for interaction with neighboring disciplines and can help us revitalize and transform stagnant debates in philosophy of religion, while simultaneously allowing for the introduction and recovery of marginalized voices and traditions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although analytic philosophy of religion (henceforth: 'APR') has seen significant thematic diversification in the past 50 years, the discipline remains remarkably limited in its epistemological focus. By and large, when it comes to religious epistemology, APR has concentrated on exploring — and not seldomly defending — the reasonableness of religious belief, either considered on its own or in the face of disagreement. Of course, this rather narrow focus should not be all that surprising, especially when we consider how the rise of movements like that of theistic evidentialism and Reformed epistemology in the 1970s and '80s represented significant responses to the theological anti-realism of neo-Wittgensteinian, psychoanalytic, and postmodern approaches to religion, as well as to the still-looming specters of logical positivism and ordinary language philosophy. Within this historical context, the focus on knowledge as *justified true belief* (hereafter, the 'JTB' model)[1] and the project of demonstrating that theistic belief of a certain kind could, under the right circumstances, amount to *factual religious knowledge* was an important one — especially insofar as it took propositional religious commitment seriously, refusing to reduce it to a matter of mere expressive emoting or unfounded wishful thinking. Significant debates and discussions have arisen from these epistemological endeavors that have had an impact on analytic philosophy outside of APR circles, and APR itself has become an epistemological force to reckon with as it explores new ways to think about old beliefs.

At the same time, APR today suffers from a worrying lack of diversity and a rather restricted, arguably insular approach to its subject matter, one which focuses almost exclusively on the rationality or rational permissibility of monotheistic (usually Western Christian) religious belief and the metaphysics of perfect-

---

1   It may be suggested that, at least since Gettier, few analytic philosophers have accepted the JTB model of knowledge without qualification. However, since most analytic epistemologists, religious or otherwise, still tend to take justification to be in some way central to ordinary cases of knowledge (and in keeping with the current literature surrounding knowledge and understanding), I will continue to speak of the JTB-model. For those who would prefer the broader notion of 'warrant' (i.e., whatever it is that would, in a particular instance, make a true belief into knowledge), they may feel free to substitute 'WTB' for 'JTB' wherever it occurs.

being theism that are implicitly or explicitly assumed to make up the bulk of the propositional content of such belief. This means that the socio-political, cultural, and ethical dimensions of religion, including its liturgical, ritualistic, and practical aspects, have received very little extended attention. And this *is* somewhat surprising, given the kind of discipline we might expect a philosophy of religion to be. That is, given the fact that 'philosophy of religion' would appear to have as its object a centrally social phenomenon — namely, *religion* — it is remarkable that APR continues to devote so much energy to the content and rational permissibility of such a small number of religious beliefs (even if such beliefs do express certain fundamental propositions of at least some manifestations of religion), while exerting so little effort to thinking about what religion actually *is* and *does* or about those phenomena that many religious adherents take to be central to their way of life. Indeed, APR seems largely content to outsource the practical and cultural aspects of religion, not to mention the very definition of religion itself, to religious studies and the social sciences, while at the same time paying curiously little attention to what these disciplines have to say on these matters. It has likewise proved stubbornly resistant to (and even rather suspicious of) the socio-cultural critiques and postcolonial meta-discourses that have arisen within these fields, as well as the neighboring area studies and *Kulturwissenschaften*, which has led to the development of significant blind spots in the discipline and further served to insulate it from relevant scholarly discussions taking place elsewhere.

Of course, as Terence Cuneo has pointed out, there is a sense in which the religious life on the ground "enjoys a certain degree of autonomy from higher-order reflections on it", such that APR may not be strictly beholden to lived religion (or its empirical study) in its analyses.[2] At the same time, as Cuneo himself rightly notes, if this means that APR has become "detached from the religious life in such a way that it threatens to offer a distorted picture of what is important to this way of life", then that might count as a strike against the way the discipline proceeds.[3] I think that APR has, indeed, become too detached from lived religion in ways that have served to insulate it from outside criticism and have inhibited its potential to become a more inclusive, relevant, and ambitious discipline. I propose that APR can be and do more, and in the remainder of this article I intend to show how a certain shift in APR's epistemological approach might help it begin to overcome some of its self-imposed limitations and to become a discipline whose epistemological aims go beyond the rather unambitious tasks of avoiding epistemic blame and defending the rational permissibility of realist theistic belief.[4]

Ultimately, I will suggest that APR would do well to extend its focus from propositional knowledge in the sense of JTB to *dynamic understanding in reflective equilibrium*. Not only can an understanding-centered approach create new avenues for the exploration of largely neglected aspects of the religious life, I think it can also shed some light on how religion might be epistemically valuable in ways that knowledge-centered approaches fail to capture. Importantly, although my own preference is for a more radical change in the approach and subject matter of APR, I wish to emphasize that the epistemological shift I recommend below is still consistent with much of what APR currently does. It merely creates space for growth and inclusivity within a context of increased epistemic humility. My suggestions here may thus be taken more as a modest plea for expansion rather than a call for revolution — as a way for APR to look outward as well as inward and to transform itself into a more just and inclusive philosophy of religion of relevance to increasingly plural societies in an ever more global world.

II. SHIFTING OUR ATTENTION: EXAMPLES FROM SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS

In order to motivate the shift from knowledge to understanding in APR, it will be helpful to first think about two domains whose epistemic value is rather uncontroversial — namely those of the natural sci-

---

2   Terence Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), 5.

3   Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 6.

4   Regarding APR's lack of ambition, cf. Harriet A. Harris, "Does Analytical Philosophy Clip our Wings? Reformed Epistemology as a Test Case", in *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Harriet A. Harris and Christopher J. Insole (Ashgate, 2005), 117.

ences and mathematics. These are domains whose methods we generally agree produce epistemically valuable results. Yet philosophers like Catherine Elgin, Henk De Regt, and others have recently suggested that an epistemological approach that places propositional knowledge at its center ultimately fails to show what it is about these disciplines that is of genuine epistemic value.[5]

According to Elgin, for example, the cognitive achievement of the natural sciences goes beyond the mere discovery or accumulation of relevant and individually justified true propositions and the avoidance of significant falsehoods, as recommended by JTB models of propositional knowledge. Scientists must also grasp how the relevant propositions (together with other objects relevant to the theoretical system) hang together or are *related* to each other, as well as what *inferences* one can draw from them. They must be able to *do* things with this web of information to promote their further epistemic ends — e.g., to connect it fruitfully with other areas of inquiry and identify new questions for productive future research. And so on. "Disciplinary understanding is not an aggregation of separate, independently secured statements of fact", Elgin writes. "[I]t is an integrated, systematically organized account of a domain."[6] In this sense, she claims, the more holistic process of *understanding* is much more central to the sciences (and, we might add, to mathematics) than the piecemeal accumulation of propositional knowledge. Yet this aspect of the scientific enterprise fails to be reflected in contemporary knowledge-focused epistemologies.

