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Wittgenstein and Contemporary Belief-Credence Dualism

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Abstract. This paper examines religious epistemics in relationship to recent defenses of belief-credence dualism among analytic Christian philosophers, connecting what is most plausible and appealing in this proposal to Wittgenstein’s thought on the nature of religious *praxis* and affectively-engaged language-use. How close or far is Wittgenstein’s thought about faith to the analytic Christian philosophers’ thesis that “beliefs and credences are two epistemic tools used for different purposes”? While I find B-C dualism appealing for multiple reasons, the paper goes on to raise critical concerns about the manner in which it has been applied to the epistemology of religious belief. I argue that this application is at odds with some of Wittgenstein’s best insights, and that it presents a promising but comparatively unbalanced account of religious epistemics.

1. Religious Belief and Credence: Beyond Reduction

One development with potential to bring an improved understanding of the sources of religious diversity and of their implications for the epistemology of religious belief, is the recent increased attention to differences between “beliefs” and “credences.” There are numerous reflections from Wittgenstein which might indicate that he recognized something like what analytical philosophers of religion have recently termed belief – credence dualism, or B-C dualism for short. On the dualist view, as articulated by Christian philosophers Lara Buchak and Liz Jackson, “beliefs and credences are two different epistemic tools used for different purposes.” The importance of distinguishing often value-charged B-reasoning from largely agent-independent C-

reasoning, while giving place to both, shares considerable overlap with Wittgensteinian thought, especially through connections with his own distinction between two different but not unrelated ways of treating evidence: as criterial (grammatical) or as symptomatic (inductive).¹

B-C dualists contend that what they take to be different sorts of reasoning, evidence, and doxastic attitudes have been subject to reductionism or eliminativism in mainstream epistemology.² On a closer view, they argue, there are many epistemological advantages to differentiating these concepts and how they should be philosophically approached and related. These suggest resources for a rapprochement between Continental and Analytic approaches in philosophy of religion, and still more so, between discussion of religious epistemics, and contemporary philosophy of luck and risk.

Section 2 introduces B-C dualism through its leading proponents, pointing out some of the general philosophical advantages they allege for it, including the support it provides for a permissivist ethics of belief (Jackson), and its manner of connecting the various normative tasks of epistemology with assessment of different types of risk or risk-taking (Buchak). Section 3 develops overlaps between B-C dualism and Wittgenstein's account, beginning from his distinction between treating evidence as symptomatic (inductive evidence) or as criterial.³ It considers how Wittgenstein and the B-C dualists each understand their core distinction applying to faith-based belief as distinct from inductively well-grounded belief, and to the reasonability of doxastic faith venture. Some Continental thinkers might be put off by analytic philosophy and thus by analytic approaches such as B-C dualism which are enjoying a gain in popularity. But we explore how B-C dualism similarly affords an alternative to evidentialist thinking about intellectual entitlement to a person's religious faith venture.

Section 4 goes on to argue that while philosophers of religion should accept some version of the *distinction* which B-C dualists and Wittgensteinians share recognition of, they should not accept the *dualism* by which Buchak and Jackson characterize it, nor all of the religious apologetic purposes to which they (or some self-described Wittgensteinian theologians) might put it. Since Gorazd Andrejč and Thomas Carroll have worked to show that a closer reading of Wittgenstein resists, and even undercuts some misappropriations of his thoughts about religious belief, I take my project to be generally complementary to theirs.⁴ My critical comments should also be taken as friendly modifications which allow for rather than undercut a fuller application of the belief-credence distinction to the epistemology of religious belief. I will highlight – and tie together in a way that neither of them have – Buchak’s *risky commitment account* of faith and Jackson’s argument that doxastic *states pluralism* (the dualist thesis) each ties into legitimate concern with unsafe aetiology of belief and with the kinds of evidence which CSR draws upon. I conclude that while creeds *are* not credences (faith-based belief affirmations differ dramatically from C-based affirmations), doxastic risk and doxastic responsibility in faith ventures *are* coordinate concepts. Risky commitments anticipate rewards, but they also reinforce concerns about religious enthusiasm and point out possibilities of epistemic injustice and the need for “risk-aware” religious epistemics.

2. The Attractions of B-C Dualism

Among contemporary Christian philosophers who have begun to make more explicit use of a formal distinction between credence and belief are Lara Buchak and Elizabeth Jackson. Their papers highlight the differences between these respective foci of assessment, both for general epistemology *and* in application to epistemology of religious belief.⁵ Differences between ascribing no-belief or a state of belief or disbelief to an agent, and ascribing a degreed credence

to that agent, have been discussed by epistemologists outside of the context of philosophy of religion. So Buchak and Jackson want to show that epistemic or doxastic states “pluralism” - in contrast to a monistic view which either is eliminative or reductive of the language of one of the two states - has definite explanatory advantages with respect to problems *other* than those in philosophy of religion. Acknowledging the irreducibility of the one doxastic attitude (or type of reasoning) to the other is alleged to afford a more satisfying account of a wide range of central problems in philosophy. This makes Buchak’s and Jackson’s further arguments for applying epistemic states pluralism, in the specific form they call B-C dualism, all the more appealing. If it helps to resolve a range of other problems, why should it not also be applicable to religious epistemics?

