



# Does the Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism Defeat God's Beliefs?

Perry Hendricks<sup>1</sup>  · Tina Anderson<sup>2</sup>

Published online: 11 February 2020  
© Springer Nature B.V. 2020

## Abstract

Alvin Plantinga has famously argued that the naturalist who accepts evolutionary theory has a defeater for all of her beliefs, including her belief in naturalism and evolution. Hence, he says, naturalism, when conjoined with evolution, is self-defeating and cannot be rationally accepted. This is known as the evolutionary argument against naturalism (EAAN). However, Tyler Wunder (*Religious Studies* 51:391–399, 2015) has recently shown that if the EAAN is framed in terms of objective probability and theism is assumed to be non-contingent, then either theism is necessarily false or the EAAN is unsound. Neither option is attractive to the proponent of the EAAN. Perry Hendricks (*Religious Studies* 1–5, 2018) has responded to Wunder's criticism, showing that the EAAN can be salvaged and, indeed, strengthened, by framing it in terms not of naturalism (N), but of a proposition that is entailed by N that is also consistent with theism. We will show that once Hendricks' solution to Wunder's objection is accepted, a puzzle ensues: if the EAAN provides the naturalist with a defeater for all of her beliefs, then an extension of it appears to provide God with a defeater for all of his beliefs. After bringing out this puzzle, we suggest several ways in which the proponent of the EAAN might solve it, but also show some potential weaknesses in these purported solutions. Whether the solutions to the puzzle that we consider ultimately succeed is unclear to us. (Translation: the authors disagree. One author thinks that the solutions (or, at least, some of them) that we consider do solve the puzzle while the other author does not.) However, it is clear to us that this is an issue that proponents of the EAAN need to address.

**Keywords** EAAN · Objective probability · Defeat · Alvin Plantinga · Evolutionary argument against naturalism

---

✉ Perry Hendricks  
ampchendricks@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

<sup>2</sup> Rochester, NY, USA

## Introduction

Alvin Plantinga has famously argued that the naturalist who accepts evolutionary theory has a defeater for all of her beliefs, including her belief in naturalism and evolution. Hence, he says, naturalism, when conjoined with evolution, is self-defeating and cannot be rationally accepted. This is known as the evolutionary argument against naturalism (EAAN). However, Wunder (2015) has recently shown that if the EAAN is framed in terms of objective probability and theism is assumed to be non-contingent, then either theism is necessarily false or the EAAN is unsound. Neither option is attractive to the proponent of the EAAN. Hendricks (2018) has responded to Wunder's criticism, showing that the EAAN can be salvaged and, in fact, strengthened, by framing it in terms not of naturalism (N), but of a proposition that is entailed by N that is also consistent with theism. We will show that once Hendricks' solution to Wunder's objection is accepted, a puzzle ensues: if the EAAN provides the naturalist with a defeater for all of her beliefs, then an extension of it appears to provide *God* with a defeater for all of his beliefs. After bringing out this puzzle, we suggest several ways in which the proponent of the EAAN might solve it, but also show some potential weaknesses in these purported solutions. Whether the solutions to the puzzle that we consider ultimately succeed is unclear to us. (Translation: the authors disagree. One author thinks that the solutions (or, at least, some of them) that we consider do solve the puzzle while the other author does not.) However, it is clear to us that this is an issue that proponents of the EAAN need to address.

## The EAAN

Plantinga argues that the person who accepts naturalism (N)—the thesis that there is no God or anything at all like him—and evolution (E)<sup>1</sup> has a defeater for her belief that her cognitive faculties are reliable (R). This is because, he argues, the probability of R on N&E is low. His reasoning is, very roughly and briefly,<sup>2</sup> that a belief on materialism (which he takes N to entail) will have neurophysiological properties as well as semantic properties. However, he claims, E via natural selection can only select for the neurophysiological properties, not for the semantic properties. But then E will only care about *behavior*, not the content of one's beliefs; so long as a belief causes the right behavior, it does not matter what the content of it is. Hence,  $P(R/N\&E)$  is low, and the reflective naturalist who sees this and accepts E has a defeater for R. But, Plantinga argues, if one has a defeater for R, then she has a defeater for any belief produced by her cognitive faculties. Since all of one's beliefs are produced by her cognitive faculties, it follows that she has a defeater for all of her beliefs, including N and E. Hence, N&E is self-defeating and cannot be rationally accepted.<sup>3</sup>

The argument can be formally stated as follows:

<sup>1</sup> More specifically, E denotes the thesis that we humans have come to be by way of evolution as it is (at least roughly) currently understood.