Another, perhaps more compelling reason to focus attention on understanding over propositional knowledge has to do with the fact that the centrality of truth to JTB approaches seems incompatible with the common use of models, idealizations, and other "epistemic props" in these domains. Indeed, even if we think the sciences should somehow bring us "closer" to reality, or that our theories should be "tethered" to the phenomena they concern in some relevant way, truth might nevertheless be less fundamental to the sciences than we are inclined to think.[7] "Even the best scientific accounts are not true", Elgin writes. "Not only are they plagued with anomalies and outstanding problems, but where they are successful, they rely on lawlike statements, models, and idealizations that are known to diverge from the truth."[8] To make matters even more complicated, scientists also sometimes employ incompatible models with regard to the same subject matter, as when water is alternately represented as a fluid or as a collection of molecules, or when light is modelled as a wave or as a particle, depending on which scientific purpose the representation is supposed to serve in a particular context.[9] Yet although models like the ideal gas law are explicitly acknowledged *not* to be true, and the wave and particle models with respect to light are admitted to be incompatible, these falsehoods and incongruences nevertheless still figure centrally and ineliminably in the scientific contexts in which they are employed. Elgin thus calls such representations "felicitous falsehoods", or those untruths whose inaccuracy does not undermine their epistemic function within the scientific enterprise and may even serve to enhance it.[10] Contemporary science is "riddled" with useful fictions of these kinds, Elgin maintains, yet it is unclear that the use of such devices in scientific practice is likely to disappear — nor that their elimination would even be desirable — even

---

5   Cf., e.g., Catherine Z. Elgin, *True Enough* (MIT Press, 2017); Henk W. De Regt, "Scientific Understanding: Truth or Dare?", *Synthese* 192, no. 12 (2015); Christoph Baumberger, Claus Beisbart, and Georg Brun, "What is Understanding? An Overview of Recent Debates in Epistemology and Philosophy of Science", in *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Stephen R. Grimm, Christoph Baumberger and Sabine Ammon (Routledge, 2016).

6   Elgin, *True Enough*, 13.

7   Elgin insists that tenable scientific theories must nevertheless be "tethered to the phenomena they concern" but denies that truth is the only possible tether. Drawing on the work of Nelson Goodman, she argues that *exemplification* may also bind theories to "the facts" and can provide "at least as strong and stable a link to the phenomena as truth does" (Elgin, *True Enough*, 1). In a similar vein, De Regt claims that *intelligibility* is ultimately more central to the scientific enterprise than establishing a one-to-one correspondence to the facts (cf. De Regt, "Scientific Understanding").

8   Elgin, *True Enough*, 14.

9   De Regt, "Scientific Understanding", 3791–92; Elgin, *True Enough*, 267.

10   Elgin, *True Enough*, 3.

This is a Postprint Draft! Please do not Cite.

Always refer to the version Published in European Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 12, No. 3

if they may sometimes be replaced by new or revised representations as science pursues an ever more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena it observes.[11]

Turning to mathematics, we also see that truth is less central than we might have thought. For example, questions concerning the existence and ontological status of numbers and other mathematical objects are largely irrelevant — or at least posterior to — the success of actual mathematical practice.[12] As Charles Hockett writes with respect to a particular form of mathematical realism: "Nothing is gained for mathematics by assuming that such entities exist […] [J]ust as before, *we do not care*."[13] Moreover, Howard Wettstein has claimed that it would be a "folly" to think that "work in mathematics itself awaits such philosophical underpinning."[14] We do not feel the need to settle the question concerning mathematical realism in order to justify mathematics as an epistemically valuable enterprise. Wettstein chalks this metaphysical indifference up to the "primacy of the institution and its practices" for us, as well as our "complete confidence in mathematical practice."[15] Regardless of what we think about the existence or ontological status of numbers or other mathematical objects, we value what mathematics does, and we trust it to do so reliably without having first settled the ontological question. Indeed, it is no problem for mathematical realists, agnostics, and skeptics to successfully engage in, e.g., proving or exploring the limits of a particular theorem or solving a certain equation, so long as they share an understanding of how the relevant mathematical objects can be employed and manipulated to further their collective epistemic ends.

In both the natural scientific and mathematical domains, then, the question of the existence of some of the most fundamental objects of the discourse or of the mind-independent truth of certain propositions central to successful practice might be largely orthogonal to the practice itself. Yet a veritistic epistemology that places propositional knowledge at the center of its account is going to have a difficult time explaining how it is that these domains are so epistemically valuable. As Elgin puts it: "Knowledge requires truth. And there seems to be no feasible way to get the scientific accounts we admire to come out true. So knowledge is not the cognitive condition that good science standardly engenders."[16] Something similar might also be said with respect to mathematics, at least insofar as we can have little confidence about the truth of mathematical realism with respect to numbers and other mathematical objects but remain firm in our conviction that the mathematical enterprise yields epistemically valuable results. For this reason, philosophers like Elgin and De Regt have suggested that the cognitive achievement relevant to mathematics and the sciences is not solely (or perhaps even primarily) what scientists or mathematicians *know*, but rather the extent to which they are capable of holistically and systematically observing, manipulating, and implementing the (sometimes false) commitments that they accept and affirm within a particular scientific or mathematical context to further their epistemic aims. In order to do justice to these fundamental aspects of the scientific enterprise, they claim, we need an epistemology that goes beyond the JTB model and which places *understanding* at the center of our philosophical attention.

Of course, as with any contentious philosophical concept, there are various definitions and characterizations of understanding to be found in the contemporary philosophical literature, and there are currently significant debates concerning, e.g., whether understanding should be viewed as factive or non-factive, whether it is not ultimately reducible to a kind of "knowing how", and what kind of under-

---

11   Elgin, *True Enough*, 31.

12   For the claim that philosophy of mathematics, like APR, might not do better focus more on mathematical practice than on the ontological status of mathematical objects, cf. Jeremy Avigad, "Principia: Is it possible that, in the new millennium, the mathematical method is no longer fundamental to philosophy?", *Aeon* (2018).

13   Charles F. Hockett, *Language, Mathematics, and Linguistics* (de Gruyter, 2019), 20.

14   Howard K. Wettstein, "Awe and the Religious Life: A Naturalistic Perspective", *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (1997): 257.

15   Wettstein, "Awe and the Religious Life", 257. Compare also Sylvia Jonas' claim that "mathematics is widely accepted as a rational enterprise even though we have no clue how to make sense of its objects." Cf. Silvia Jonas, "On Mathematical and Religious Belief, and on Epistemic Snobbery", *Philosophy* 91, no. 1 (2016): 70.