In contrast to approaches which largely ignore the difference, or treat one of these two concepts as eliminable in favor of the other, Buchak, Jackson and others argue that the eliminative views are suspect: Neither concept obviates the need for the other. Belief and credence, they go on to argue, are each responsive to *different features* of a body of evidence. Self-described “B-C dualists” reject the view that the concept of belief can either be reduced to credence, or eliminated altogether when characterizing the norms governing ideally rational agents.

We should mention at the outset that Buchak introduces beliefs and credences as “attitude-types.” This way of speaking characterizes both beliefs and credences as doxastic attitudes, but takes credences, unlike beliefs, to come in degrees. “Belief is the attitude of taking some proposition to be the case or representing it as true. Belief is a categorical attitude in the sense that it is not degressed; either one believes a proposition or one does not.” Credence “represents the extent to which an individual *takes* a proposition to be supported by her

evidence.”⁶ This distinction retains a close connection with evidence, since rational credence and rational belief are partly distinguished by their being sensitive to different features of evidence. Faith-based beliefs are neither based upon evidence, nor describable in terms of low or high degreed credences, so their reasonableness needs to be evaluated differently. We will later return to a particularly interesting aspect of Buchak’s account of religious faith, her account of it as “risky commitment.”

Jackson’s development of B-C dualism follows Buchak’s in most regards, although she casts the relevant distinction into one between “B-evidence” and “C-evidence,” which language I do not find in Buchak’s work. In either case, they allow ample traffic across these divisions though holding that they *answer to different norms*. I find no easy translation between speaking of distinct attitude-types to speaking of the distinctness of B and C “evidence,” and of course the “distinct attitude types” thesis is controversial as well. So, I will favor a third and more minimal option of speaking of “B-reasoning” (or “B-taken evidence”) and “C-reasoning” (or “C-taken evidence”) later in the paper, which is intended to focus, as Buchak does, on what is prioritized by an actual agent (or by a particular model or exemplar of religious faith).

In papers including “The Relationship between Belief and Credence,” and “Belief and Credence: Why the Attitude Type Matters,” Jackson discusses multiple cases aimed at motivating belief-credence dualism even apart from interest in the epistemology of religious belief. Lottery cases for example are handled better by B-C dualism, and the latter, dualistic or pluralist view has similar advantages with other problems which have concerned epistemologists. I should hesitate to move, without direct confirmation, from “it’s very unlikely I won” to “I believe I lost,” even as statistically I move from poor to still poorer odds. Worse still, of course, is moving to “I know I lost” (or will lose) on the basis of statistical information about odds. The

upshot of our intuition that we do not “know” we lost without seeing sure confirmation of the fact, is that sometimes one’s evidence generates a rational high credence but not rational belief. And conversely, “While most of our evidence is both belief-generating and credence-generating, certain types of evidence ought to affect one’s credences more than one’s beliefs.”⁷

Dualism thus enters the scene to explain the role that beliefs play that high credence cannot. Our B-C dualists think that serious conflation occurs when epistemologists assume that only beliefs or credences *exist*, or that both may exist but that epistemologists may still easily reduce the normative standards of one to the other.⁸ These conflations lead to fixation on problems that are treated more satisfactorily when one recognizes that belief and credence do not necessarily ‘march in step,’ but instead exhibit substantial independence. Descriptively, belief and credence respond differently to evidence, and most important for Jackson in this regard is the difference between unhedged and hedged assent, or assent which does or does not make salient the possibility of error or falsehood:

“*C-evidence*. Evidence for p that makes salient the possibility of not-p.

B-evidence. Evidence for p that does *not* make salient the possibility of not-p.”⁹

According to Jackson “We often get B-evidence when we get evidence that a proposition p is true without qualification, such as when someone asserts p [or one has an experience they take to be veridical]. We get C-evidence for p when we get statistical evidence for p, but also when we get evidence for p that is hedged or qualified in some way.” B-evidence includes “many cases of testimony and perception, especially e.g. flat-out assertions, clear perceptions of medium-sized objects,” while C-evidence includes “evidence for lottery propositions; statistical

evidence.”¹⁰ The descriptive characteristics of these attitudes are different, and their normative characteristics are as well. The distinction between descriptive and normative concerns is vital for assessing B-C dualism and its competitors.¹¹ Normatively, Jackson thinks these features lead us to how “the distinction between B-evidence and C-evidence does important work with respect to the question of how rational belief and rational credence respond to evidence.”¹² This she thinks implies that “rational belief” should not be equated merely with a threshold of probabilistic support; whatever justifies belief isn’t merely a high probability that the believed proposition is true.