<sup>2</sup> We are rough and brief here since whether the EAAN is sound is not of interest for this article. Rather, we are interested in its implications for God's beliefs.

<sup>3</sup> For Plantinga's defense of the argument, see e.g. Plantinga (1993), Plantinga (2000), Plantinga (2011a, b) and his contributions to Beilby (2002) and Plantinga and Tooley (2008).

- (1)  $P(R/N\&E)$  is low.
- (2) Anyone who accepts (believes) N&E and sees that  $P(R/N\&E)$  is low has a defeater for R.
- (3) Anyone who has a defeater for R has a defeater for any other belief she thinks she has, including N&E itself.
- (4) If one who accepts N&E thereby acquires a defeater for N&E, N&E is self-defeating and cannot rationally be accepted.

Conclusion: N&E cannot rationally be accepted. (Plantinga 2011a, 344–345)

We will not question any of the premises here. Rather, we will assume that they are correct and will later show that they lead to a puzzle about God's beliefs.

### Wunder's Objection to the EAAN

Wunder (2015) has argued that proponents of the EAAN face an unattractive dilemma: if it is framed in terms of objective probability and theism is assumed to be non-contingent (and Plantinga does both of these), it entails that either theism is necessarily false, or that the EAAN is unsound. This is due to some facts about the probability calculus. Hendricks succinctly states Wunder's criticism as follows:

The objective probability of X on Y is undefined if the objective probability of Y is zero. Now, if theism is non-contingent, then, if theism is true, it is necessarily true, which entails that N is necessarily false, and hence its (N's) probability is zero. (The reverse holds as well: if N is true, then theism is necessarily false.) Hence the objective probability of a conjunction containing N as a conjunct will be zero. So, any substitution instance of  $P(X/N\&Z)$  will have a defined value only if N is possibly true, and N's possible truth entails the necessary falsehood of theism. Thus, if theism is necessarily true then N is necessarily false, and it follows that  $P(R/N\&E)$  is undefined rather than low, and hence premise (1) is false and the EAAN is unsound. On the other hand, if  $P(R/N\&E)$  is not undefined, then (by the above reasoning) it follows that theism is necessarily false, a conclusion Plantinga no doubt seeks to avoid. (2018: p. 2)

Wunder says that Plantinga has conceded in correspondence that his (Wunder's) criticism is successful, and Plantinga's main response was to suggest that the EAAN should now be understood in terms of epistemic probability.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the EAAN (as traditionally stated) is in peril, and to save it, we must give up the non-contingency of theism or the objective probabilistic framework of the EAAN.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Wunder (2015) expresses worries about Plantinga's retreat to epistemic probability in the EAAN on account of Plantinga's view of how epistemic probability is grounded. Whether the retreat to epistemic probability is actually problematic is not relevant to our article, so we will not address it further. Though, see Collins (2009) for a defense of the use of epistemic probabilities in science.

<sup>5</sup> Bosse (2018: 141) notes that Wunder's objection can be applied to *any* argument using 'propositions in the form of ' $P(Z/X) > P(Z/Y)$ ' where 'X' and 'Y' are mutually exclusive and one of them is non-contingent.'

## Hendricks' Reformulation of the EAAN

Hendricks has argued that there is a simple way to circumvent Wunder's objection to the EAAN: replace N with a proposition that is (a) entailed by N but that does not itself entail N and (b) consistent with theism. He suggests the following proposition:

Divine Distance (D): God, or anything at all like him, did not intervene (or order the world from the beginning) to ensure that his creatures' cognitive faculties are reliable. (2018: p. 3).