16   Elgin, *True Enough*, 37.

This is a Postprint Draft! Please do not Cite.

Always refer to the version Published in European Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 22, No. 3

standing is most relevant for the sciences or mathematics.[17] Going into these debates would require more space than I have at my disposal here, but for our purposes Elgin's construal of understanding can serve as a jumping-off point for further discussions.

III. UNDERSTANDING AND THE JTB MODEL

According to Elgin, understanding "consists in accepting a system of commitments in reflective equilibrium", where the latter is construed as each of the elements of a network of commitments being "reasonable in light of the others, and the network as a whole [being] as reasonable as any available alternative in light of our relevant previous commitments."[18] I will return to reflective equilibrium in a moment, but it is first important to see how exactly this approach goes beyond the JTB model of knowledge.

First, the definition allows that, unlike JTB, understanding can be objectual or representational and is capable of going beyond the propositional. Not only do we understand propositions, we also understand rules, reasons, actions, images, words, patterns, and much more — and this understanding need not be verbal or even expressible. Second, as we have seen, even if truth remains an important epistemic value, it is not the end-all-be-all of our epistemic activities in these domains. Models, idealizations, and other felicitous falsehoods can add to our understanding, even if they give rise to theories or laws that are not, strictly speaking, true. Third, given the indispensability of falsehoods to the scientific enterprise and the dispensability of realist interpretations of its objects to mathematical practice, it is not necessarily the mental state of *belief* that represents the relevant attitude for epistemic evaluation. Rather, it is much more the attitude of *acceptance* that is up for rational assessment. Unlike belief, acceptance is less a cognitive disposition to represent a proposition *p* as obtaining or to "feel" *p* to be true when asked whether *p* and more a volitional disposition to act in ways commensurate with *p*-relevant worlds.[19] Of course, accepting that *p* is not incommensurable with believing that *p*, but insofar as acceptance is put toward the epistemic aim of understanding, it may not be unfitting for a scientist or a mathematician to maintain a skeptical, agnostic, or epistemically humble doxastic attitude toward the truth of *p* — or merely to bracket any consideration of its truth — while at the same time being willing to assert, use, and act on *p* in epistemically productive ways. Likewise, two practitioners in the same field operating with the same model need only agree in their *acceptance* and *use* of the relevant propositions and objects to do "good" science or math, even if they may ultimately disagree on their truth or ontological status.

In at least these three related senses — i.e., that it need not be propositional, that it does not always require truth, and that it involves acceptance but not necessarily belief — understanding appears to go beyond the JTB model of knowledge and thus represents an alternative approach to traditional analytic epistemology that can perhaps better capture what is epistemically valuable about the scientific and mathematical enterprises in ways that can move debates in the philosophy of science and mathematics in more productive directions. I want to suggest that the same can be said for philosophy of religion. But before I turn to how a similar shift can be fruitful for APR, I wish first to discuss another reason an epistemology centered on understanding might be preferable to that of more knowledge-centered approaches — one that focuses on the *social dynamism* involved in understanding.

---

17   For more on these contemporary debates, cf. Baumberger, Beisbart, and Brun, "What is Understanding?".

18   Elgin, *True Enough*, 4. For a lengthier elaboration of what is involved in acquiring and maintaining reflective equilibrium, cf. Christoph Baumberger and Georg Brun, "Dimensions of Objectual Understanding", in *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Stephen R. Grimm, Christoph Baumberger and Sabine Ammon (Routledge, 2016).

19   Cf. L. J. Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Clarendon Press, 1992), 4.

This is a Postprint Draft! Please do not Cite.

Always refer to the version Published in European Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 12, No. 3

IV. THE DISCURSIVITY OF UNDERSTANDING: RESONANCE, RESISTANCE, AND REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

Whereas knowledge is generally considered to be a static, all-or-nothing state that one either has or does not, understanding is much better construed as a *dynamic, discursive process* that can admit of degrees. Moreover, insofar as this process involves the pursuit of reflective equilibrium, it also involves an epistemic subject's engaging in *critical reflection* on her commitments in light of the available evidence and bringing them into a kind of "balance" that makes the system preferable to (or, minimally, as acceptable as) its alternatives. Importantly, however, the process of understanding in reflective equilibrium is never final and definitive. As Elgin writes, "since [scientific] understanding is open to extension, correction, and refinement, a reflectively endorsed finding is not considered fixed or final, but is an acceptable springboard for further inquiry."[20] Dynamic understanding thus requires being continually open to new or alternative perspectives and involves discursive, diachronic processes of interrogating and negotiating the conceptual, affective, and volitional spaces we occupy in the pursuit of our epistemic ends. Moreover, insofar as these are spaces we share with others, understanding is necessarily an *intersubjective* enterprise.

Focusing on the social discursivity of understanding also helps us see how, even when truth takes a backseat in the ways we have seen above, the notion of *objectivity* need not, as Helen Longino's social approach to scientific objectivity demonstrates. According to Longino, despite commonly being construed in the literature as "an activity of individuals", the scientific method involves subjecting hypotheses and background assumptions to different kinds of conceptual criticism, "which is a social rather than an individual activity."[21] Scientific objectivity, then, arises out of the practice of a scientific *community*. Merely containing "hypotheses and theories [that] are accepted or rejected on the basis of observational, experimental data" is not sufficient to make the practice of scientific inquiry objective, since the relevant background assumptions may contain various metaphysical or normative considerations not subject to empirical (dis)confirmation. What makes objectivity possible, Longino argues, is the intrinsically social process of critical scrutiny—one which does not suppress alternative points of view and which leaves itself open to being transformed by those points of view. Like understanding, Longino thinks that objectivity, too, is a matter of degree: "A method of inquiry is objective to the degree that it permits *transformative* criticism."[22]

If this is correct, and objective scientific understanding is necessarily social understanding, then certain epistemic duties and virtues might gain more salience on an understanding-centered approach than they would in a knowledge-based epistemology. For example, José Medina speaks of the *imperative of epistemic interaction* with others and the importance of cultivating openness to new or alternative perspectives. This imperative "calls for the development of communicative and reactive *habits* that operationalize our responsiveness to diverse and multiple others" and "for the cultivation of *sensibilities* that open ourselves to diverse others cognitively, affectively, and communicatively", thus enabling us to "share spaces responsibly and to engage in joint activities."[23] At the same time, such duties make it significantly more likely that epistemic subjects will be forced to confront positions that conflict or are inconsistent with their own—or, alternatively that strike them as foreign or odd in ways that make interaction difficult. It is here that the metaphor of *resonance* becomes especially relevant to understanding and the achievement of reflective equilibrium. When epistemic subjects confront competing models or foreign perspectives to their own, the parties involved can attempt to locate or create *resonances* between them. Muhammad Legenhausen, for example, describes resonance as involving a kind of reactive experience through which acceptance is aroused and welcomed, and he claims that the kind of acceptance generated through experiences of resonance, even if only temporary, can help epistemic subjects learn to navigate

---

20 Elgin, *True Enough*, 146.
21 Helen E. Longino, *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), 74.
22 Longino, *Science as Social Knowledge*, 76.
23 José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 9.

the "space of reasons" of others' perspectives, without thereby being required to take on these reasons as their own or to regard them as true or correct.[24] Nevertheless, such resonant experiences can contribute to achieving a more "balanced" and reflective cognitive (and perhaps also affective) equilibrium, thereby also potentially promoting greater intersubjective understanding, even if it does not ultimately lead to consensus or agreement. Such experiences can, in some cases, even be genuinely *transformative* for the epistemic subjects who undergo them, as well as for the objectivity and robustness of the scientific, mathematical, philosophical, or political discourses in which such subjects are engaged.

