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WHEN CITING **ALWAYS** REFER TO THE FINAL VERSION PUBLISHED IN
EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, VOL. 10, NO. 3., 51–66.
WITH DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V10I3.2605

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QUASI-FIDEISM AND RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

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Abstract. It is argued that standard accounts of the epistemology of religious commitment fail to be properly sensitive to certain important features of the nature of *religious conviction*. Once one takes these features of religious conviction seriously, then it becomes clear that we are not to conceive of the epistemology of religious commitment along completely rational lines. But the moral to extract from this is not *fideism*, or even a more moderate proposal (such as *reformed epistemology*) that casts the epistemic standing of basic religious beliefs along non-rational lines. Rather, one needs to recognise that in an important sense religious convictions are not beliefs at all, but that this is compatible with the idea that many other religious commitments are beliefs. This picture of the nature of religious commitment is shown to fit snugly with the Wittgensteinian account of *hinge commitments*, such that all rational belief essentially presupposes certain basic arational hinge commitments, along lines originally suggested by John Henry Newman. We are thus able to marshal a parity-style argument in defence of religious commitment. Although religious belief presupposes basic arational religious convictions, it is not on this score epistemically amiss since all belief presupposes basic arational convictions, or hinge commitments. The resulting view of the epistemology of religious commitment is a position I call *quasi-fideism*.

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"None of us can think or act without the acceptance of truths,
not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign."
John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*

I. RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

A crucial starting-point in any account of the epistemology of religion is to have a correct understanding of the phenomenon of religious conviction. By this, I have in mind those religious commitments that are fundamental to a religious life, as opposed to merely incidental religious beliefs that come with a religious life. For example, that God exists, or that miracles can occur would be natural instances of the former, whereas beliefs about, say, the more arcane elements of religious teaching would be natural instances of the latter. The point is that one's fundamental religious convictions play an indispensible part in what it is to be a religious believer at all, such that one cannot lose very many of them (if any) without losing one's faith altogether. One's incidental religious beliefs are not like this. One can alter quite a lot of these — and, indeed, over the course of one's life one probably will — while still retaining one's faith.

Henceforth, when we refer to religious beliefs we will have in mind specifically these incidental religious beliefs, in contrast to one's fundamental religious convictions (I will also take it as granted that all religious conviction is in the relevant sense fundamental too, and hence mostly dropping this qualifier). I don't claim that this distinction is completely sharp. Like most distinctions regarding a practical realm, there will likely be a range of penumbral cases. Moreover, I don't want to deny that there might be a certain kind of unusual religious believer for whom what is for most people peripheral to their faith is in fact central to theirs. My claim is just that in order to develop a suitable epistemology of religious belief we need to be sensitive to this distinction, and in particular to the usual nature of religious conviction, so construed.

For example, in evaluating the epistemic standing of religious belief, it is tempting to fall into the trap of treating all religious commitment — whether a conviction, in the aforementioned sense, or a

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mere belief — as being, at root, a *choice* on the believer's part, akin to the kind of theoretical choice that a scientist might make. For example, we have a conception of well-conducted scientific practice such that the conscientious scientist sifts through the available evidence and on that basis forms a belief about the theory that offers the best fit with the evidence. Only when the belief is so formed does it enjoy a sound epistemic standing. We might well think that the same should apply to religious conviction. The well-conducted religious inquiry involves sifting through the available evidence and conscientiously forming one's religious beliefs on this basis. Only when the beliefs are so formed do they enjoy a sound epistemic standing.

Such a conception of how to epistemically evaluate religious belief/conviction is at least implied by the *evidentialist* approach to the epistemology of religion — roughly, such that one should proportion one's religious conviction to the supporting evidence available.[1] But while enthusiasm for evidentialism has been in steady decline for some time now, I think the underlying conception of religious belief/conviction remains — i.e., that this is a matter of forming the appropriate attitudes in light of the epistemic support available. And yet while this picture might have some application to mere religious belief, if one examines the nature of religious conviction, specifically, at least as it is usually manifested, then it becomes transparent that it is radically misleading, if not downright false.