C-reasoning is a ‘quantifiable balance’ mode of reasoning, but does not well represent holistic judgments of multiple different kinds of evidence and argument. Probabilistic reasoning is primarily applicable to *synchronic* or time-slice assessment of the justificational status of propositions considered discreetly, and does not mesh well with assessment of agents making life-choices or undertaking diachronic projects.¹³ This is an additional advantage claimed for B-C dualism in so far as it can lend support to intra and interpersonal permissivism. Arguments for the distinctive role belief plays which cannot be played by credence support a more permissive viewpoint than is typically supported by credence-focused epistemology, with its obvious connections to evidentialist principles, and to religious and skeptical rationalism.¹⁴

In summary, cases of naked statistical evidence, lotteries, and hedged assertions are some of the *non-religious* cases the B-C dualists discuss, in which rational belief and credence seem to respond differently to evidence. To be sure, there are certainly cases where the distinction *isn’t needed* by epistemologists; these concepts need not *always* come apart. But if there are cases where they do not function the same way, then the two forms of eliminativism we find defended by epistemologists, belief-first and credence-first, will fail to explain them.¹⁵

This introduction was necessary to understand the application of B-C dualism to philosophy of religion. Epistemic states pluralism is a resource for responding to what Buchak and Jackson describe as the over-simplistic opposition of proof and faith that skeptical rationalism, verificationism, and evidentialism, and perhaps some forms of theology give rise to. Evidentialism, in particular, have adopted the “uniqueness” principle as holding in all cognitively meaningful domains of discourse, and the literature in ‘epistemology of disagreement identifies the acceptance or rejection of a universally-case uniqueness principle with impermissivism and permissivism, respectively: “Proponents of uniqueness deny permissivism, maintaining that every body of evidence always determines one rational attitude, so even if one’s choice of doxastic attitude is underdetermined by *the evidence*, it may not be underdetermined in general.”¹⁶

Permissivism by contrast is an underdetermination thesis, and the dualist proposal, by distinguishing belief permissivism with or without credence (‘creedal’) permissivism,¹⁷ helps explain the range of cases where evidence underdetermines a uniquely rational doxastic attitude toward p. “On a dualist picture, credal permissivism and belief permissivism can potentially come apart quite a bit.”¹⁸ I will return to this issue later, but so long as the view is able to establish limits, I agree that the dualists’ support of permissivism is an advantage: limited permissivism allows for recognition of reasonable disagreement, tolerating doxastic faith ventures so long as they are tolerant themselves.¹⁹

There is considerably more to the dualist account, but in its application to epistemology of religion what is important, the dualist holds, is that “the cases that support this thesis about belief can be extended to cases of faith. In the same way that rational belief is not merely a matter of probabilistic support, rational faith is also not merely about probabilistic support”

(2019c, 9). Like many other religious philosophers, the B-C dualists think we need an account that respects and makes sense of the *resilience* of faith. Buchak (2017, 113) writes,

It is sometimes said that faith is recalcitrant in the face of new evidence, but it is puzzling how such recalcitrance could be rational or laudable. I explain this aspect of faith and why faith is not only rational, but in addition serves an important purpose in human life. Because faith requires maintaining a commitment to act on the claim one has faith in, even in the face of counter-evidence, faith allows us to carry out long-term, risky projects that we might otherwise abandon. Thus, faith allows us to maintain integrity over time.

Relatedly for Jackson, faith is more sensitive to B-evidence than C-evidence, and this helps to explain both the manner in which faith ‘goes beyond the evidence,’ and the manner in which faith is normatively (i.e., *genuine* faith vs. tepid) *expected* to be especially resilient to C-evidence which might impact it negatively. If so, then B-C dualism has especial benefit in potentially assuaging the vexed debates over the epistemology of religious belief. Let us look at a longer passage where Jackson discusses how the distinction helps make sense of faith’s resilience or steadfastness:

Uncontroversially, rational faith’s steadfastness will depend on the weight of the evidence for and against the proposition of faith. However, the point here is that the type of evidence also matters; rational faith is not a mere matter of probabilistic support. Rational faith, like rational belief, can remain steadfast in

cases where it otherwise would not, if it is supported by good B-evidence and has merely or mainly C-evidence going against it. Thus, I maintain that if rational belief is more sensitive to B-evidence than to C-evidence, then rational faith is more sensitive to B-evidence than C-evidence as well. The cases that support this thesis about belief can be extended to cases of faith. In the same way that rational belief is not merely a matter of probabilistic support, rational faith is also not merely about probabilistic support.²⁰

The B-C dualist wants to detail ways in which B-reasoning is more sensitive than is C-reasoning to personal experience and to testimonial transmission. B-reasons have a kind of stickiness for people that is not well-captured as quantifiable C-reasons, and the differences between impersonal argumentation, experience, and testimony as sources of belief are, again, not easily weighed on a scale of probabilistic inference. Of course, the sense in which religious belief tends to be abiding or steadfast across time, and emotionally-engaged, also is not well-captured when all evidence types are reduced to a credence function.²¹

Part of the reason why faith is said to be more given to B than to C reasoning (or more sensitive to B-evidence than C-evidence, in Jackson's terms), is that the difference between them overlaps with the distinction between *trust and mere reliability* (Buchak 2017a; Siebert 2018).²² In broader view, the trust/reliability distinction informs the debate between testimonial reductivism and non-reductivism. While religious epistemology of religious belief typically takes a non-reductivist view of testimony, this still makes allowance for potential defeaters to testimonial trust, acknowledging that, as Henderson (2018, 115) puts it, "warranted testimonial

belief formation on the part of normal adult humans must be regulated by a rich acquired sensitivity to indicators of degrees of trustworthiness.”