He argues that N entails D since the non-existence of God (or anything at all like him) entails that he did not intervene to ensure that R holds for his creatures. Hence, he claims, those who endorse N should also endorse D. Thus, he proposes that we replace 'N' in (1)–(5) with 'D.' But, he claims, if  $P(R/N\&E)$  is low, then so is  $P(R/D\&E)$ . And if that is the case, then the advocate of N has a defeater for R, since she affirms D as well, and hence, she has a defeater for all of her beliefs, including D&E itself. Thus, the EAAN is back up and running. Indeed, he claims that its scope is widened, for it now applies not only to N, but also to deism and any form of theism in which God does not ensure that R holds for his creatures; the only way out is to endorse a form of theism in which God (or something like him) ensured R holds for his creatures. So, we can continue to frame the EAAN in terms of objective probability and hold theism to be non-contingent since  $P(R/D\&E)$  does not require us to affirm (or deny) N or affirm (or deny) theism. In Hendricks' words:

...to make a claim about  $P(R/D\&E)$  does not commit one to making a probabilistic judgment about N or a conjunction containing N as a conjunct, which is what got us into trouble in the first place; to say that  $P(R/D\&E)$  is low does not commit one to saying that N is true or false. Hence, the EAAN can still be framed in terms of objective probability without entailing the necessary falsity of theism or the falsity of [the revised version of premise (1)]. (2018: p. 4)

Thus, the EAAN remains intact: its proponent need not retreat to epistemic probability nor give up the non-contingency of theism. However, we will argue below that this results in a puzzle for its proponent: it appears to provide God with a defeater for his beliefs.

## A Puzzle for the EAAN

While  $P(R/D\&E)$  gives the naturalist a defeater for her beliefs, it appears that a similar conditional probability— $P(R/D)$ —could be used; that is, it appears that E is not essential to the argument. While the arguments from the original EAAN can obviously be used to support  $P(R/D\&E)$  being low, we will argue that similar considerations show that  $P(R/D)$  is also low.

Sosa (2018) offers what he considers a simpler and more defensible version of the EAAN by considering  $P(R/PM)$ , where PM is the proposition that we have come about by unguided forces acting upon primordial muck. The forces referred to by PM exist prior to evolution and are akin to the cosmic singularity. Both Sosa and Plantinga think that  $P(R/PM)$  is low. Notice that with the extraction of E,  $P(R/PM)$  bears a strong

resemblance to  $P(R/D)$ . PM and D are similar in that they both suggest that human cognitive faculties have not been guided (by an agent) in their development. One natural way to consider the value of  $P(R/D)$  is to apply a principle of indifference. This is what Plantinga does in the context of materialism:

Shouldn't we estimate its probability, on the condition in question, as in the neighborhood of .5? That would be the sensible course. Neither seems more probable than the other; hence we should estimate the probability of its being true as .5. ... [But] am I not relying upon the notorious Principle of Indifference? And has not that principle been discredited? Not really. ... the fact is we project properties all the time, and do so perfectly sensibly. ... Given that the probability, for any belief on the part of these creatures, is about .5, what is the probability that their cognitive faculties are *reliable*? Well, what proportion of my beliefs must be true, if my faculties are reliable? The answer will have to be vague; perhaps a modest requirement would be that a reliable cognitive faculty must deliver at least 3 times as many true beliefs as false: the proportion of true beliefs in its output is at least three-quarters. If so, then the probability that their faculties produce the preponderance of true beliefs over false required by reliability is very small indeed. If I have one thousand independent beliefs, for example, the probability (under these conditions) that three quarters or more of these beliefs are true will be less than  $10^{-58}$ . (2011a: pp. 331–333)

So, according to the principle of indifference, unless we have reason to suspect otherwise, we apply an equal probability among the possibilities. We will follow Plantinga in using the principle of indifference, and also in his criterion that three-quarters of the beliefs produced by a faculty must be true in order for it to be reliable. Thus, by the principle of indifference, we estimate the probability of a belief being true given D as .5. It follows from this that the probability that there are at least 3 times as many true beliefs as false is very small indeed. That is, we conclude that  $P(R/D)$  is low. By the reasoning of the EAAN, we can see that anyone that believes D and sees that  $P(R/D)$  is low has a defeater for R, and the rest of the EAAN follows.<sup>6</sup>

One might have worries that trace back to the 'perspiration objection' that D may not be an appropriate defeater for R, for it is not the case that for any proposition X and Y that you believe, if X is improbable given Y, then Y is a defeater for X.<sup>7</sup> While Plantinga, as a particularist, prefers to argue by way of analogies, he does suggest a general principle: '[i]f a principle is wanted [for admissible defeaters], I'd suggest starting with something pretty limited, something about beliefs specifying the origin and provenance of cognitive faculties' (2002: p. 240). Thus, by Plantinga's account, D qualifies as a defeater candidate for R, since it pertains to the origin of and provenance of cognitive faculties; it says that no one intervened to ensure that our cognitive faculties are reliable.

