

Guy Axtell: Problems of Religious Luck. Assessing the Limits of Reasonable Religious Disagreement. Lanham: Lexington Books 2019, 290 pages, \$95.00 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-4985-5017-8

Guy Axtell's new book, as the title suggests, is an attempt to assess the limits of reasonable religious disagreement. In trying to delineate those limits Axtell thinks that it is useful to employ the notions of luck and risk in examining how reasonable a particular religious (or atheistic) stance is. A central concern of the book is with religious groups which exclude others in some way and which ascribe traits to those other groups that are very unlike the traits the group ascribes to themselves. For example, a group might describe its own members as being *saved* but describe members of other similar groups as *lost*. Axtell thinks that the groups making these kinds of asymmetrical trait ascriptions are subject to a great deal of inductive risk (and so it seems as though the privileged group is *lucky* to be in the situation it is in, if it is correct about being saved or about being in possession of the truth). Inductive risk is the risk of 'getting it wrong' in an inductive context of inquiry. In the introduction to *Problems of Religious Luck* Axtell cites Heather Douglas's definition of inductive risk which says that it is "... the risk of error in accepting or rejecting hypotheses" (3). Axtell says that he is primarily concerned with building a *de jure* case against the reasonableness of these kinds of extreme positions in religion and so his arguments are meant to cast doubt on the doxastic responsibility of the people who hold such (risky) positions rather than to cast doubt on the truth of what the person in question asserts (a *de facto* objection) (6, 214). He thinks that exclusivist responses to religious multiplicity "lie beyond the pale of reasonable disagreement" (132).

Problems of Religious Luck takes a fresh look at the kinds of problems raised by the contingency of people's beliefs on their location (the time they live in, the place they live in, the family they grow up in, the groups they happen to be exposed to, and so on). These are not new problems. In *On Liberty* John Stuart Mill wrote that, "[t]he world, to each individual, means the part of it with which he comes in contact; his party, his sect, his church, his class of society ... It never troubles him that mere accident has decided which of these numerous worlds is the object of his reliance, and that the same causes which make him a Churchman in London, would have made him a Buddhist or a Confucian in Peking ... nor is his faith in this collective authority at all shaken by his being aware that other ages, countries, sects, churches, classes, and parties have thought,

and even now think, the exact reverse.”¹ Axtell’s book tries to hone our appreciation of such problems and to sharpen our critical tools by mapping the conceptual territory on which these debates take place and by bringing in resources from critical thinking, the philosophy of technology, psychology, and cognitive science. He makes use of the existing literature on moral luck and epistemic luck as well as the, still relatively small, literature on religious luck to produce a taxonomy of various types of religious luck. He presents us with six varieties of religious luck: three inspired by the moral luck literature and three inspired by the literature on epistemic luck.²

The first two chapters of the book introduce the key terms, present his taxonomy (along with examples of the various kinds of luck), and introduce what Axtell calls ‘The New Problem of Religious Luck’. In the second part of the book the focus moves away from luck towards a discussion of the related notion of inductive risk and its usefulness in social scientific approaches to religious disagreement. However, although Axtell argues that studies from psychology (such as studies of bias), cognitive science, and theology are useful in making his case and that his own work can be of benefit to those areas, he sees his own work as primarily philosophical. Axtell makes this clear when he says that his “... de jure argument against theological defenses of the reasonableness of an exclusivist response to religious contrariety ... is a *philosophical* thesis. It is based on moral, logical, and epistemological concerns, even though it draws heavily on psychological studies” (86). In the final, sixth, chapter of the book Axtell argues that cognitive science is best placed to answer some of the questions raised by the philosophy of luck and risk and he responds to criticisms of cognitive science of religion raised by Olli-Pekka Vainio.

Before moving on to a critical evaluation of some elements of the book let us first take a look at some of the examples Axtell gives of religious luck and at his New Problem of Religious Luck, which forms the centrepiece of the second chapter of the book. One variety of luck that Axtell examines is what he calls ‘constitutive religious luck’. This variety of luck has to do with traits that a person is

1 Mill 1978 (1859): 17. Axtell cites this passage from Mill on p. 6 and also cites a similar passage from Montaigne, where he makes a ‘contingency’ argument, on p. 53 (the passage he cites comes from *Apology for Raimond Sebond* [1580], p. 6).