Trust naturally raises concerns about trustworthiness, and about risks both for ourselves and affected others. So, we can conclude this section with noting the centrality of risk on Buchak’s account. Buchak’s *risky commitment account* of faith prescribes that one “must not be certain of the proposition on the basis of his evidence alone—his evidence must leave it open that the proposition is false.” In a rough approximation of her view, “A person has faith that *X*, expressed by *A*, only if that person performs act *A* and performing *A* constitutes taking a risk on *X*.”²³

We will return to issues of risk and rewards in doxastic faith ventures in Section 4, but the more general point from this section I would draw is that this account of faith shows again that the epistemology of disagreement and the ethics of belief are bound to be impacted by assumptions not just about attitude-types, but about different kinds of risk incurred through our doxastic methods or strategies. Several methodological points will help us in the remainder of the paper should be clear: First, there has been too little recognition of how approaching epistemological assessment through belief or through credence affects the framing and treatment of a range of problems important to philosophers; Second, “epistemologists ought not slide between attitudes, and should be careful making an argument considering only one attitude and then taking their argument to generalize.”²⁴ Third, if we determine that belief and credence really do come apart and are thus tools we use for different purposes, then the relationship them is a central issue for epistemology, including (and perhaps especially) epistemology of religion and, more broadly, domains of controversial views (morals, politics, religion, and philosophy).

3. Wittgenstein on the Grammatical and Symptomatic

In order to identify connections with Wittgenstein and with Continental philosophy more generally, Wittgenstein's distinction between criterial (grammar) and symptomatic is the connection to B-C dualism we should first focus upon.²⁵ How close or far is Wittgenstein's thought about criterial and symptomatic uses of language to the analytic Christian philosophers' thesis that "beliefs and credences are two epistemic tools used for different purposes"? If it presents a possible rapprochement between Continental and Analytic approaches, and is rife with connections to Wittgenstein's thought, Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion should not overlook B-C dualism simply because it uses the tools of analytic epistemology. They have in common that faith is a "certainty." But I will also show that where they differ over religious epistemics, Wittgensteinian attention to the force of inductive norms for epistemic assessment of agents and their beliefs often proves to be a helpful corrective. There is an ethics to 'knowing' and to 'being certain' which demands we cannot completely banish inductive normativity. The dialectic with inductive norm-respecting perspectives on doxastic responsibility is conducive to gaining perspective between religious and secular philosophy, as well as between fundamentalist ideologies of any kind.²⁶

Wittgenstein held that we confer normative or empirical status on certain expressions by *using* them in a particular way on a given occasion. He emphasizes this point in terms of his distinction between "criteria" and "symptoms," concept distinguish not just by logical differences but by specific uses, practices, and contexts of inquiry. "We can treat certain evidence either as symptomatic (inductive evidence) or as criterial, that is, due to the grammar of the terms involved." For example, we can treat benevolence either as a criterion or a mere symptom of love, by accepting or ruling out the legitimacy of calling 'love' an emotion unaccompanied by

benevolence” (AWL, p.90). Elsewhere he develops connections which I will not detail here, between criterial ways of taking evidence, and grammar, writing in clear allusion to John Henry Newman’s *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, [1901] that “Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar.)” (*PI* §373).

Wittgenstein main example focuses on the different grammars of a professed Day of Judgment believer, and another person who does not have that belief. They are seen as often talking past one another, and their communication is poor: “These controversies look quite different from any normal controversies. Reasons look entirely different from normal reasons” (48). Wittgenstein is comparing and not *merely* contrasting fideist assent with philosophical or scientific questions of the objective “grounding” of belief. He goes on to comment, “In a religious discourse we use such expressions as: ‘I believe that so and so will happen,’ and use them differently to the way we use them in science. . . . [T]here is this extraordinary use of the word ‘believe.’ One talks of believing and at the same time one doesn’t use ‘believe’ as one does ordinarily” (49).

Wittgenstein says that the Day of Judgment teaching and others like it are in one sense “well-established” for the adherent of a testimonial faith tradition, but in another way not. They are well-established in the sense of being a regulating principle of that person’s life, or practice. Special concerns arise, I interpret Wittgenstein to be indicating, with an intention to speak of events and sacred narratives as having grounds in the way of literal – historical propositions. The description of the faith-commitment as a “belief” in contrast with some other doxastic attitude may play “an absolutely minor role,” he emphasizes. Historical claims and related ‘believing that’ are not well-grounded, due both to logically underdetermination and to the simple fact that faith, and more particularly Wittgenstein’s understanding of Christian faith, is *prescriptively*

fideistic. Grammatical uses of language are then potentially conflated with symptomatic uses, and with norms of evidential reasoning. But this occurs typically post hoc, since the teachings a person may defend through philosophical or theological reconstructions were not acquired through reasoning from evidence.

Rather than this, attributing belief to others (and even to oneself) is best determined from finding it employed as guidance for a person's life, which may involve giving up some things, and taking up risky projects. If not based on (scientific) evidence, a belief will normally not be unsettled by counter-evidence. This is why religious beliefs are usually referred to as dogmas, creeds, conviction, or confessions rather than opinions, conjectures, hypotheses, research projects, etc. It is also why religious faith is often seen as consistent with hope, where possibility is sufficient, or with *believing* in, where affective-valuative engagement is sufficient, rather *than* belief. It is not just that the Day of Judgment belief is unlike scientific belief, but that it is unlike everyday beliefs, or all others which we have experience of. But these differences over how to understand the relationship between faith-base and reason-based belief, while important, do not preclude seeing both sets of terms above ("confessions" and "convictions" as properly differentiated from "conjectures" and "hypotheses") etc. as, for philosophical purposes, categories of speculative thinking. The paradoxicality of Christianity invites reflection that while it rests on an historical basis, "it doesn't rest on an historical basis in the sense that the ordinary belief in historical facts could serve as a foundation." This is what the application of the Wittgensteinian distinction between the grammatical & symptomatic might address or assuage, even if not the paradoxes can never be fully resolved.