For example, it is in the nature of a good scientific belief of a broadly theoretical kind that it brings with it a kind of intellectual distance, a kind of *cerebral coolness*, if you will. The theoretical belief is formed in the light of the evidence, and the attachment to that belief remains only so long as the evidence continues to support it.[2] Religious conviction is rarely, if ever, like this. To begin with, there is the point at which the conviction is acquired. This is often not via a process of ratiocination, at least not in any explicit sense anyway. For many, it will involve absorbing the conviction from those around them from childhood as part of their upbringing within a community that shares that belief. Even when the conviction comes later, it is still rarely due to a sober assessment of the relevant evidence, but rather springs forth out of certain distinctive experiences of deep emotional import to the person involved. Either way, there is rarely any trace of the kind of intellectual detachment that we prize in well-founded scientific belief.

Not only is religious conviction rarely formed in the way that sound scientific beliefs are formed, it is also maintained in very different ways too. Once the conviction is in place, then henceforth it tends to perform a 'fulcrum' role with regard to the subject's other beliefs, such that it is a commitment relative to which other beliefs are evaluated. So, for example, someone with genuine religious conviction is not going to simply lose that commitment in the face of counterevidence. Indeed, were this not so, then I think we would tend to regard the religious conviction in play as being somewhat suspect. Relatedly, having religious conviction will usually lead to one having experiences that will naturally generate (what one will naturally regard as) supporting evidence for one's religious belief. So, for example, one will find such supporting evidence in one's interactions with other members of one's religious community (e.g., in observing their shared beliefs, by listening to the testimony of an religious elder, and so on).

The point of the foregoing is that religious conviction, at its heart, is typically not a matter of endorsing a hypothesis, as it is with well-founded scientific belief of a theoretical kind. I'm not here denying that this is ever a possibility, but I do want to suggest that there would at least be something very odd about someone who acquires and maintains her religious conviction in this manner. In any case, it is religious conviction of the paradigm kind that interests me, and the epistemological implications of which I want to explore.

Taking this picture of religious conviction seriously might seem to naturally lead to scepticism about the rationality of religious belief. Doesn't it suggest that religious conviction fails to be tethered to evi-

1 Evidentialism is usually attributed to Locke (1979 [1689]), and in particular his claim that "reason must be our last judge and guide in everything." (Locke 1979 [1689], IV, xix, p. 14)

2 I'm obviously not claiming that all scientific belief, even in highly theoretical matters, is like that, since scientists can be as devout as religious believers in this regard. The point rather concerns a certain kind of paradigmatic scientific inquiry. (Note too that this point is meant to be compatible with the idea that even a scientist conducting a paradigmatic scientific inquiry might well nonetheless have some core commitments that are arationally held, as I explain below).

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dential concerns? (One might well be reminded of Locke's famous remarks about the 'enthusiasts' who believe what they do "because it is a revelation, and have no other reason for its being a revelation but because they are fully persuaded, without any other reason, that it is true, they believe it to be a revelation only because they strongly believe it to be a revelation; which is a very unsafe ground to proceed on, either in our tenets or actions.").[3] If so, then doesn't it follow that the only way to defend religious conviction is to go *fideistic* and maintain that, unlike other forms of belief, it is not to be evaluated epistemically at all?[4]

I think this is far too quick. For one thing, there is the possibility that the supporting evidence is available, even if it fails to play any role in the formation and maintenance of the belief. That's not a comfortable epistemic position to defend, of course — we would rather that the justification for religious belief be doxastic rather than merely propositional — but it is at least distinct from the scenario where there is no epistemic basis at all available for religious conviction.