We have now arrived at the puzzle for the EAAN. In order to circumvent Wunder's objection, we must modify premise (1) of EAAN to  $P(R/D\&E)$  being low. And we

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we have bracketed the issue of materialism and how it relates to the EAAN.

<sup>7</sup> Plantinga notes that the fact that P (the function of perspiration is to cool the body/N&E) is low does not mean N&E is a defeater for perspiration. The point is that defeat only happens between certain propositions.

have seen that if  $P(R/D\&E)$  is low, then, by similar reasoning, so is  $P(R/D)$ . However, this appears to give *God* a defeater for his beliefs. To see this, let us consider a restricted version of *D*.

$D^*$ : God, or anything at all like him, did not intervene (or order the world from the beginning) to ensure that his (God's) cognitive faculties are reliable.

$D^*$  has the same structure as *D*, so this revision is unproblematic; while  $D^*$  is a slight revision of *D*, it is no doubt in the same spirit as *D*: it too refers to the origin and provenance of cognitive faculties. Thus, if  $P(R/D)$  is low, we take it that  $P(R/D^*)$  is low too. However, this spells trouble for theists since, being omniscient, God believes  $D^*$ . Hence, since God affirms  $D^*$  and  $P(R/D^*)$  is low, he has a defeater for all of his beliefs.

There are (at least) three strategies for solving this puzzle: (a) add another proposition(s) *X* such that  $P(R/D^*\&X)$  is high, (b) deny that God believes  $D^*$ , or (c) use the medieval theory of analogy. We explore these options below.

## Omniscience

One might be tempted to use God's belief that he is omniscient (*O*) to solve the puzzle we have raised. That is, one might argue that while  $P(R/D^*)$  is low,  $P(R/D^*\&O)$  is not—since an omniscient being cannot be mistaken, it follows, of course, that  $P(R/D^*\&O)$  is 1. Puzzle solved.

Unfortunately, there are some hurdles for this reply to overcome. To assess whether the omniscience reply works, we must consider just what propositions are appropriate defeater-deflectors for God.<sup>8</sup> This is what Plantinga refers to as *the conditionalization problem*.<sup>9</sup> So, is *O* an admissible defeater-deflector for God? It does not appear so, for God's appealing to *O* resembles a move that Plantinga bars the naturalist from making:

Is there a belief *X* the naturalist might have such that  $P(R/N\&E\&X)$  is not low? Well, it certainly looks as if there are: what about *R* itself? That's presumably something the naturalist believes.  $P(R/N\&E\&R)$  is certainly not low; it's 1. But of course *R itself* is not a proper candidate for being a defeater-deflector here. If a belief *A* could itself be a defeater-deflector for a putative defeater of *A*, no belief could ever be defeated. (2011a: p. 347)

Plantinga's point is that if *R* is an admissible defeater-deflector, then we could deflect defeat in cases where it is obvious that we have defeat, e.g., the Cartesian demon scenario or by the anti-reliability inducing *XX* drug, which causes the cognitive faculties of 95% of those who ingest it to become unreliable.<sup>10</sup> Plantinga also rejects the use of defeater-deflectors that are broadly logically equivalent to *R*. If *R* is not an admissible defeater-deflector, then it is dubious to suppose that *O* is an admissible defeater-deflector. That is, since *O* entails *R*, it seems inadmissible.

<sup>8</sup> A defeater-deflector is a belief *B* that prevents a defeater *D* from defeating a belief *X* in the first place. A defeater-defeater is a belief *B* that defeats the defeater *D* after *D* has defeated belief *X*.

<sup>9</sup> 'Which beliefs are such that they can properly function as defeater-deflectors? Which beliefs are admissible in this context—that is, which beliefs *X* are such that if  $P(R/N\&E\&X)$  is not low, then *X* is a defeater-deflector for *R* and  $N\&E$  and  $P(R/N\&E)$  is low? This is the conditionalization problem' (Plantinga 2011a: p. 347).

<sup>10</sup> See Plantinga (2002) for more on the *XX* drug.

But does O entailing R really preclude it from acting as a defeater-deflector? Perhaps not. For suppose that God is, as is traditionally held, *necessarily* omniscient. And suppose that omniscience entails R (as is no doubt true). It follows from this that R will be *necessarily true* of God. But everything entails necessary truths, so everything will entail R. Thus, it is impossible for there to be any defeater-deflector for God if propositions entailing R are precluded from acting as defeater-deflectors. But this must be wrong: it is wholly implausible to suppose that God is not capable of having a defeater-deflector. And hence, it appears that we cannot rule out O as a candidate for being a defeater-deflector on account of it entailing R.