The epistemological implications for Wittgenstein are these: "We don't talk about hypothesis, 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. Although the temptation is great to think we do. Because we do talk of evidence, and do talk of evidence by experience.”²⁷ Going back to OC, “Having compelling grounds makes one’s certitude objective ‘I have compelling grounds for my certitude.’ These grounds make the certitude objective. What is a telling ground for something is not anything I decide.” (OC, §271-272). So, the Day of Judgment reflects an “entirely different kind of reasoning” (LRB, 56). Wittgenstein says that either beliefs of this sort “are not treated as historical, empirical, propositions” or they are treated as “historical facts that are different from a belief in ordinary historical facts.”²⁸ This is an important divergence, so let us elaborate these options further.

The first option may push us the direction of an Independence model of science and religion that conservative thought will resist. Indeed, this passage might be used to explain a dividing point between so-called “Left” and “Right” Wittgensteinians, insofar as liberal theologians of testimonial faith traditions tend to take this first option while conservative thought favors the more highly fideistic view that the unique authority of the home religion’s scripture ‘proves’ the literal – historical nature of its narratives.²⁹ The second option, that they are historical facts but ‘in a different way’ seems to lead to paradox. Being at odds with everyday uses of “believes” or “is certain of” doesn’t necessarily make the usage subject to criticism. But if we use Lessing’s ‘ugly, broad ditch’ to represent the *prescribed* underdetermination of faith by evidence, it seems that the one who take this path imagines truth and other epistemic aims achieved by not-epistemic means. In *Problems of Religious Luck* (2019) I described this as the urge to ‘have one’s ditch, and cross it, too.’ In short, Wittgenstein’s “two ways” seem to divide those who display an intellectual humility in the face of the ‘ugly, broad ditch,’ such that they

“do not talk about knowing,” while those who take the second option award themselves all epistemic goods, and like Craig take themselves to have crossed it, though they falter at saying how.

However, one answers the question about natural theology’s value, that *faith* is not construed by the faithful, nor faithfully reconstructed by theologians or philosopher as an inference from C-taken evidence, is something widely acknowledged. It is evident especially of belief in teachings of particular faiths, and of testimonial uptake, and follows from the very definition of faith as risky belief the B-C dualist offers.³⁰ This is true even of belief that God exists, but risk obviously increases with scriptural teachings. With beliefs about transubstantiation and virgin birth, Wittgenstein concedes instances in which there could be “contradiction” between what a religious believer tries to state, and what their interlocutor states. But even here, to generate a contradiction it appears that the claimant must *intend* their affirmation be taken in a specific-enough sense that the other *could* deny it. Wittgenstein seems to suggest trying out description as an *alternative* to finding contradiction. Lots of describing, and little sure judgment of contradiction –on both sides of the division between believers and non-believing interlocutors, whether religionists of another sort, or philosophers, or scientists. Wittgenstein indicates that even if it would be rare to find the other’s speech a “blunder” in some neutral sense (because this would presuppose a full understanding of it), it may still and more easily be found to be a blunder within the particular system or game, as he takes O’Hara to make himself ridiculous by treating his Day of Judgment belief as both faith-sprung and grounded (doxastically justified) at once.³¹ This would be like saying that the belief is the result of both B-Reasoning and C-Reasoning.³² But having “compelling grounds” is just what B-Reasoning lacks, and what recognition of risky assent in the B-C dualist’s account of faith logically implies. So,

both accounts seem able to allow a means for O'Hara, or at least an outsider, to recognize his "blunder."

There are many more cases, however, where beliefs that *need* not rub-up against each other nevertheless do, perhaps because a speaker is pushed to give clear propositional content to what she claims as religiously true. In these cases, further philosophical issues arise of what constitutes "grounds" and why lacking grounds is important or not. If affective "steps" up what William James called the "faith ladder," rather than a chain of logical reasoning is the psychological reality of in religious assent or conviction, then thinking of religious belief on the purely cognitive model of inference from C-taken evidence cannot but misdescribe how religious language is affirmed and utilized in religious practice.³³ Again on this matter Wittgenstein, James, and the B-C dualists agree.

4. Critique of B-C Dualists

As we have seen, the independence of reasons to support B-C dualism makes for a strong initial motivation for applying it to epistemology of religious belief as well. However, I am concerned that B-C dualism's application to epistemology of testimony and of religious belief invites repetition, in a new vocabulary, of many of the 'insulating and isolating' moves that religious philosophers have sometimes justified through appeal to Wittgenstein's reflections.³⁴ I write as a secular or non-affiliated philosopher interested in psychology and cognitive science of religion as well as philosophical theologies. Some of the concerns I will raise mirror criticisms sometimes voiced *against* Wittgenstein (or at least his 'Right-Wittgensteinian' interpreters), while others I try to show Wittgenstein's reflections on religious language and *praxis* already provide a correction for.