There is also another theoretical alternative available, which is to argue that although religious commitment, at its heart, is lacking in evidential support it does not follow that it is epistemically lacking thereby. I have in mind here *reformed epistemology*, whereby basic religious belief can be both groundless and yet also epistemically in good order in virtue of the manner in which it was acquired. That is, just as basic perceptual belief can be — according to a number of contemporary epistemological proposals at any rate — both rationally groundless and yet epistemically in good order if it is formed via a reliable perceptual faculty, so basic religious belief can be both rationally groundless and yet epistemically in good order if it is formed via a reliable religious faculty (the *sensus divinitatis*).[5]

These particular dialectical moves are not my interest here (though I will be returning to the reformed epistemology proposal later). Rather, I want to suggest that the underlying picture of religious conviction needs to be complicated in important ways, and that once one adds these complications into the picture, then a distinctive way of thinking about the epistemology of religion becomes apparent.

II. FUNDAMENTAL RELIGIOUS CONVICTION VS. RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Earlier I contrasted religious beliefs with religious conviction. This was merely for convenience, but I now want to suggest that there is a good philosophical basis for the contrast. We use the term 'belief' in lots of different way, both in everyday and theoretical (e.g., philosophical) contexts. In its most inclusive form, to believe that *p* can just mean little more than a general endorsement of *p*; but it can also be used in more restrictive ways. In particular, the notion of belief that is operative in epistemology is more restrictive. This is because it concerns that propositional attitude that is a constitutive part of rationally grounded knowledge.[6] This propositional attitude is restrictive in the sense that it bears some base-level connections to reasons and truth. In particular, to believe that *p* in this sense is to believe that *p is true*, and this has some important consequences. One of these consequences is that one cannot manifest this

3 See Locke (1979 [1689], IV, xix, p. 11).

4 Fideism is often attributed to Wittgenstein (1966). For some key discussions of Wittgensteinian fideism, see Nelson (1967) and Philips (1976). As I will be explaining below, however, once we take into account Wittgenstein's (1969) writings on the subject, then in fact his position looks rather different.

5 For some of the key texts on reformed epistemology, see Alston (1982; 1986; 1991) and Plantinga (1983; 2000). Note that there is a further dialectical option on this score. Rather than treating religious belief as being on an epistemic par with perceptual belief, one could instead argue that a better analogy would be ethical belief. Unlike perceptual knowledge, which employs innate faculties that most of us enjoy, ethical knowledge often requires distinctive kinds of expertise, expertise that is usually only acquired by learning from ethical exemplars in one's community (or, at least, representations of such exemplars, such as in literature). If one conceives of religious belief on the model of ethical belief, one is thus led to a very different picture of its epistemology. I will return to this point below — see footnote 9. For an excellent overview of this way of thinking about the epistemology of religious belief, see Zagzebski (2010).

6 Whether all knowledge is rationally grounded knowledge is, of course, moot. Insofar as knowledge comes apart from rationally grounded knowledge, however, then it is important for our purposes to focus on the latter rather than the former as the propositional attitude that is a constituent part of the former might well have different properties to the propositional attitude that concerns us here (in particular, it is likely to be much more inclusive).

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propositional attitude while also recognising that one has no rational basis for the truth of *p*.[7] That is, insofar as one maintains this propositional attitude while recognising the lack of a rational basis for that proposal attitude (i.e., a rational basis for thinking the target proposition true), then whatever propositional attitude one is manifesting it cannot be one of belief in this specific sense (though it can still be a belief in a more inclusive sense). It is rather a different propositional attitude entirely, such as a *wishful thinking* that *p* or just a *brute conviction* that *p*.[8]

Henceforth, when we refer to belief without qualification we will have this specific propositional attitude in mind, rather than more inclusive usages of the term. The reason why this distinction is important for our purposes is that it helps us to differentiate between the two kinds of religious commitment that we noted earlier. In particular, notice that the kind of paradigm religious conviction described above may not count as a belief in the specific sense just outlined. Suppose, for example, that one comes to realise that all of the reasons that one can offer in support of one's religious commitments (i.e., beliefs and convictions) are themselves the product of one's religious convictions, such that one only regards them as supporting reasons because one already has these religious convictions. This might include such things as the 'evidence' of scripture, the testimony of fellow believers, certain kinds of religious experiences that one has had, and so on. In recognising this, one thereby also recognises that one has no independent rational basis for the truth of one's religious convictions, and hence no real rational basis at all. Would this recognition have any bearing on the strength of one's religious convictions? My claim is that it would have little, if any, effect in this regard, at least insofar as the religious conviction is genuine. If that's right, then religious convictions are not beliefs in the specific sense that interests epistemologists.