At the same time, as we have seen, subjecting one's perspectives to critical scrutiny is the very thing that prevents individual biases and subjective preferences from playing an inordinately large role in what comes to be accepted as fact by participants in the discourse. Thus, the dynamic pursuit of more objective understanding is not only compatible with but also *requires* criticism from alternative points of view. In some cases, this may mean that the process of reflective equilibrium requires, not the location of harmonious resonances, but rather the introduction of *dissonances* and *disruptions* into the epistemic field — for example, to keep agents from falling into a comfortable "dogmatic slumber" or to productively counter current harmful tendencies in the mainstream discourse. Given that the voices of those in positions of power tend to be louder — that they often dominate the conversation and sometimes even silence minority voices — certain debates aiming at greater objectivity may require what Medina terms "beneficial epistemic frictions" to be able to move forward.[25] Such frictions can show us where our cognitive biases, social prejudices, and epistemic insensitivities lie, and they can moreover contribute to preventing "epistemic bubbles" and "echo chambers" from forming between like-minded individuals. In this sense, the cognitively or affectively disruptive, resistant, or subversive elements of a model — and the dissonances that arise between competing approaches or theories — are not just helpful, they are necessary to prevent inquiry and discourse from insularity. Resonance and resistance are thus both, to some extent, essential in the dynamic pursuit of transformative, objective understanding.

V. RELIGION, MEANING-MAKING, AND THE PURSUIT OF HERMENEUTICAL UNDERSTANDING

So what does all this mean for APR and religious epistemology? Similar to Elgin's claims about the epistemic value of the sciences and mathematics, I think that if APR were to place understanding at the center of its religious epistemology it would find itself in a better position to explain what it is about religion and the religious life that might be especially epistemically valuable. In fact, such a move might be even more appropriate to the religious sphere than that of the natural sciences. Indeed, with respect to the latter, a proponent of a JTB-focused epistemology might maintain that the kind of understanding ultimately aimed at by science is that of *causal explanation*, which may be reducible to propositional instances of "knowing-why".[26] If this is plausible, then there may be no need to look beyond traditional

---

24   Cf. Hajj M. Legenhausen, "Responding to the Religious Reasons of Others: Resonance and Nonreductive Religious Pluralism", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 2 (2013).

25   Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 23. Of course, not all epistemic frictions are beneficial to our epistemic ends. Some frictions may not serve to increase understanding or even be outright harmful to those involved in or impacted by the discourse. The falsity of particular dissenting views may be one consideration here, but it is certainly not the only one, and in some cases, the introduction of a "frictional falsehood" may be exactly what is needed to shed light on the shortcomings of the dominant view. (In fact, this may sometimes be exactly what we are aiming at in philosophy when we employ certain obviously fictional thought experiments.)

26   For a pair of opposing views on whether scientific understanding is reducible to the propositional knowledge of causes, cf. Duncan Pritchard , "Knowledge and Understanding", and Stephen R. Grimm , "Understanding as Knowledge of Causes", both in Abrol Fairweather, ed., *Virtue Epistemology Naturalized: Bridges Between Virtue Epistemology and Philosophy of Science* (Springer, 2014).

knowledge-centered epistemologies to locate the epistemic value of the scientific enterprise.[27] However, I hope to motivate the idea that the religious case need not be subject to this worry.

Suppose we accept the claim that science ultimately aims at a kind of causal understanding reducible to propositional knowledge. It is certainly the case that religion, like science, may likewise aim at such causal explanations — as, for example, we find in cosmological proofs for the existence of God or theistic accounts of the origins of human morality. Insofar as it sets up such explanations as competing or complementary hypotheses to natural scientific claims, then, religion would be subject to the same objection expressed above. However, many of the instruments, objects, symbols, practices, and behaviors that need to be grasped and comprehended by religious participants — perhaps in order to even be said to be participating in religious activity in the first place — do not appear to aim at this kind of interrogative causal understanding. Rather, from an epistemic standpoint, religions and religious activities seem designed to cultivate what we might call a *hermeneutical understanding* of the *conditio humana*, one that goes beyond purely causal explanations. Indeed, whatever else religion might be, it is minimally an interpretive enterprise aimed at existential meaning-making.[28] I thus submit that, if a religious tradition is epistemically valuable at all,[29] it is primarily so insofar as it provides the contours of a narrative cosmic framework through which human beings can come to productively understand their own experience, as well as their relation to each other and the universe, in ways that (ideally) contribute to the flourishing of all concerned.[30]

Hermeneutical understanding does not appear to be reducible to instances (or even conjunctions) of propositional knowledge, even if it generally contains propositional knowledge as a constituent part. Indeed, various types of understanding (e.g., propositional, interrogative, objectual, etc.) may serve as components of or means to this further hermeneutical end, but it itself is not reducible to any mere conjunction of these. Moreover, in contrast to scientific explanation, the *object* of understanding in hermeneutical understanding is not generally clear from the outset. Meno problems aside, when we pursue straightforward causal explanations in science, we usually have a pretty good idea of what it is that we are trying to explain. In the case of hermeneutical understanding, however, the object is not clearly defined from the outset. Rather, it *emerges* out of the dynamic act and process of understanding itself. This is not to say that hermeneutical understanding cannot point beyond itself to the Real, as many (if not most) practitioners of religion hold. Yet, whereas causal explanations are *discovered*, existential meaning is something religious subjects *make* (and make together!) in light of their individual and collective experiences. This constructive aspect of hermeneutical understanding notwithstanding, however, it nevertheless remains essentially epistemic, insofar as it involves the cultivation of a fundamental kind of *orientation* through which epistemic subjects filter their experience and locate themselves in relation to each other and the universe. Just as a girl scout with a map and the cognitive skills to read it is in a better epistemic position to find her way out of an unfamiliar forest than one without, religion offers us a point

---

27   Of course, even if it should turn out that the scientific enterprise largely aims at types of understanding that are reducible to propositional knowledge, there might still be a sense in which the instrumental roles of objectual understanding and felicitous falsehoods in science takes the scientific enterprise beyond the JTB model, a topic itself worthy of increased philosophical investigation.