Jackson's claim that B-reasons "need not compromise *epistemic* rationality" is compatible with the present account. But that B-taken evidence does not "make salient" error possibilities comes into tension with the observation that the more our beliefs and attitudes mirror known personal or social biases, the more salient these possibilities *should be* (whether or not the agent allows them to become). Continental and analytic approaches might coalesce around the intersection between doxastic states pluralism and Wittgenstein's moderate skeptical fideism. But to do so Jackson's permissivism in regards to the reasonableness of faith ventures needs to be *limited*, and associated with philosophy of luck and risk; and Buchak's account of the riskiness of beliefs motivated in B-reasoning needs to go beyond the first-personal or *existential risk* viewpoint, to a social epistemological perspective on risk that includes the risks of epistemic injustices toward religious outsiders. Note however that I only contend that B-C dualism *could* be used in much the manner that post-liberals (mis)use Wittgenstein, not that B-C dualism is necessarily in that camp or that its extant proponents are.

Doxastic states pluralism seems to deliver some of the goods that defenders of reasonable disagreement seek. The believer and agnostic don't share a belief, but neither do they disagree. While Wittgenstein says little about different religions, he would presumably emphasize contrariety while de-emphasizing contradiction. Left-Wittgensteinians tend to see things this way, and take it as advantageous, while Right Wittgensteinianism, and other religious conservatives like Robert Plant, the truth of the home religion must remain absolute, and thus the paradox of the ugly, broad ditch is ignored. Here again we have a theology of glory, as Labron (2009) puts it, in comparison with Wittgenstein's more reflexive theology of the cross.³⁵ Where the believer refrains from casting tenets of faith as literal-historical truth claims, and the agnostic

refrains from turning their own preference for agnostic suspension as a universal duty of reason, different faith traditions, and indeed even religious and humanist ideas might be seen as enjoy a compatibility, or at least broader overlap. The more so as beliefs are sourced in *narrative* testimonies and in their own affectively-driven testimonial trust in one such source as authoritative to them, acceptance of teaching may be something more internal to the framework which the narrative supplies, than external in a way that generates contradictions and “religious disagreement.”

This is not, however, what we find in Buchak’s or Jackson’s application to B-C dualism to the epistemology of religious belief. A first concern about the compatibility of B-C dualism and Wittgensteinian thought which I will not pursue in-depth is that the dualist defends “rational propositional faith,” while Wittgenstein’s discussions of Father O’Hara show him as uninterested in, or even skeptical of apologetic projects aimed to support the epistemic rationality and warrant of religious beliefs.³⁶ He more clearly divided faith from knowledge in order to preserve its reasonableness.³⁷ The deflating of the epistemic assessment of beliefs such as those of a Day of Judgment amounts to his finding that the evaluation of such a belief neither meets nor aims to meet the criteria for objectively grounded belief.³⁸ A related difference between Jackson’s and Wittgenstein’s thought is that while the former tends to focus only on the contrast of belief and credence, placing faith in the former category, Wittgenstein sometimes also contrasts believing, or at least knowing, with doxastic attitudes expressing hope and fear, thus problematizing the propositional view of faith. Relatedly, one can worry that the B-C dualists are being overly prescriptive in focusing on propositional faith, faith *that* p, and that sub-doxastic conceptions of faith are being closed off.³⁹ In the mutualist language which the B-C dualists employ, a person, apparently irrespective of what religion or testimony the hail from, can be not just pragmatically

but epistemically rational in accepting B-reasons as grounds. For Buchak for example, epistemic rationality requires only a self-consistency, a consistency between one's doxastic attitude and what one *thinks* the evidence indicates.

Buchak writes,

On my analysis faith can also be epistemically rational: that one has faith in *X* implies nothing about one's degrees of belief or the consistency thereof.

Therefore, one can clearly meet the requirements of epistemic rationality, as I've stated them, while having faith—whether one has faith is completely separate from whether one is epistemically rational because it is separate from whether one has appropriately evaluated the evidence one has.⁴⁰

While I find this argument and associated conception of rationality far from compelling, I would simply point to Howard-Snyder and McKaughan who offer a related critique of Buchak's account. They urge Buchak to embrace an account of faith broad enough to have comparative application, and consistent with holding “that conative and cognitive attitudes are also essential to faith and none is more faith-expressive than the other.”⁴¹

The purposeful deflation of the epistemic status of faith-based belief is neither incidental nor accidental to the trio of Kierkegaard, James, and Wittgenstein.⁴² It is instead, as I take Wittgenstein to be showing us, co-extensive both with the *special value* accorded to faith, and with the battle against bewitchment of intelligence by means of language. Moreover, this deflation is not taken as inimical to the value of faith ventures, since personal existential risk and genuine faith are fused for each of these writers. Testimonial faith traditions are poor candidates

for knowledge or objective justification. Their very conceptions of faith presuppose and demand that faith *not* be so based, or consequently treated like a hypothesis. But moderate fideism -- *made* moderate by just this sort of acknowledgment -- is decidedly no disagreement-motivated religious skepticism. People can thereafter improve their epistemic situation, and of course some do come to reflect upon and revise their own beliefs even consistent with an orthodox insistence of the constancy of faith.