2 In particular, Axtell draws on Linda Zagzebski’s work on religious luck (1994) which was in turn inspired by work on moral luck by Joel Feinberg and Thomas Nagel, and on Duncan Pritchard’s work on epistemic luck (2005). The six types of luck Axtell draws our attention to are (i) resultant luck, (ii) criterial religious luck, (iii) constitutive religious luck, (iv) propositional religious luck, (v) intervening veritic religious luck, and (vi) environmental veritic religious luck (12–34).

born with or their inherited social standing. Somebody might be considered lucky to have been born with a high social status that is rationalised using a particular religious doctrine, law, or standard. An example of this is the Hindu caste system, according to which some are reckoned to have been born ‘untouchables’ (deemed spiritually polluted and compelled to work in demeaning, low-paid jobs) while others are regarded as being Brahmins (given high social status). This hierarchical organisation of society is rationalised by the Law of Karma from traditional Hindu thought, which says that actions in past lives determine someone’s position in society, with each individual accruing either good or bad karma.³

Another variety of luck that Axtell brings our attention to is what he calls ‘environmental veritic religious luck’. This kind of luck runs parallel to the kind of luck that appears in fake barn cases, according to Axtell’s account. In the famous *Barney* case Barney sees a barn and assents to ‘that is a barn’ but he is unaware that he is in fake barn county. In fake barn county there are numerous fake barns which look very much like real barns (they are indistinguishable from real barns in the conditions under which Barney saw the barn) but Barney is lucky in forming the true belief that he has seen a barn. Nonetheless, most philosophers are reluctant to say that Barney *knows* that there is a barn in front of him, because he could very easily have been looking at a fake barn and would have assented to the (false) claim ‘that is a barn’ under those circumstances.⁴

Axtell claims that parallel cases can be constructed in the case of exclusivist religious beliefs. According to Axtell, “arguably we have merely to swap out ‘the one real barn’ for the exclusivist notion of ‘the one true theology’, and ‘perceived by eyesight from a distance’ for ‘believed on the basis of the purported special revelation dominant at one’s epistemic location’” (26). Exclusivist religions

³ Axtell gives this example on pp. 16–17 of *Problems of Religious Luck* and elsewhere in the book (154–155) he warns against giving overly simplistic accounts of social phenomena, disagreeing strongly with Dawkins’s claim that “religion itself” should be blamed for martyrdom (2008: 306). Axtell’s complaint against Dawkins is that his picture of religious extremism is overly simplistic and Axtell, quite reasonably, argues that the blame for negative actions carried out by extremists cannot just be laid at the door of the religion in question. Other factors (economic, political) should be brought into play when explaining atrocities committed by religious extremists. Something similar could be said about the caste system in India. Recent research suggests that the caste system in India became particularly rigid under British colonial rulers, who elevated the status of Hindu texts which promoted the caste system in order to rule over their colonial subjects more easily (see Chakravorty 2019).

⁴ The example originally comes from Goldman 1976. Goldman himself credits Carl Ginet with the example.

look similar from the outside, in much the same sort of way that barns and fake barns look very similar from a distance. So, it seems plausible to claim that exclusivists are on shaky ground when they claim to be in possession of the one true theology or in claiming that only the adherents of their religion will be saved.

To make his argument more convincing Axtell constructs a case along the lines of the Barney case with a character called Tess. The *Tess* case seems to resemble disagreements between exclusivist religious groups more closely than the *Barney* case. Tess travels to a county that, unbeknownst to her, is known locally as fake news county. Distributed throughout the town there are various different coloured newsstands. The different coloured newsstands each contain different, and conflicting, accounts of the town's history, often in narrative form, and which present the reader with moral lessons. When Tess arrives in town her uncle Sal picks her up from the train station and as they are walking to his car they pass a blue newsstand containing a newspaper. Uncle Sal takes a copy of the paper from the blue newsstand and tells Tess that this is the only paper she can trust. Papers from other newsstands are untrustworthy, according to Sal. Tess was unaware of any other stands and Sal does not enlighten her any further about the newspapers in the other newsstands. Later on, Tess reads the paper from the blue box and finds it fascinating. She accepts the content of the paper as trustworthy, partly due to her uncle's assurances and partly due to the compelling nature of the narratives in the paper. Then, as she is returning home she passes other newsstands that are yellow, red, green, violet, and brown. Each of the different coloured newsstands contains a paper with a warning that the other papers are untrustworthy. Uncle Sal again assures Tess that the paper in the blue box is the trustworthy one and suggests that Tess does not bother reading the others. Tess listens to her uncle and reads the blue paper again on the train home. When she arrives back home she tells her sister about what she has been reading and presents the material as if it is entirely factual. It seems that Tess is lucky to be correct if the newspaper from the blue newsstand is indeed the trustworthy one.