28   Compare here the view of Anthony B. Pinn (2015), who describes religion as "a hermeneutic by means of which human experience […] is mined for what it says about our response to the deepest existential and ontological challenges we face" (Pinn, *Humanism*, 35). Importantly, however, I by no means intend to maintain here that this hermeneutic aspect is *sufficient* for a system of practices being considered a religion. Moreover, I do not wish to reduce all such meaning-making enterprises (e.g., sport, literature, political activity, theater, philosophy, etc.) to instances of "implicit" religion. At the same time, these activities may share this hermeneutical feature with religion to some degree or other — which could perhaps point us toward points of *resonance* for productive discourse between religious and secular worldviews.

29   Note that I am not claiming here that religious traditions actually succeed in making existential meaning or contributing to world-flourishing, nor that all religions do so (or fail to do so) to the same degree. As Graham Oppy has aptly noted in correspondence, "it is controversial whether religions contribute more to human flourishing than to human floundering." I take investigations into this question to be a central task for an APR of the future.

30   For a somewhat similar approach, albeit one more interested than I in defending realism and the centrality of belief, cf. Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science & Religion* (HarperOne, 1974).

of reference, a narrative order, a conceptual space within which we can come to better navigate the world and our place in it.

At the same time, the reference to flourishing in the hermeneutical approach to religious understanding, together with the fact that the meaning-making in question is fundamentally *existential*, points to the idea that religion's epistemic aims are not independent of its practical, ethical, and social ends. The epistemic aspects of the religious life on this approach cannot be divorced from religious adherents' pragmatic concerns and moral commitments, from their individual and collective values and experiences, or from their situated lives as embodied, social, and political organisms. But this is exactly what we should expect of religion (especially in those traditions where, for better or for worse, there is an implicit — or, in the case of classical monotheism, explicit — identification of knowledge, power, and goodness). Of course, even if the inextricability of the epistemic, the ethical, and the social is especially true for the religious enterprise, it is also the case for many if not most of our epistemic undertakings. One of the great insights of feminist epistemology is that we cannot neatly separate our epistemic practices from our practical and moral concerns or from the social and political realities in which we are situated — and that analytic philosophy's attempt to try to detach epistemology from these kinds of considerations has tended to do more harm than good, both epistemically and morally.[31] If this is correct, then any religious epistemology or attempt to evaluate the epistemic dimensions of religion would do well to consider the beneficial and maleficial ways in which the epistemic and non-epistemic are intertwined in the religious case, especially as it concerns existential meaning-making and world-flourishing.

Of course, despite placing hermeneutical understanding over causal explanation as central to the religious enterprise, there still remain certain fruitful analogies between the religious and scientific enterprises when we begin to concentrate more closely on understanding over knowledge. For example, an epistemological focus that takes seriously the *dynamics* of hermeneutical understanding can allow that theological models need not be true to warrant our philosophical attention. Here, the exploration of alternative models of the divine to those traditionally championed by APR can serve as epistemically beneficial frictions, even if we are hesitant to take them as true.[32] As with the use of felicitous falsehoods in the sciences or ontologically indeterminate objects in mathematics, progress in theological and philosophical understanding can also sometimes be promoted by going *beyond* the question of metaphysical realism and considering theological models, approaches, and narratives that might not correspond one-to-one with the way we think things really are.[33] Indeed, if one thinks that any language about or model of God will necessarily fall short of what the divine is, but that some language or models are better or more appropriate than others, then one should embrace the idea that certain "un-truths" can be epistemically beneficial in the religious sphere. Further, insofar as dynamic understanding, in its search for reflective equilibrium, demands the discovery and sometimes even construction of both resonances and dissonances, an understanding-centered religious epistemology actually requires paying serious attention to — and perhaps, in some cases, even *centering* — alternative theological models, which (as I will discuss presently) can lead to the welcome result that a larger number of diverse voices may gain representation in APR.

---

31 On this point, cf., e.g., for example, Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance*, 82ff; Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007) and Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Indiana Univ. Press, 1999).

32 See also Helen De Cruz, "Seeking out Epistemic Friction in the Philosophy of Religion", in *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology*, ed. Michelle Panchuk and Michael C. Rea (Oxford Univ. Press, 2020).

33 For example, Harmonia Rosales' painting, *The Image of God* (https://www.instagram.com/p/BTuPgk3g_RC/), which replaces the white male figures in Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* with black women — can serve as a helpful corrective to the dominant Western Christian social imaginary (and much of the history of Western art), which tends to associate God with white masculine imagery. Here, philosophers may wish to maintain that neither depiction of God (whether white and male or black and female) is, strictly speaking, "true" or "correct" when it comes to describing the Divine. However, considering the fact that even many of those APR scholars who maintain that God is *not* a person continue to refer to God using the masculine pronouns *he/him/his*, paintings like Rosales' can serve as a reminder of how deeply embedded certain imaginative associations are in our philosophical construals of the divine.

VI. ADVANTAGES AND APPLICATIONS OF AN UNDERSTANDING-CENTERED RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

I think the benefits for APR of looking past its rather limited epistemological concern regarding whether theistic belief could amount to religious knowledge (or, even less ambitiously, regarding whether religious believers are within their "epistemic rights" to believe as they do, whatever that means) — and looking toward an increased focus on the role of understanding in the religious life — are significant and many. I thus want to conclude by gesturing briefly at four ways in which the epistemological shift I am recommending could be productively transformative for APR and help to make the discipline more outward-looking in its orientation.

a. Advantages and Applications I: Religious Practice and the Possibility of a Genuine Philosophy of Religion

One significant advantage of shifting APR's epistemological focus from propositional knowledge to dynamic understanding in reflective equilibrium is that it creates space for a philosophical analysis of religious *practice*, including liturgical praxis and ritual action. For despite playing a central role in the religious life and the achievement of existential meaning-making, the practical aspects of religion have, with few exceptions, been largely ignored in the APR literature.[34] An epistemology of understanding, however, can better transverse the space between the practical and theoretical domains than an epistemology that focuses almost exclusively on the cognitive state of belief and the possibility that it could constitute knowledge. First, insofar as an understanding-centered epistemology looks beyond the propositional, it can direct attention to the various ways in which religious practice cultivates forms of *non-propositional* understanding (e.g., of practices, persons, objects, symbols, and norms), which — when embedded within a certain cultural context and informed by a particular cosmic narrative framework — can serve as a means for existential meaning-making of the sort that constitutes hermeneutical understanding.[35] Additionally, exploring the kinds of understanding cultivated in and through religious practice can bring discussions of the social and the political, materiality and the body, affectivity and the emotions, the gustatory and the haptic, the spatial and the geographical, etc. back into play.[36]

Finally, given that a) truth is not the only epistemic value in the game, b) belief is not the only relevant propositional attitude for epistemic evaluation, and c) understanding admits of degrees, an understanding-centered epistemology allows that, rather than focusing only on those (overly idealized) religious practitioners whose propositional commitments are accompanied by a high degree of certainty in their truth, APR can start to take seriously religious adherents who occupy various positions on the doxastic spectrum, without implicitly and uncharitably charging them with outright insincerity or irrationality. This should be welcome news to proponents of non-doxastic theories of faith or religiosity, as well as to those APR theorists interested in thinking more carefully about the virtue of epistemic humility or the benefits of epistemic doubt in the religious sphere. In all these ways, shifting our attention to the role of understanding in the religious life creates opportunities for APR to become more than just a philosophy of (classical, perfect-being) theism — that is, to become what its title promises: a genuine philosophy of *religion*. The philosophy of theism need not (indeed, should not) disappear, but an APR of the future demands that it expand its vision beyond this limited horizon.