We can circumvent this issue by noting that it is only in a *trivial* way that any proposition will entail R in the above objection. However, omniscience entails R in a non-trivial way: there is actually a serious, non-trivial connection between the two propositions.<sup>11</sup> Thus, we ought to understand only propositions that *non-trivially* entail R to be inadmissible as defeater-deflectors, not propositions that entail R *simpliciter*. In other words, a proposition cannot be ruled out as a defeater-deflector merely because it entails R. Rather, what needs to be shown is that it *non-trivially* entails R. Since O non-trivially entails R, this issue is circumvented (so says one author). In any case, we do not intend to say anything novel about the conditions of admissible defeater-deflectors. We are content to defer to Plantinga's paradigmatic examples which seem to support our claim that O is inadmissible as a defeater-deflector.<sup>12</sup>

### The (Im)possibility of Defeat of R

One might think that there is a symmetry-breaker between humans and God. While humans think that it is possible for them to have a defeater for R (say, by the anti-reliability inducing XX drug), the same considerations do not apply to God. The *possibility* of defeat of R by the skeptical scenarios is what (at least partially)<sup>13</sup> motivates the inadmissibility of R as a defeater-deflector since then no belief could ever be defeated. By contrast, God does not believe defeat of R is even possible for him; that is, the belief that *R cannot possibly be defeated* functions as a defeater-deflector for God.

A worry with this reply is that if we understand the impossibility of defeat of R as a 0 percent probability of defeat of R, then we can consider a demigod that believes that he has a 1 percent probability of defeat of R, and thus, he believes it is possible that R is defeated for him. Consequently, the belief that *there is a 0 percent chance of defeat of R* serves as a defeater-deflector, while the belief that *there is a 1 percent chance of defeat of R* does not. It is unintuitive—at least to one author—that the 1 percent difference can be the difference-maker between the road to global skepticism and staving off defeat.

<sup>11</sup> What is it that makes the connection between O and R non-trivial? Briefly, for any being that is omniscient, R will hold of that being. There are, of course, significant differences between R and O. But we regard the previously mentioned fact as sufficient to render the connection non-trivial.

<sup>12</sup> Plantinga says, '[b]ut even if we cannot easily come up with a rigorous statement of necessary and sufficient conditions for admissibility, we can still see some obvious necessary conditions. R itself is not admissible, and the same goes for any belief equivalent in the broadly logical sense to R (for example,  $R \vee 2 + 1 = 4$ ) as well as any belief that together with N, or E, or their disjunction entails R (for example,  $N \supset R$ ).' (2011b: p. 440).

<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that Richard Otte in Beilby (2002) thinks that R cannot serve as a defeater-deflector because it would beg the question in an important sense.

But is this just another example of the paradox of the heap, in which case it is not a worry specific to the EAAN? Roughly, in the paradox of the heap, one is asked to consider how many grains of sand it takes to make a heap. The difference between a heap and non-heap will boil down to 1 grain.<sup>14</sup> So perhaps just as 1 grain is the difference between a non-heap and a heap, a 1 percent difference—which is the difference between the belief that defeat is highly improbable and the belief that defeat is impossible—is the difference between an unacceptable and acceptable defeater-deflector; perhaps this result is not as counterintuitive as initially thought.<sup>15</sup>

### Rejecting D\*

Another way to solve the puzzle is to show that God does not affirm D\*, in which case he does not have a defeater for R. That is, P(R/D\*) only functions as a defeater for God's beliefs *if* God accepts D\*, and hence, if he does not accept D\*, then he does not have said defeater.

Does God accept D\*? It appears that there is no reason to think that he would—at least if we are setting aside his omniscience, which we will for the sake of argument (due to criticisms raised in the ‘[Omniscience](#)’ section). This is because if God is omnipotent, then he is capable of ensuring the reliability of his cognitive faculties. And, as a rational being, he would no doubt seek to do this. So, when confronted with the claim that P(R/D\*) is low, God could happily grant it but hold that he has no reason to accept D\*—he has no reason to think that he did not intervene to ensure that R holds for himself (since he is a rational being and is omnipotent). Of course, this does not commit us to saying that God has *actually intervened* to ensure that R holds for him; indeed, since his omniscience entails R, we may positively say that he did not intervene to ensure R. But, again, we have set O aside here as a possible defeater-deflector, and hence, he must look for a different candidate. (In other words, if O is inadmissible defeater-deflectors, the rejection of D\* needs to be considered independently of it.) But there is a serious problem with this reply: God, since he is *actually* omniscient, actually accepts D\*. That is, the fundamental problem with this reply is that it assumes that God does not affirm something that he does, in fact, affirm (namely, D\*). So, even if this strategy were to work, God would not, and could not, use it.