It will be useful here to contrast this scenario with a parallel scenario involving a theoretical kind of scientific belief. Imagine that the conscientious scientist discovers that the only rational support that she can cite in favour of her belief in a certain theoretical claim already presupposes a commitment to this claim. Perhaps the data that has been collected turns out to be ambiguous in terms of what it shows on this score, but that the scientist has — without realising; this could be a straightforward case of confirmation bias — treated it as confirming evidence due to her prior attachment to the theoretical claim in question. In recognising these facts about her supporting reasons for the target claim, wouldn't this have a direct effect on the scientist's commitment to this claim (bearing in mind that we are stipulating here that she is an intellectually conscientious inquirer)? After all, she has now come to realise that she has no rational basis for thinking the target claim to be true, and hence she ought to suspend judgement on its truth. Moreover, insofar as she continues to endorse this claim, then we would not treat this as a believing on her part, at least in the restricted sense we are interested in. Instead, it would be rather more akin to a wishful thinking on her part.

Just as we would not characterise a scientific commitment that was maintained even in light of the recognition that one has no rational basis for its truth as a belief in the relevant sense, the same will go for a fundamental religious conviction. Where the two kinds of commitment diverge, however, is in terms of how fundamental religious convictions were never meant to be thought of as beliefs in this sense in the first place (at least not typically). The scientist who maintains her commitment to the theoretical claim even though she recognises that she has no rational basis for its truth has thereby shown herself to be lacking in the intellectual virtues characteristic of a good inquirer. But to lay this charge against the religious person who maintains her religious conviction even though she recognises that she lacks a rational basis for its truth seems to entirely mischaracterise the kind of propositional attitude in play.

The crux of the matter relates to the point raised earlier about how religious convictions lack the kind of intellectual distance that is characteristic of scientific belief. It is simply not the kind of commitment that is the result of a well-conducted inquiry, nor is it the kind of commitment that is meant to be responsive to the

7 Note that this constraint is entirely compatible with one having irrational beliefs, or beliefs that lack any kind of rational basis (in that it is the *recognition* of the lack of a rational basis for *p*'s truth that is the issue).

8 There are, of course, many notions of belief operative in the philosophical literature. See Stevenson (2002) for a survey of some key kinds of belief.

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results of well-conducted inquiry. It is rather a brute conviction in the truth in question, one that informs and structures the world of the believer.[9]

One might think that to argue this much is to retreat back to fideism. Religious conviction is more a matter of faith than of belief, and hence is to be epistemically assessed differently from belief in general. But that kind of reasoning is far too quick. For notice that we have only characterised religious *conviction* as not involving belief. It is entirely consistent with this claim that many religious beliefs are just that — *beliefs*, just like beliefs in general (e.g., scientific beliefs). Indeed, this is precisely the line that I want to defend.

After all, as noted above, many religious commitments are not convictions of the kind that we have outlined, but rather involve quite specific beliefs in particular claims — for example, about religious doctrine. Crucially, however, these beliefs *do* behave in many ways just like ordinary beliefs. Indeed, take beliefs about religious doctrine as a case in point. We can make perfect sense of there being a vibrant debate about matters of this kind amongst groups of religious believers, debates that might lead to participants to change their stance, sometimes in minor respects, and sometimes in more radical ways. Moreover, these processes seem entirely rational, and much like how issues are debated and minds are changed in other domains (e.g., concerning public policy). If that's right, then in granting that religious convictions are not beliefs we are not thereby committed to taking the fideist line that all religious conviction is to be treated this way.