---

34 Notable recent exceptions include work by Terence Cuneo, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and Kevin Schilbrack.

35 Compare, for example, Cuneo's discussion of "ritual knowledge", which he characterizes as having less to do with "being in [some] type of doxastic state with respect to propositions about God as with *conducting oneself in certain ways* with respect to God that count as engaging God, and *knowing how* to conduct oneself in those ways" (Cuneo, *Ritualized Faith*, 165, my emphasis).

36 This could also have an effect on how we approach religious experience. Cf. Amber Griffioen, "'Signs for a People Who Reason': Religious Experience and Natural Theology", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (2017) and Mark Wynn, "Re-Enchanting the World: The Possibility of Materially-Mediated Religious Experience", in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, ed. Robert MacSwain (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012); Amber Griffioen, *Religious Experience* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2021).

b. Advantages and Applications II: New and Renewed Opportunities for Interaction

Part of extending APR's vision in this way also means reaching out to disciplines and subdisciplines it has traditionally ignored. If APR is to become a genuine philosophy of *religion*, then it must begin to more closely interact with those empirical and historical fields that take religion in its various forms and aspects as their objects of study. Certainly, there is much contemporary buzz in APR and Analytic Theology about "science-engaged research" or "interdisciplinary approaches", and these are most definitely welcome initiatives. However, there still remains a significant level of disciplinary boundary-policing in these kinds of exchanges, especially from philosophers who seem to worry that APR will somehow cease to be either "analytic" or "philosophical" if it undertakes a more empirically-informed study of "religion". Yet a blurring of disciplinary lines is exactly what we should expect in an epistemological turn to exploring hermeneutical understanding, and I see no good reason (other than pragmatic reasons arising from overly rigid university structures and assessment procedures) to fear the loss of disciplinary distinction that arises when scholars really begin to work cross-disciplinarily.

Furthermore, if epistemologies of understanding really do look beyond the question of metaphysical realism, it is possible that adopting such an approach could assist in repairing (or at least partially mediating) the divide between analytic and continental philosophical theology. One of the main criticisms of postmodern theology has to do with worries concerning APR's tendency to pursue what the former calls "ontotheology", or the heavily metaphysical approach that insists on trying to comprehend God's nature and being within the limits of reason. The worry here is that such approaches "diminish" God in some way — e.g., by reducing God to a mere *causa sui* or to a mere "being among beings."[37] The charge here is no less than one of idolatry. But if postmodern theology worries that APR tends toward idolatry, APR for its part worries that non-metaphysical theology dissolves into nonsense. The analytic side of the divide insists that there must be a genuine (if limited) sense in which God is comprehensible, and that the job of the analytic philosopher or theologian is to think about what that God *could* be like such that it could be understood. This is where an understanding-centered epistemology can be helpful. Insofar as an epistemology of understanding allows that felicitous falsehoods and not-strictly-true models of the divine can increase our understanding of ourselves and our relation to the Last Things, then it might also allow for a genuine discussion between these parties over the appropriateness or inappropriateness of various models within a given religious context, without requiring that the question of onto(theo)logy be settled before inquiry can begin. Truth and justification are important considerations in these discussions, but they are not the only considerations of relevance in an epistemology that focuses on dynamic, transformative understanding. Such an epistemological shift could allow that APR can provide postmodern theology with the cataphaticism it needs to speak meaningfully of God, while postmodern theologians, for their part, can infuse APR with a healthy dose of apophaticism and epistemic humility that can re-engender the requisite sense of awe necessary for any respectful metaphysics of the divine.

c. Advantages and Applications III: Reformulation and Transformation of Traditional Debates

An understanding-centered epistemology can also be transformative for prominent debates within APR itself. To take just one example, the so-called "problem of religious disagreement" has spawned much important literature in religious epistemology. However, many of the discussions (e.g., the debate between "conciliationists" and "permissivists") remain almost exclusively tied to decidedly individualistic, knowledge-centered JTB models, with the result that the questions posed in these discussions generally revolve around the rational status of particular beliefs of highly idealized individual subjects and their epistemic duties given the fact of some generic religious disagreement. (For example: "What are Jack's epistemic duties regarding his religious belief that *p* when he recognizes that some person, Jill, who is equally competent in reasoning, reflecting, and inferring, and who also happens to have roughly the

---

37   Compare Heidegger's claim that one can neither "fall to [one's] knees" nor "play music and dance" before this "god of philosophy". In: Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (Harper & Row, 1969), 72. For a response to this kind of "ontotheological objection", cf. Marilyn Adams, "What's Wrong with the Ontotheological Error?", *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (2014).

same evidence as Jack, concludes that not-*p*?") This is, of course, an interesting and important philosophical question. Yet Jack's hypothetical "epistemic peer", Jill, is only relevant to the discourse as his epistemic foil — that is, insofar as she represents a challenge to *Jack's* belief and thereby a threat to *Jack's* rationality.

However, when we place understanding at the center of our epistemologies, the philosophical discussion might start to look a bit different. Some discussions here may remain similar, but when the focus is placed less on the acquisition, retention, or justification of individual religious beliefs and more on the dynamic understanding in reflective equilibrium arising in and between epistemic agents, the *gap* between Jack and Jill — their *mis*-understanding — can also become a subject for philosophical investigation. Indeed, questions of intersubjective understanding go beyond the mere assessment of Jack's and Jill's individual cognitive capacities, doxastic sets, or any conjunction of these. An understanding-centered approach can assist philosophers in developing the conceptual tools to consider both how the understanding *between* Jack and Jill arises (or fails to arise) out of their dynamic interaction with one another and what their individually and collectively making epistemic "progress" in this domain might mean. But this requires taking *both* parties into account, as well as the various contexts each occupies and the situated viewpoints to which their occupation of these contexts give rise. This, in turn, can complicate but also potentially enrich any virtue-theoretic approach to religious disagreement.