In the second chapter of the book Axtell brings together some of the considerations that he raised in the first chapter to formulate the 'New Problem of Religious Luck'. He starts formulating the problem by again noting the kinds of issues that Mill recognised concerning the contingency of people's beliefs on their environment. People are very likely to take on the religion of their family or their culture. Someone raised in a Catholic family is more likely to grow up to be Catholic but if they had been raised by another family with a different religion or in another culture (and had the same capacities and intellectual temperament)

then they would likely have identified with another religion.⁵ It is difficult to deny this. Axtell cites evidence that in the United States around 90–91% of adults are adherents of the religion that they were raised in as children (54–55). There is also evidence that in Europe children raised in Portugal are likely to be raised Catholic,⁶ children raised in Greece are likely to be raised to be Greek Orthodox,⁷ and children raised in Kosovo are likely to be raised to be Muslim.⁸ The second claim made by Axtell in setting up the problem is that people acquire a religious identity in much the same sort of way in many cases. There is ‘etiological symmetry’ in the ways that people acquire religious beliefs. In particular, “accepting the unique authority of a purported revelation is a common way to acquire a religious identity, and often in testimonial traditions such acceptance by the individual is tantamount to what they were taught from an early age that faith consists in” (58–59). Axtell calls this the ‘testimonial authority assumption’. The third claim that Axtell makes in putting together the New Problem is that religious exclusivists exhibit asymmetries of a certain kind. If those exclusivists acquired their beliefs in the ways Axtell earlier described (i.e. through being raised in a religious exclusivist household or in a religious exclusivist culture, and coming to accept the unique authority of a purported revelation) and we imagine that they were raised in a different location with a different exclusivist tradition then it seems likely that they would ascribe to a different set of exclusivist beliefs than the ones that they actually ascribe to (thinking them uniquely true and salvific) and would think that the beliefs that they actually hold are false. Putting these three claims together, Axtell concludes that the religious exclusivist must be employing counter-inductive thinking. That is, they are actively setting themselves against the inductive norms that most of us ascribe to. They are thinking counter-inductively because they are exempting themselves from “the normal logic of induction” (59) by saying that the way in which others gain their beliefs leads to falsehood and yet in their own case leads to truth.

At this stage you may well be thinking, this is all very interesting but what has it got to do with Wittgenstein? This is, after all, a review of a book in a jour-

5 Axtell calls this the ‘Familial-Cultural Displacement Symmetry thesis’ (58).

6 According to the census of 2011, 81% of Portugal’s population are Catholic https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_publicacoes&PUBLICACOESpub_boui=73212469&PUBLICACOESstema=55466&PUBLICACOESmodo=2&xlang=en

7 According to Pew research from 2017, 90% of the Greek population is Greek Orthodox <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-affiliation/>

8 According to the CIA World Factbook 95.6% of the population in Kosovo is Muslim <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html>

nal dedicated to Wittgenstein's philosophy. Wittgenstein is of interest in thinking about the material in Axtell's book in part because Axtell sees himself as being influenced by Wittgenstein although he does not view himself as a Wittgensteinian. Axtell claims that 'religion' and 'fundamentalism' are both 'family-relations' concepts in that they are concepts "with multiple aspects such that manifesting different combinations of these aspects may be sufficient to fall under the description" (89). His account of these concepts is presumably influenced by Wittgenstein's account of concepts such as 'game' and 'number', as forming a family made up of kinds of games/numbers which resemble each other as members of a family do.⁹ But this is not the only reference to Wittgenstein in the book. In the fifth chapter Axtell claims that in saying that a mode of thinking is counter-inductive we are also characterising it as counter-evidential and he claims that implicit in counter-inductive thinking is Wittgenstein's claim that "[t]he pattern stops here".¹⁰ This phrase from Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Religious Belief* is then also used as the title for the sixth and final chapter of the book and there is some discussion of Wittgenstein's approach to religion there. In that chapter, Axtell again quotes the passage from Wittgenstein's *Lectures* and connects it to his own claims about inductive risk. The passage in question is one where Wittgenstein is discussing the nature of religious belief in a Judgement Day. Wittgenstein imagines that there are people who are reliable in making predictions about the future and that they describe a Judgement Day. Wittgenstein claims that if someone believed in a Judgement Day on the basis of these people's forecasts then their belief would not be a religious belief. It would be a belief based on evidence, like the belief that it will rain tomorrow, based on the predictions of meteorologists. Wittgenstein says that to the religious person, looking at evidence like this, "[t]he best scientific evidence is just nothing. A religious belief might in fact fly in the face of such a forecast, and say 'No. There is will break down' ... A man would fight for his life not to be dragged into the fire. No induction. Terror. That is, as it were, part of the substance of the belief."¹¹ Axtell suggests that Wittgenstein's way of thinking about religious belief fits well with his own way of thinking about the exclusivist's response to religious multiplicity. The exclusivist, on Axtell's account, effectively says that an inductive pattern which produces false beliefs in others breaks down in their own case. Witt-