Wittgenstein's recognition of a close connection between inductive normativity and epistemic assessment raises many interesting concerns. He was interested in connections between cognitive and conative processes in religious consciousness, and it is important to see that he contrasted those processes with inductive processes, and with knowledge. The connections between inductive processes and epistemic assessment were, firstly obvious to him. Objectivity and inductive normativity are closely connected in in philosophical and scientific reasoning, as well as our everyday lives. In the *Tractatus* 6.363 "The process of induction is the process of assuming the simplest law that can be made to harmonize with our experience." The close association of the "symptomatic" use of evidence with inquirers who abide by inductive norms raises serious problems for the question of whether belief which suspends or violates inductive norms is warranted belief.

In Wittgenstein's *Lectures on Religious Belief*, these concerns are again explored. In the case of such particular beliefs, thinking is utterly different than thinking in terms of patterns and predictions based upon them "The best scientific evidence is just nothing. A religious belief might in fact fly in the face of such a forecast, and say 'No. There it will break down.'" He depicts the faith-based believer as thinking in this way: "No induction. Terror. That is, as it were, part of the substance of the belief" (LRB p. 56-7).

Epistemically, risk and violation of inductive norms are closely linked. This raises the riskiness of trust in one testimonial tradition among others, especially when there is much contrariety in their teachings.⁴³ Wittgenstein offers this intriguing reflection: “And mightn’t I hold fast to my belief, whatever I learned later on? But is my belief then *grounded*?” (*On Certainty* §194). Both faith’s special connections with positive B-reasoning and its prescribed resilience to evidential challenges suggests doxastic risk; doxastic risk in turn implies doxastic responsibilities which individuals and communities bear.⁴⁴

How does this bear upon the resilience of faith, and its purported tendency not to allow error possibilities to be salient? Howard-Snyder and McKaughan provide some useful qualifications to the dualist’s discussions of the resilience of faith, by explaining “how resilient reliance dovetails with limitations-owning to promote the aims of inquiry and personal relationships.”⁴⁵ This connects faith-based belief directly with research on intellectual and moral humility, but what is also needed are the further connections between humility and philosophy of luck and risk.⁴⁶ It also leaves us with a more critical conception of the “certainty” alleged for faith, since believing *with certainty* what is evidentially underdetermined appear to be in tension with, or even incompatible with limitations-owning in these same domains.⁴⁷ On the basis of moderate permissivism, an individual might still be doxastically responsible and virtuous in a religious or secular faith venture, even while evidence is deeply ambiguous and while the evidentialist’s demand for “synchronic evidential fit” between their propositional attitude and their evidence goes unmet. As Paul Sands rightly points out in a study comparing Kierkegaard, James, and Newman, “One might say that evidentialism sacrifices faith on the altar of probabilism, while fideism substitutes self-assertion for adjudication when challenged by religious pluralism.”⁴⁸ This self-assertion, then, must be very different not just than skeptical

evidentialism, but also of religious evidentialism. Some religious traditions value natural theology, or systematic theology of another sort, and some value only scriptural reasoning; but all religious *practitioners* value *practice* and active living in a moral community. In this they have their closest connections with Wittgenstein account, who held that “*Practice* gives the words their sense” (CV, 85).⁴⁹

That “belief” is sensitive to certain kinds of evidence and insensitive to others is an interesting descriptive claim. But it does not easily follow that there are no special normative concerns with doxastic strategies which separate out a set of beliefs insensitive to counter-evidence.⁵⁰ *Counter-inductive* thinking – thinking that flies in the face of normal inductive reasoning – is arguably always epistemically suspect due to being a highly risky way of seeking true belief or other epistemic goods (justification, understanding, doxastic responsibility, etc.).⁵¹ Jackson concedes that an agent’s coming to lower their credence in a proposition may well affect belief as well as credence.⁵² But it seems to me that “insensitivity to certain kinds of evidence” (where this may mean insensitivity to possible defeaters on one kind or another), together with the special resilience of faith shouldn’t be given this blank check that renders the ensuing belief “epistemically rational.” A risk profile noting this insensitivity is part of the description of the agent’s doxastic state.⁵³ But this seems to me to lead directly on to normative concerns, and to recognition that some strategies are *censurably* risky.⁵⁴ Buchak’s *risky commitment account* of faith prescribes that one “must not be certain of the proposition on the basis of his evidence alone—his evidence must leave it open that the proposition is false.” So, while the evidence leaves it open, the agent does not.

The application of B-C dualism to philosophy of religion by its leading proponents Lara Buchak and Liz Jackson presents a still unbalanced account. It reduces reasonableness by appeal

to religion-specific B-reasons such as their trust in a particular testimonial tradition, while ignoring both the epistemic injustice issues arising out of theological intolerance, and challenges arising from inductively strong evidence of aetiological symmetries in testimonial uptake across testimonial traditions (aetiological evidence, or A-reasoning). Creedal assent, if that is how someone wants to talk of propositional faith, is not a matter of credence-level on evidence, and the radically underdetermined commitments which Buchak calls risky often means that holding one's self or one's testimonial tradition to be alethically or metaphysically true occurs through not just in risky, but in epistemically lucky manner. For epistemic risk and luck are both modal concepts. "State pluralism" opens us broader investigation of not just faith, but other concepts where there is debate over whether it requires propositional content or belief. It invites a much fuller application of contemporary psychology and philosophy of risk/luck, but this is missed when B-taken evidence is held to devalue commonalities and to focus only on the content uniqueness of one's home religion.