Moreover, even with respect to the individual epistemic subject, when understanding becomes the focal point, the question becomes less one of knowledge or "getting it right" and more one of *wisdom*, as Legenhausen points out. "One can believe with insufficient justification or with insufficient understanding", he writes. "One who tends to believe without sufficient justification is deficient in rationality; one who tends to believe without sufficient understanding is deficient in wisdom. Wisdom presupposes rationality; but one may be rational without being very wise."[38] An understanding-centered epistemology thus takes APR beyond questions of mere rationality and the justification of individual beliefs to explore issues of what epistemic subjects can (at least temporarily) *accept*, in order to not only expand their understanding of their own views but also with an eye to both increasing their understanding of the other whom they encounter in dialogue and strengthening the understanding between them. This is an epistemic task, but it is simultaneously a moral and political one. It therefore takes the philosophical discussion past mere interreligious disagreement into the realm of interreligious *dialogue* and the search for — or appreciation of — the wisdom that can arise between differently-situated human beings. It is what we might call *philo-sophia* in its most genuine sense.

d. Advantages and Applications IV: Recovery and Reappropriation of Marginalized Voices and Neglected Topics

In the service of this kind of intersubjective epistemic activity, we see a further advantage of the understanding-centered approach that I have hinted at above — namely, the possibility of recovering or introducing marginalized historical and contemporary thinkers, alternative models of the divine, and traditionally neglected religious traditions into APR discourse. Given the current discussion in Western analytic philosophy of its general lack of inclusivity and the limited nature of its traditional philosophical "canon" (which has tended to exclude, among others, the contributions of women, gender and sexual minorities, persons of color, and non-Anglo-American-European figures and traditions), APR also has a duty to think about its own limitations — especially insofar as it has traditionally focused most of its attention on mainstream classical Western monotheism, which ignores the large majority of religious believers (even those from within Western monotheistic traditions). Minimally, the recovery of traditionally ignored or silenced voices, as well as increased attention to non-Western and non-(mono)theistic religious and spiritual traditions, can provide necessary "epistemic frictions" or "resistant imaginings" in the service of destabilizing dominant approaches that have gone critically unreflected.

Of course, this ameliorative activity must go beyond the mere *inclusion* of neglected perspectives, which can have a tokenizing effect on marginalized groups. In order to genuinely make APR a more inclusive discipline, we must consider *centering* perspectives that have been systemically and system-

---

38   Legenhausen, "Responding to the Religious Reasons of Others", 33.

This is a Postprint Draft! Please do not Cite.

Always refer to the version Published in European Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 22, No. 3

atically excluded and to look beyond the narratives and genres that have dominated APR for the past half-century. To channel Naomi Scheman, we must begin to "queer the center" *of* APR by "centering the queer" *in* APR.[39] We may also need to introduce new considerations of plurality and multiplicity into a discipline that has traditionally focused on unity and simplicity.[40] This may obviously cause some level of discomfort in mainstream circles, but nobody ever said philosophy was supposed to be easy. It may also require us to expand our conception of what counts as "legitimate" philosophy or theology, but as I noted above, if we are willing to allow our disciplinary and genre boundaries to become a bit fuzzier, we may ultimately end up with a philosophy (or philosoph*ies*) of religion that display more objectivity in Longino's sense than APR currently enjoys.

Another way of "centering the queer" in APR is to move forward by looking back — e.g., by recovering and, where helpful, reappropriating those texts, figures, and traditions less commonly associated with "scholastic" or "systematic" writing to rethink and reframe contemporary debates. One attempt to do just this can be found in the recent focus by some philosophers on medieval thinkers and traditions often characterized as "mystical".[41] APR has largely treated of mysticism only insofar as mystical authors are taken to provide data for arguments from religious or mystical experience, which has meant that much mystical writing has been not only taken out of context; it has also been scrubbed and sanitized of many of its more embodied and material aspects.[42] However, recovering less "domesticated" readings of medieval mysticism can present us with various promising, yet sometimes also disturbing and disruptive, approaches to grasping and grappling with divine realities and their relation to human beings. It can also expand our conception of what can count as "systematic" or "philosophically-relevant". Mystical authors, especially women, employed genres outside the traditional theological scholasticism (and neo-scholasticism) we are used to encountering in APR, usually in the service of giving their readers an accessible means to come to grasp highly sophisticated and difficult ideas.[43] Why shouldn't we re-incorporate their thought into our philosophical teaching and research today? Renewed attention to mysticism in its various modes and expressions can also present new opportunities for comparative work and interaction with non-Western or non-(mono)theistic traditions. Focusing on mysticism thus represents just one way (of many) that APR can explore the various media by which certain religious believers of the past communicated their experiences and contributed to theological (as well as lay) understandings of the divine, while at the same time making room in APR for the re-introduction of medieval women and other marginalized thinkers into the annals of canonical philosophical thought. In this way, APR can both investigate modes of hermeneutical understanding and increase its own disciplinary understanding — goals which can and must mutually inform each other.

---

39   Cf., e.g., Naomi Scheman, "Queering the Center by Centering the Queer: Reflections on Transsexuals and Secular Jews", in *Shifting Ground: Knowledge and Reality, Transgression and Trustworthiness*, ed. Naomi Scheman (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011).

40   Cf., for example, Mikel Burley, *A Radical Pluralist Philosophy of Religion: Cross-Cultural, Multireligious, Interdisciplinary* (Bloomsbury, 2020); Catherine Keller and Laurel C. Schneider, eds., *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation* (Routledge, 2011) and Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Routledge, 2008). For two other recent volumes that "center the queer" in APR, cf. Michelle Panchuk and Michael Rea, eds., *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2020) and Blake Hereth and Kevin Timpe, eds., *The Lost Sheep in Philosophy of Religion: New Perspectives on Disability, Gender, Race, and Animals* (Routledge, 2019).

41   Cf., for example, Amber L. Griffioen and Mohammad S. Zahedi, "Medieval Christian and Islamic Mysticism and the Problem of a 'Mystical Ethics'", in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018) and Christina Van Dyke, "Self-Knowledge, Abnegation, and Fulfillment in Medieval Mysticism", in *Self-knowledge: A History*, ed. Ursula Renz (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016). I should note here that this idea was already introduced and explored by feminist thinkers like Grace Jantzen and others in the 1980s and '90s, but their ideas have not received the uptake in APR that their careful work deserves. (Cf., e.g., Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995).)

42   Cf. Leigh E. Schmidt, "The Making of Modern "Mysticism"", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 2 (2003) and Grace M. Jantzen, "Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics", *Hypatia* 9, no. 4 (1994).

43   On this point, cf. Amber L. Griffioen, "Doing Public Philosophy in the Middle Ages? On the Philosophical Potential of Medieval Devotional Texts", *Res Philosophica* (forthcoming 2022).