⁹ Wittgenstein famously uses the 'game' example (and the number example) in PI 1953: 66–67. Apparently, his first use of Familienähnlichkeit is in BT 2005: 58, where he argues against Spengler's way of sorting cultural epochs into families in a dogmatic manner (see Glock 1996: 120).

¹⁰ "Lectures on Religious Belief" in LA 1966: 56.

¹¹ Ibid.

genstein's description of the religious person's beliefs ("No induction. Terror") "... suggests violation of inductive norms" (218).

Wittgenstein's remarks on religion have been interpreted in many different ways. Gorazd Andrejč, in his recent book on Wittgenstein and religious disagreement, identifies at least four different conceptions of religion within Wittgenstein's work: the grammaticalist, instinctivist, existentialist, and nonsensicalist conceptions of religion.¹² In addition to these we might add that other philosophers have described his philosophy of religion as expressivist.¹³ In a recent collection of essays about Wittgenstein and religion Mikel Burley notes that interpretations of Wittgenstein diverge to such an extent that some see him as trying to insulate religious beliefs from criticism whereas other see varieties of naturalism and anthropocentrism in Wittgenstein's work which will result unavoidably in accepting atheism.¹⁴ However, despite the wide divergence in interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy of religion there is widespread agreement that Wittgenstein opposed scientific accounts of religion. Whether religious utterances are grammatical remarks, hinge-propositions, expressions of approval, or pieces of nonsense it seems clear that they are not hypotheses or claims that might be supported by empirical evidence. Wittgenstein himself says that the words 'opinion', 'hypothesis', and 'knowledge' are out of place in religious discourse, and that although the word 'belief' appears in religious discourse it is not used as it is in science¹⁵ – and Wittgenstein is not just talking about natural science here. Wittgenstein wants to say that religious discourse is in many ways unlike the kinds of claims made by historians when they make empirical claims about the past. Christianity, he says "... doesn't rest on an historic basis in the sense that the ordinary belief in historic facts could serve as a foundation ... Those people who had faith didn't apply the doubt which would ordinarily apply to *any* historical propositions. Especially propositions of a time long past, etc."¹⁶ Whereas our beliefs about historical claims are, on the whole, ap-

12 Andrejč 2016. According to Andrejč these conceptions do not exclude one another. They are different ways of looking at religion (27–29).

13 For example, Richard Swinburne describes Wittgenstein's account of religion as an 'attitude theory' and says that "religious assertions ... express intentions to live in certain ways, or express attitudes of approval ... or do something else other than stating how things are" (1977: 85).

14 Burley 2018: 49–50.

15 See LA 1966: 57, where he says "We don't talk about hypothes[e]s, or about high probability. Nor about knowing, In a religious discourse we use such expressions as: 'I believe that so and so will happen', and use them differently to the way in which we use them in science".

16 Ibid. Wittgenstein makes similar remarks in the collection of his remarks that has been published as *Culture and Value*. These remarks come from around the same time as his lectures on religious belief. He says, "Christianity is not based on a historical truth, but presents us with a

appropriately held with less confidence the further back in time we go, the ‘historical’ claims of the Bible are appropriately held on to “through thick and thin”. Although the Bible contains propositions that look like historical propositions, they are treated very differently to historical propositions by believers, in such a way that we might say that a different game is being played with them.