Another problem with this reply is that one might think that is *impossible* for one to ensure R for oneself. Omnipotence does not include the ability to do impossible things; e.g., we can rule out the idea that God designed his own cognitive faculties, for he would need to have them causally prior to his designing them. And, if God can ensure R holds for him, could not the naturalist make a similar suggestion? So, the challenge is

<sup>14</sup> At least, it will for those who do not hold that the concept ‘heap’ is vague.

<sup>15</sup> There is an interesting consequence that arises from this section. Suppose God does stave off defeat while the demigod does not. Is there another defeater-deflector that can save the demigod? If the reasoning behind the original EAAN is correct, it is hard to see how. Without a designing agent, natural selection is the only game in town, and he has thrust back upon the original EAAN. So, if the strategy in this section is right, it seems that—in the absence of a design plan—not only is the belief that it is impossible to have your R defeated sufficient to stave off defeat, it is also necessary. (Though, perhaps a demigod could appeal to some of the other responses, we consider below, e.g., the medieval theory of analogy.)

to show how it is possible for God to ensure R for himself in a way that is not available to the naturalist. What is it precisely about omnipotence that allows D\* to be rejected by God that does not enable a naturalist to reject D?

Consider the use of *epistemically circular* arguments of the sort endorsed by Alston (1986).<sup>16</sup> Alston endorses an inductive argument using a track-record of past instances of successful sense perceptions to conclude that the faculty of sense perception is reliable.

1. At t1, S1 formed the perceptual belief that p1, and p1 is true.
2. At t2, S2 formed the perceptual belief that p2, and p2 is true.
3. Therefore, sense experience is a reliable source of belief

An argument is epistemically circular *iff* the source—in this case, sense perception—is concluded to be reliable based on premises which depend on the source. An argument is logically circular *iff* one of the premises is logically equivalent to the conclusion. While Alston's argument is epistemically circular, it is not logically circular: the conclusion is not logically equivalent to any premise.<sup>17</sup> Supposing epistemically circular arguments are legitimate, if God can use them, then so can the naturalist.<sup>18</sup> Omnipotence plays no essential role in the legitimacy of epistemically circular arguments. What is needed is a symmetry-breaker such that there is a way for God to ensure R, but not for the naturalist. Saying God used his omnipotence to ensure R is not any more informative than saying the naturalist used her finite power to ensure R. In both cases, we would like to know how.

One potential move on behalf of the EAAN proponent is to say that while we have sufficient access to the ways the naturalist could ensure R, such that we know she cannot ensure R, and so know she cannot escape defeat, we have limited knowledge of God, and he may have ways to ensure R that are unknown to us. After all, defeat is *relative* to a particular noetic structure (Plantinga 1994: p. 28)—what is a defeater for me may not be a defeater for you—and we do not have access to God's noetic structure. This leads us to the final reply.

### The Medieval Theory of Analogy

The reader may see a resemblance between the issue raised in this article and an issue that arises for Plantinga's theory of warrant: both his theory of warrant and his EAAN raise skeptical issues for God. So, perhaps the solution that Plantinga offers to the former can be used as a solution for the latter.

Roughly, for Plantinga, 'a belief has warrant for a person S only if that belief is produced in S by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for S's kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth' (Plantinga 2000: p. 156). If this account of warrant is right, this seems to bar God from having knowledge, because he

<sup>16</sup> Plantinga also seems to endorse epistemically circular arguments for R, as long as R has not been questioned or doubted (Beilby 2002, p. 241).

<sup>17</sup> Inductive arguments, in general, are not logically circular.