VII. CONCLUSION: PHILOSOPHIA QUAERENS INTELLECTUM?

I would like to conclude by emphasizing that the approach I have recommended here by no means entails that APR leave all questions about truth and the epistemic rationality of religious belief behind. It is an important epistemological task to think about whether and how particular religious propositions and beliefs might be rationally defensible for an epistemic subject. At the same time, a religious epistemology for the 21st century must extend its limited gaze beyond these questions and inquire more fruitfully into the ways in which various forms and manifestations of religious understanding in a hermeneutical sense may be epistemically valuable — and it must begin to think about how such forms of understanding are intersubjectively produced in diverse contexts through the encounter with a range of religious models and practices. We must, therefore, strive to create a more *comprehensive and objective religious epistemology* — one which can lead to an expansion and opening up of APR, whereby it can begin to look beyond its traditional boundaries for new and renewed ways of manifesting a genuine love of wisdom through its own pursuit of dynamic, intersubjective understanding.[44]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Marilyn. 2014. "What's Wrong with the Ontotheological Error?". *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2: 1–12.

Avigad, Jeremy. 2018. "Principia: Is it possible that, in the new millennium, the mathematical method is no longer fundamental to philosophy?". *Aeon*. https://aeon.co/essays/does-philosophy-still-need-mathematics-and-vice-versa.

Barbour, Ian G. 1974. *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science & Religion*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

Baumberger, Christoph, Claus Beisbart, and Georg Brun. 2016. "What is Understanding? An Overview of Recent Debates in Epistemology and Philosophy of Science". In *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Stephen R. Grimm, Christoph Baumberger and Sabine Ammon, 1–34. New York: Routledge.

Baumberger, Christoph, and Georg Brun. 2016. "Dimensions of Objectual Understanding". In *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Stephen R. Grimm, Christoph Baumberger and Sabine Ammon, 165–89. New York: Routledge.

Burley, Mikel. 2020. *A Radical Pluralist Philosophy of Religion: Cross-Cultural, Multireligious, Interdisciplinary*. London: Bloomsbury.

Cohen, L. J. 1992. *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Cuneo, Terence. 2016. *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

De Cruz, Helen. 2020. "Seeking out Epistemic Friction in the Philosophy of Religion". In *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology*, edited by Michelle Panchuk and Michael C. Rea, 23–46. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. doi:10.1093/oso/9780198848844.003.0002.

De Regt, Henk W. 2015. "Scientific Understanding: Truth or Dare?". *Synthese* 192, no. 12: 3781–97. doi:10.1007/s11229–014–0538–7.

Elgin, Catherine Z. 2017. *True Enough*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Griffioen, Amber. 2017. "'Signs for a People Who Reason': Religious Experience and Natural Theology". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2: 139–63. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v9i2.1937.

Griffioen, Amber L. 2022. "Doing Public Philosophy in the Middle Ages? On the Philosophical Potential of Medieval Devotional Texts". Forthcoming in *Res Philosophica*.

Griffioen, Amber L. 2021. *Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. doi:10.1017/9781108699952.

Griffioen, Amber, and Mohammad S. Zahedi. 2018. "Medieval Christian and Islamic Mysticism and the Problem of a 'Mystical Ethics'". In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, edited by Thomas Williams, 280–305. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. doi:10.1017/9781316711859.014.

Grimm, Stephen R. 2014. "Understanding as Knowledge of Causes". In *Virtue Epistemology Naturalized: Bridges Between Virtue Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Abrol Fairweather, 329–46. Dordrecht: Springer.

Grimm, Stephen R., Christoph Baumberger, and Sabine Ammon, eds. 2016. *Explaining Understanding: New Perspectives from Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*. New York: Routledge.

Harris, Harriet A. 2005. "Does Analytical Philosophy Clip our Wings? Reformed Epistemology as a Test Case". In *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: The Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Harriet A. Harris and Christopher J. Insole, 100–118. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Heidegger, Martin. 1969. *Identity and Difference*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Hereth, Blake, and Kevin Timpe, eds. 2019. *The Lost Sheep in Philosophy of Religion: New Perspectives on Disability, Gender, Race, and Animals*. Abdington-on-Thames: Routledge.

Hockett, Charles F. 2019. *Language, Mathematics, and Linguistics*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Jantzen, Grace. 1994. "Feminists, Philosophers, and Mystics". *Hypatia* 9, no. 4: 186–206. doi:10.1111/j.1527–2001.1994.tb00655.x.

—. 1995. *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

—. 1999. *Becoming Divine: Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press.

Jonas, Silvia. 2016. "On Mathematical and Religious Belief, and on Epistemic Snobbery". *Philosophy* 91, no. 1: 69–92. doi:10.1017/S0031819115000431.

Keller, Catherine, and Laurel C. Schneider, eds. 2011. *Polydoxy: Theology of Multiplicity and Relation*. London: Routledge.

Legenhausen, Hajj M. 2013. "Responding to the Religious Reasons of Others: Resonance and Nonreductive Religious Pluralism". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 2: 23–46. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v5i2.232.

Longino, Helen E. 1990. *Science as Social Knowledge: Values and Objectivity in Scientific Inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

Medina, José. 2013. *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Panchuk, Michelle, and Michael Rea, eds. 2020. *Voices from the Edge: Centring Marginalized Perspectives in Analytic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Pinn, Anthony B. 2015. *Humanism: Essays on Race, Religion and Popular Culture*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Pritchard, Duncan. 2014. "Knowledge and Understanding". In *Virtue Epistemology Naturalized: Bridges Between Virtue Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Abrol Fairweather, 315–28. Dordrecht: Springer.

Scheman, Naomi. 2011. "Queering the Center by Centering the Queer: Reflections on Transsexuals and Secular Jews". In *Shifting Ground: Knowledge and Reality, Transgression and Trustworthiness*, edited by Naomi Scheman, 111–44. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780195395112.003.0008.

Schmidt, Leigh E. 2003. "The Making of Modern "Mysticism"". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 2: 273–302. doi:10.1093/jaar/71.2.273.

Schneider, Laurel C. 2008. *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity*. London: Routledge.

Van Dyke, Christina. 2016. "Self-Knowledge, Abnegation, and Fulfillment in Medieval Mysticism". In *Self-knowledge: A History*, edited by Ursula Renz, 131–45. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Wettstein, Howard K. 1997. "Awe and the Religious Life: A Naturalistic Perspective". *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 21, no. 1: 257–80. doi:10.1111/j.1475–4975.1997.tb00527.x.

Wolterstorff, Nicholas. 2015. *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Wynn, Mark. 2012. "Re-Enchanting the World: The Possibility of Materially-Mediated Religious Experience". In *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, edited by Robert MacSwain, 115–27. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199646821.003.0010.