All of this suggests that it is wrong to interpret Wittgenstein as complaining about a violation of inductive norms by the religious believer in the passage cited by Axtell. Moreover, if Wittgenstein is right then it seems as though we cannot talk in terms of inductive risk and in terms of probabilistic accounts of luck at all when it comes to assessing the truth or correctness of religious beliefs. Axtell’s claims about the inductive risk taken on in accepting exclusivist claims about being saved, his talk of ‘theses’ and ‘hypotheses’, would likely be viewed as scientific by Wittgenstein (what Kierkegaard called “a confusion of the spheres”¹⁷).

If we think about the *Barney* and *Tess* cases that Axtell discusses then these worries about scientism might become a bit clearer. In the *Barney* case we are reluctant to ascribe knowledge to Barney because the environment he is in is a ‘hostile’ one, where he could easily mistake fake barns for real ones. But we can conceive of ways in which he might actually come to have knowledge. If he were informed of the facts about the environment he is in then he would likely become less sure that what he saw was a real barn and he could perform checks to determine whether what he is seeing is real or fake. One thing he could do is ask trustworthy people who know the area which barns are fake and which are real. Real and fake barns are indistinguishable at a distance but as we approach them they become easier to distinguish and when somebody walks right up to one they can look at it, touch it, go inside it, and so on. Testimonial evidence and the information that our senses provide us with can help to settle the matter. Similarly, in the *Tess* case, a person would not just have news-

(historical) narrative & says: now believe! But not believe this report with the belief that is appropriate to a historical report – but rather: believe through thick & thin...*don’t treat it as you would another historical message!* Make a *quite different* place for it in your life” and that “historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief” (CV 1998: 37–38e).

17 Kierkegaard 1998: 5. Kierkegaard distinguished between several different ‘existence spheres’ – the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious (see 1988: 476). Scientific accounts of religion confuse the religious sphere with the aesthetic one (note that ‘aesthetic’ does not have the ordinary meaning we associate with it in Kierkegaard’s writings. He means something like ‘the in-principle-directly-perceivable’ by ‘aesthetic’). In her excellent book, *A Confusion of the Spheres*, Genia Schönbaumsfeld identifies existence-spheres with forms of life and suggests that Kierkegaard’s complaint about the confusion of the aesthetic and religious spheres is much like Wittgenstein’s complaints about confusing empirical questions with grammatical ones (2007: 43–44).

papers to rely on in getting to the truth about the history of the county. If someone wanted to get to the bottom of the question about which newspapers in the town promulgate ‘fake news’ and which are reliable then they could consult records in the county hall and other places which keep records, such as churches. They could dig in the area and unearth artefacts which might help deciding what had occurred there and they could consult various people around the town to ask about their experiences living in the county, stories their parents had told them about events in the county, and so on. All of these could provide checks on the content of the newspapers. So, in both of these cases it is clear that gathering empirical evidence could help to settle matters. However, if we compare the cases of disagreeing newspapers to the case of disagreeing holy books then it becomes much less clear that empirical evidence is relevant to settling matters. How could we decide, for example, whether Jesus is the son of God? Kierkegaard compares empirical investigations with religious questions about Jesus in his *Practice in Christianity*:

A footprint on the way is indeed the result of someone’s having walked this way. It may happen that I make the mistake that it was, for example, a bird, but by closer scrutiny, following the prints further, ascertain that it must have been another animal ...

We might confuse footprints with ‘fake footprints’ but we could perform empirical checks to see if we were right if we were confused. However,

... can I by close scrutiny and by following prints of this sort, at some point reach the conclusion: ergo it is a spirit that has walked along this way, a spirit which leaves no print?¹⁸

Nonetheless, it is not a major complaint against Axtell’s book that he misinterprets Wittgenstein’s philosophy of religion in it. Axtell is not primarily concerned with giving a correct account of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of religion and he grants that other ways of interpreting the passage from *Lectures on Religious Belief* are plausible. Axtell acknowledges the possibility that in using religious language we might be playing “a quite different language game altogether” and he

18 Kierkegaard 1991: 28. Genia Schönbaumsfeld discusses this question in her *A Confusion of the Spheres* (2007, 171–172). She concludes, along with Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein, that it is not possible to conduct a probabilistic investigation of religious claims. Andrejč (2016) also discusses this question – the question of whether Jesus is the son of God – and how one might discuss it in his book about religious disagreement. Andrejč contemplates the possibility that ‘Jesus is God’s Son and Saviour’ be construed as a grammatical claim or as a rule for the use of the word ‘God’ (19), discusses what it would mean to say that it is true (74), and thinks about how discussions between Muslims and Christians might proceed on this question (204).