Now one might think that I'm here glossing over a rather fundamental point. Recall that we have made two interconnected points about the nature of religious commitment. The first is that religious convictions are not to be thought of as beliefs (in the restricted sense), due to how they are the kind of propositional attitude that would survive even the recognition that one has no rational basis for their truth. Indeed, religious convictions are not formed by a process of ratiocination, nor are they to be thought of as supported by reasons. The second is that these religious convictions play a fulcrum role in the believer's mind-set, such that they determine the shape of her other commitments. In particular, the kinds of supporting reasons that the religious person will marshal in support of her belief-system will be itself crucially dependent on the prior endorsement of the general and fundamental religious conviction. Putting these two points together, doesn't this suggest that just as one's basic religious convictions are essentially arational, so too are one's non-basic religious convictions, even if they are to count as normal beliefs? And doesn't that imply that fideism is now the natural way to understand the epistemology of religion?

I think that this is a line of reasoning which, while admittedly superficially appealing, should be resisted. In order to see why, however, there is a further piece of the puzzle that we need to put in place, concerning the nature of our ordinary, non-religious, convictions and how they compare to religious convictions.

III. QUESTIONS OF EPISTEMIC PARITY

The contemporary debate about the epistemology of religion is very much concerned with issues of epistemic parity. In particular, the idea has been that scepticism about the epistemology of religious belief needs to be rooted in a challenge that does not set an epistemic bar to religious belief that wouldn't be posed for other kinds of belief that are appropriately analogous to religious belief (and which are generally held to be in good epistemic order). For if that were so, then a double-standard would be in play, and the challenge would be illegitimate.

In order to settle questions of epistemic parity like this we need to establish two things. The first concerns which kind of non-religious belief that religious belief should be compared with. The second is to establish what epistemic demands are made with regard to this non-religious kind of belief. The debate

9 As noted above — see footnote 2 — I'm not suggesting that those who conduct paradigmatically scientific inquiries lack basic arational commitments. In fact, as we'll see, I want to suggest that they precisely do have such commitments. But for the now the crucial point is just that their theoretical scientific commitments, acquired via such a paradigmatic process of inquiry, is not to be understood as essentially arational.

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about the first issue has tended to take it for granted that religious conviction involves belief through-and-through, and then to search for a suitable everyday kind of belief to compare it to. For reformed epistemology, for example, the relevant analogy is perceptual belief. With regard to the second issue, they claim that basic perceptual beliefs can be epistemically in order even though lacking in supporting reasons, just so long as the relevant perceptual faculties are functioning appropriately. Similarly, argue the reformed epistemologists, that basic religious beliefs are lacking in supporting reasons need be no bar to them counting as epistemically in order just so long as they are the product of an appropriately functioning religious faculty.[10]

My take on this issue is rather different because, as noted above, I don't think that religious convictions are beliefs at all in the relevant sense. Equally, however, I don't think that this should lead to a conception of the epistemology of religion that treats religious commitment in a radically different way to belief in general (as fideism would entail). The way to square this particular circle is to recognise that the parity that we are after is not between religious conviction/belief and a particular kind of non-religious conviction/belief, but rather between religious conviction/belief and conviction/belief in general. What is key here is to realise that *all* belief presupposes basic commitments that are essentially brute and arational in nature, and hence which don't qualify as beliefs at all in our restrictive sense. Only once we recognise this point are we able to understand how the epistemic demands placed on religious beliefs that have essentially arational religious convictions at their heart are essentially no different from the epistemic demands that are placed on beliefs in general. This is the final piece of the puzzle, and it concerns the Wittgensteinian notion of a *hinge commitment*.

IV. HINGE COMMITMENTS

The way that I've been describing fundamental religious conviction is in terms of what Wittgenstein, in his final notebooks (published as *On Certainty*), referred to as *hinge commitments*.[11] These are commitments that are not acquired via rational processes, but are rather 'swallowed down' with everything else that one is taught. Relatedly, they are not directly responsive to rational considerations either. Instead, one's conviction is 'animal' and 'visceral'. Nonetheless, the commitment is not hedged in any way, but rather goes hand-in-hand with an optimal level of certainty.