<sup>18</sup> To be clear, Plantinga (2000: p. 125) does not think that even God can give a non-circular argument for the reliability of his cognitive faculties.

was not designed. In reply, defenders of this theory of warrant can appeal to the medieval theory of analogy. Some medieval thinkers thought that we should speak of God *analogously* rather than *univocally*. And this is what Plantinga endorses, saying:

Of course, God's knowledge is significantly different from human knowledge: God has not been designed and does not have a design plan (in the sense of that term in which it applies to human beings). When applied to both God and human beings, such terms as 'design plan', 'proper function', and 'knowledge', as Aquinas pointed out, apply analogously rather than univocally. (1993: p. 236 footnote 26)

Since God is significantly different from humans, we are not in a position to say what the conditions for warrant are for him. Similarly, the defender of the EAAN could suggest that we are not in a position to say what the conditions for defeat are for God. (Perhaps God knows things innately,<sup>19</sup> in which case he does not come to know things by reasoning through inferences.) Consequently, it could be argued that we should be agnostic about whether our revised version of the EAAN is successful against God; that is, we should be agnostic about whether it provides God with a defeater for R since we do not know the conditions of defeat for God. However, it follows from the same line of reasoning that we also should be agnostic about whether any purported defeater-deflector is, for God, *actually* a defeater-deflector. For, if we are truly in the dark about the conditions of defeat for God's knowledge, then by the same token, it seems that we are in the dark about the conditions for defeater-deflectors. Thus, if the medieval theory of analogy undercuts our ability to say that God's knowledge is defeated, it also undercuts our ability to say that it is *not* defeated, and this means that the puzzle discussed in this paper remains unsolved.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

In this article, we have brought forth a puzzle about the EAAN: if it defeats the naturalist's beliefs, then a very similar line of reasoning appears to defeat God's beliefs. We have considered four possible solutions to this puzzle, but whether any of them ultimately succeed is not an issue the authors can come to agreement on. Thus, the reader may decide for herself whether this puzzle leaves the EAAN in peril, or whether the solutions offered above are viable. Either way, this is a significant worry that all proponents (and opponents) of the EAAN must deal with.

<sup>19</sup> See Moreland and Craig (2003: p. 521).

<sup>20</sup> Another interesting issue raised by invoking the medieval theory of analogy is the potential for the medieval theory of analogy to become a double-edged sword. If God's knowledge, and the like, is to be understood analogously, one wonders if God's design plan for us is also to be understood analogously. If that is true, then the question arises as to why it would not undermine, at least to some degree, whether humans satisfy the design plan condition for warrant. In other words, is a design plan in the analogous sense close enough to a design plan in the univocal sense, such that humans satisfy that condition for warrant? We leave this issue unsettled, as it is outside the scope of the paper.

**Acknowledgements** Thanks to G.L.G. - Colin Patrick Mitchell - for particularly insightful comments on this article.

## References

- Alston, W. P. (1986). Epistemic circularity. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 47(1), 1–30.
- Beilby, J. (Ed.). (2002). *Naturalism defeated? Essays on Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism*. Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Bosse, R. (2018). Wunder's probability objections. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 84, 131–142.
- Collins, R. (2009). The teleological argument: an exploration of the fine-tuning of the universe. In W. L. Craig & J. P. Moreland (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to natural theology* (pp. 202–281). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hendricks, P. (2018). Response to Wunder: objective probability, non-contingent theism, and the EAAN. *Religious Studies*, 1–5 First View. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412518000306>.
- Moreland, J. P., & Craig, W. L. (2003). *Philosophical foundations for a Christian worldview*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.
- Otte, R. (2002). Conditional probabilities in Plantinga's argument. In J. Beilby (Ed.), *Naturalism defeated? Essays on Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism* (pp. 135–152). Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (1993). *Warrant and proper function*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, Alvin. (1994). Naturalism defeated. Unpublished manuscript.
- Plantinga, A. (2000). *Warranted Christian belief*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (2002). Reply to Beilby's cohorts. In J. Beilby (Ed.), *Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism*. Ithica: Cornell University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (2011a). *Where the conflict really lies: science, religion, and naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. (2011b). Content and natural selection. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 83, 435–458.
- Plantinga, A., & Tooley, M. (2008). *Knowledge of god*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Sosa, E. (2018). Alvin Plantinga on theism, naturalism, and rationality. In T. Shah & J. Friedman (Eds.), *Homo religiosus?: exploring the roots of religion and religious freedom in human experience* (pp. 140–156). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108381536.007>.
- Wunder, T. (2015). The modality of theism and probabilistic natural theology: a tension in Alvin Plantinga's philosophy. *Religious Studies*, 51, 391–399.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.