says that he takes Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Religious Belief* to be "primarily descriptive of how faith-based avowals often function" (218). However, he suggests that if we interpret Wittgenstein in this way then there is the danger of slipping into "Wittgensteinian fideism", which means insulating "religious assertions from the need for rational justification" (219).¹⁹

However, it is not clear that committing oneself to the view that philosophy's job is primarily to describe norms of representation and to the idea that different areas of discourse have different standards and rules mean that one is sealing off religion from criticism. Criticism need not proceed by calling people to account for failing to meet the standards of evidence and justification found in the social and natural sciences and the clarificatory work of describing norms might lay the ground for criticism of a sort. One approach to criticising representatives of religion might be to show that they exhibit scientific tendencies themselves in that they sometimes confuse empirical and grammatical questions. Wittgenstein made this sort of criticism himself when he claimed that "Father O'Hara is one of those people who make it a question of science"²⁰ and says that he "... would definitely call O'Hara unreasonable"²¹ on that basis. If a religious figure tries to defend religion by adducing evidence then Wittgenstein says that "if this is religious belief, then it's all superstition".²² Dogmatic religious views might be criticised on the grounds that they have bad moral, cultural, or political consequences.²³ We might also criticise a religious stance from the inside. The moral teachings of religious texts, for example, are open to many different interpretations, and there are principles adduced which could come into conflict with one another. There are lively discussions about such matters within religions and between representatives of different religions. Moreover, religion is not isolated from the rest of life. Religious practices take place within the flow of life. Adherents of religions do not only engage in religious practices but also engage in many other kinds of practices. The religious language that they use is not entirely detached from the other language games they play.²⁴

19 The *locus classicus* for discussion of Wittgensteinian fideism is Nielsen 1967. Nielsen does not attribute the view to Wittgenstein himself but says that commitments to strands of what he describes as Wittgensteinian Fideism can be found in the work of Wittgenstein's followers, such as Norman Malcolm, Peter Geach, Stanley Cavell, and Peter Winch.

20 LA 1966: 57.

21 *Ibid.*: 59.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Wittgenstein himself criticised the dogmatism that he saw in varieties of Catholicism in his day as "absolute palpable tyranny" (CV 1998: 32e).

24 Genia Schönbaumsfeld says that it is "obvious that I could not apply the word 'eye' to God, if I could not employ the word 'eye' in everyday contexts – if, that is, I could not understand 'a

Although Wittgensteinians are likely to think that Axtell's account is in some ways scientific they are also likely to find much to agree with in his book. Axtell is undoubtedly correct that there is a strong tie between location and religious belief. He is also surely correct in thinking that this should give religious believers pause for thought (although if they are religious, and not just superstitious, then that cannot mean reflecting on the empirical evidence that they have for their central religious beliefs). Religious believers should be reflective and should try to ensure that they do not expose themselves or others to unnecessary risks. Axtell's intention of steering a course between extreme atheists, like Dawkins, on the one hand, and religious fundamentalists on the other is one that many Wittgensteinians are likely to be sympathetic to. His approach to religious disagreement has something in common with (the Wittgensteinian) Gorazd Andrejč's approach, whose recent book closes by saying that "cooperation *should* take precedence over competition ... In the current climate in Europe, where anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic prejudices are on the rise, where some Christians feel threatened by the sheer presence of Muslims and feel a need to battle to 'keep Europe Christian' Stosch's liberation-theological call for cooperation despite disagreements is more relevant than ever".²⁵ Axtell is surely right that we should oppose religious extremism, bigoted varieties of atheism as well as oppressive systems such as the caste system in India. We should cultivate cooperative and empathetic dialogue where possible as well as tolerant attitudes towards others, at a time when powerful people are promoting division. His book is intelligent, thought provoking, and it does valuable work in promoting a more open-minded and empathetic approach to religious disagreement.²⁶

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racoon's eye can see in the dark' and similar sentences. Religious discourse cannot, therefore, be 'self contained' or 'sealed off' from other linguistic 'domains' ... religious discourse, like artistic language-use, involves an extension or transformation of everyday discourse and consequently can't be incommensurable with it" (2007: 193). However, other Wittgensteinians disagree with Schönbaumsfeld (see for example, Kusch 2011).

²⁵ Andrejč 2016: 263.

²⁶ This work was supported by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (project number PTDC/FER-FIL/32203/2017).

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