The point of the hinge metaphor is to emphasise the fact that these commitments play a kind of foundational role in one's system of beliefs, in that they determine what is to count as evidence for what; what is to be evaluated relative to what. The hinges are, in this regard, the fixed point; what we earlier referred to as the 'fulcrum' (an alternative metaphor that I'm sure Wittgenstein would have been happy with in this regard). Interestingly, however, although Wittgenstein was certainly amenable to the idea of there being religious hinge commitments — indeed, I have elsewhere claimed that he acquires the very idea of hinge commitments from John Henry Newman's (1979 [1870]) important but much-neglected defence of the rationality of religious belief — his specific concerns are not religious at all.[12] Rather, Wittgenstein's claim is that *all* rational evaluation — and therefore all belief, doubt and such like — presupposes such essentially arational hinge commitments. If that's right, then what we have described above as features of religious conviction are in fact shared by belief in general.

10 A different kind of epistemic parity argument is offered by those who hold that the relevant analogous class of beliefs is not perceptual beliefs but rather ethical beliefs. See, for example, Zagzebski (2010). See also footnote 5.

11 See especially Wittgenstein (1969, §341-3). Although the "hinge" metaphor is the dominant symbolism in the book, it is accompanied by various other metaphors, such as the following: that these propositions constitute the "scaffolding" of our thoughts (Wittgenstein 1969, §211); that they form the "foundations of our language-games" (Wittgenstein 1969, §§401-3); and also that they represent the implicit "world-picture" from within which we inquire, the "inherited background against which [*we*] distinguish between true and false" (Wittgenstein 1969, §§94-5).

12 I discuss the relationship between Wittgenstein (1969) and Newman (1979 [1870]) in Pritchard (2015*b*). See also Barrett (1997) and, especilaly, Kienzler (2006).

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So, for example, Wittgenstein was much taken by how our commitment to the so-called Moorean certainties — the everyday claims that we are optimally certain of, such as that, in normal circumstances, one has two hands — was essentially arational.[13] Rather than being foundational commitments in virtue of their high degree of rational support, they were rather the fixed points relative to which we evaluated other commitments that we hold. Wittgenstein argued that this wasn't an incidental feature of our practices, but rather reflected the essential nature of what it is to be a rational subject. The idea of rational support that goes 'all the way down' was thus, for Wittgenstein, a chimera, akin to aspiring to create a circle-square. Instead, the kind of brute certainty represented by our hinge commitments is essentially prior to belief and doubt (and moves more generally in the space of reasons), and needs to be in place in order to enable these rational moves to function at all.[14] It is thus a matter of 'logic', as Wittgenstein puts the point at several junctures, that all rational evaluation — whether positive or negative (i.e., sceptical or traditionally anti-sceptical, such as Moorean) — is essentially local, in that there could be no such thing as a fully general rational evaluation (i.e., one that presupposes no hinge commitments).[15]

In terms of our restricted conception of belief, it follows that it is not just religious commitment that has essentially arational, and thus non-belief, commitments at its core. Rather, *all* belief has essentially arational, and hence non-belief, commitments at its core. In terms of parity, then, the crux of the matter is that one cannot criticize religious belief on the grounds that it presupposes essentially arational fundamental religious commitments, in that all rational belief, by its nature if Wittgenstein is correct, presupposes essentially arational commitments.[16]

If the foregoing is correct, then the way to account for the epistemology of religious commitment in a way that is true to its psychological character — and, in particular, the sense in which fundamental religious conviction is essentially brute — is precisely *not* to retreat to fideism, and thereby concede that all religious commitments, including religious beliefs, are to be evaluated in an entirely different way to ordinary belief. Rather, one should insist on epistemic parity in terms of our dealings with religious commitments *vis-à-vis* our commitments more generally. Recognising that belief more generally also presupposes essentially arational (non-belief) commitments is liberating in this regard, in that it means that the constraints of epistemic parity do not lead us to think that religious conviction is akin to a particular kind of ordinary believing. Rather it is just like believing in general, in that believing in general presupposes essentially arational commitments just as religious believing does.

We are thus led to a distinctive account of the epistemology of religious commitment, which I call *quasi-fideism*. Like fideism, it holds that the epistemology of religious commitments must allow for the fact that fundamental religious convictions are essentially arational in kind. But unlike fideism, it does not epistemically 'ghettoise' religious belief, but rather treats it as analogous to believing more generally. Indeed, although quasi-fideism follows contemporary accounts of the epistemology of religious belief in offering an epistemic parity-style argument, it diverges from these contemporary approaches in that it

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13 See especially Moore (1925; 1939).

14 As I explain in Pritchard (2015*a*), the Wittgensteinian conception of hinge commitments is entirely compatible with the idea that one's hinge commitments can change over time, and indeed change in largely rational ways. The crux of the matter is just that such change is inevitably indirect — very roughly, one's beliefs can be changed in rational ways, and as they change the kinds of propositions which codify one's hinge commitments can also alter. See also footnote 16.

15 I further develop my own reading of Wittgenstein's epistemology in Pritchard (2012; 2015*a*; 2018*b*). For some of the key defences of competing proposals, see McGinn (1989), Williams (1991), Moyal-Sharrock (2004), Wright (2004), Coliva (2010; 2015), and Schönbaumsfeld (2017). For two surveys of this literature, see Pritchard (2011*b*; 2017*b*).

16 One worry one might have about conceiving of fundamental religious conviction as a kind of hinge commitment is that whereas abandoning the latter seems to undermine rationality itself, the same does not seem to be the case when it comes to abandoning the former. Indeed, don't people abandon their religious conviction all the time? The putative disanalogy in play here is mistaken, however. As noted in footnote 14, I have argued elsewhere — see especially Pritchard (2015*a*) — that the Wittgensteinian conception of hinge commitments is entirely compatible with there being rational change (albeit of an indirect nature) in one's hinge commitments. And what applies to our hinge commitments more generally also applies to our fundamental religious convictions. I am grateful to a referee for *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* for pressing me on this issue.

doesn't claim that religious belief is akin to a specific kind of belief (e.g., perceptual belief, in the case of reformed epistemology). Instead, the epistemic parity is with belief in general.[17]

On this view, we can accept that religious belief presupposes an arational religious conviction without in doing so accepting that it is epistemically amiss as a result, at least so long as Wittgenstein is right that it is in the nature of belief in general to presuppose arational convictions that are essentially arational. Quasi-fideism is thus able to exploit a sector of the logical space that has hitherto been underexplored, and underexplored precisely because of a failure to take certain features of the nature of religious commitment seriously, such as how they correlate to certain features of the nature of commitment more generally.[18,19]

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17 I defend quasi-fideism in Pritchard (2011*a*; 2015*b*; 2017*a*).

18 There are two further features of quasi-fideism that I have not explored here, for reasons of space. The first is how it can account for how one can ensure that the arational nature of one's hinge commitments doesn't undermine the putatively rational nature of one's religious belief (what I elsewhere refer to as the 'containment problem'). I discuss this problem at length in Pritchard (2011*a*; 2015*b*; 2017*a*). There is also the issue of whether quasi-fideism, and the Wittgensteinian picture regarding the nature of hinge commitments that underlies it, leads to a troubling form of epistemic relativism, whereby there can be disputes which are in principle irresolvable by rational means. I explore this question in more detail in Pritchard (2010). See also Pritchard (2009; 2018*a*; 2018c; *forthcoming*). For more on this topic as it arises in *On Certainty*, see Williams (2007) and Coliva (2010).

19 Thanks to Zenon Bankowski and Miroslaw Szatkowski. Thanks also to two reviewers for *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* for their comments on a previous version of the paper.

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Please do not Cite. Citable Version has DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V10I3.2605

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