Concerns about epistemic injustice have been raised by risk-aware social epistemologists. Central to risk-focused social epistemology, I argue, is the problem of inductive norm violation/suspension. It is a problem both about *how* people think in counter-inductive ways, and it is a problem about doxastic responsibility, the *rationality or reasonableness* (in a moral risk engaging sense), of the manner in which an agent attributes a trait -- a moral, intellectual, or theological virtue or vices, for example -- to group insiders and outsiders. These risk-related concerns dramatically grow, I argue, where the insensitivity in question includes insensitivity to the *counter-inductive* nature of one's thinking, insensitivity to whether one's judgments "mirror" known biases, or insensitivity to the real of potential epistemic injustices of beliefs or attitudes one holds about others.

These claims are general to our beliefs in domains of controversial views, and I simply maintain that religious discourse is no principled exception to them. Thus, I term my account of risk-limited permissivism the *inductive risk* account. When being epistemically rational is defined so weakly as the B-C dualists define it, appeal to the potential epistemic rationality of propositional faith does nothing to assuage these normative concerns. Sometimes reasonability is looser than rationality, but sometimes it requires more than being “epistemically rational” as Buchak defines that. I would be a “pluralist” here and insist on no reduction of reasonability to rationality as the B-C dualists. If chauvinism is a sin for comparative philosophers, how contend that it is not so for theologians? Authentic faith and acknowledged risk are closely tied (McKaughan 2013). There are close connections between epistemic permissivism and reasonable pluralism (Rowland and Simpson, 2020). Reasonable pluralism in turn suggests *risk-limited permissivism* (Axtell 2021a and b). This shared focus on risk and risk-management encourages theologians to hold luck-free soteriologies. Risk-limited permissivism includes the need for risk-aware theologies, but the respect due to faith ventures (religious or secular) which *are* appropriately risk-aware should be how we understand to challenge of the Enlightenment.

This underscores that the Rawlsian burdens of judgment cannot be shaken by making the home religion’s supremacy a matter of accepting an exclusivist soteriology as an article of one’s faith.⁵⁵ The epistemic reasons to expect and accept reasonable disagreement, are not simply trumped by a received setting the religious domain, or one’s own purported revelation, apart: The burdens of judgment extend across the domains of controversial views, religious soteriology included. While resilience and commitment to action under conditions of uncertainty are often admirable traits, they become vices rather than virtues whenever they “mirror” known us-them, or ingroup-outgroup, biases.

So, I can agree in counting pragmatic and conative B-reasons as often among normal contributors to worldview beliefs underdetermined by C-taken evidence. Under equally normal conditions they might offer a virtuous root to a doxastic faith venture. The epistemic ‘slack’ afforded by moderate permissivism is but the “spirit of inner toleration” which James held as common ground between religious and scientific philosophy. But if fideistic acceptance and assent to testimonial authority is taken to not be truth-conducive when relied upon by religious aliens, one needs to take seriously the concern that the ‘inductive finger’ points back at oneself. I do not oppose the idea that there are cases in which faith can permissibly remain relatively steadfast despite substantial counterevidence, but any plausible account of permissivism needs an account of the limits of reasonableness. In providing such an account much depends on the *domain* of the claim, and on a fine-grained description of the agent and her doxastic strategy within that domain.

Risks are opportunities, but risky strategies of belief uptake or maintenance also connect quite directly with the philosophy of risk and luck, where safety, sensitivity, and other related modal conditions are the main ways to operationalize epistemic assessment of agents and their cognitive strategies. So, B-reasoning and risk-taking cannot be taken up as one-sidedly supporting rationality –we need a conception of limits as well. Discussion of risk leads to recognition of the centrality of inductive norms for epistemic assessment, not away from the force of inductive norms, as with the notion of trustworthiness as something *other* than a pattern to which philosophical logic or the human sciences can study. I think it is fine that Buchak holds that faith aids a person existentially, to maintain integrity while carrying out long-term, risky projects or decisions. But this value must be balanced against how risk also raises questions of other-directed as well as self-directed virtues, of doxastic responsibility, and of epistemic in/justice. While B-C

dualists have much to say about *how* B-taken evidence makes propositional faith rational, I do not think they are properly attendant to *when* doxastic responsibility is permissive and *when not*. Without engaging how epistemology of testimony involves deep concern with counter-inductive thinking and uniqueness claims, I worry that it invites mistaking philosophical theology and religious philosophy of religion for religious apologetics.⁵⁶

To summarize, O'Hara's use of historical C-reasoning to defend beliefs he presumably took up through other pathways – enculturation into a religious identity, testimonial-authority-assumption regarding the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament and B-reasoning more generally– seems to be what Wittgenstein objects to. He objects not just to this religious rationalism but also to skeptical rationalism. In a comment attributed to him by a friend, he held that “Russell and the parsons between them have done infinite harm, infinite harm.”⁵⁷ But Wittgenstein's strong sentiment in this passage is not difficult to understand, in light of different long-standing attitudes towards the relationship of religion and science, which is often broadly described as an Independence model. His criticism is essentially of what Ian Barbour finds to be the shared flawed assumption of the skeptical and religious proponents of a Conflict model of the relationship between religious and scientific thinking. Skeptical evidentialism and biblical literalism/inerrantism are here seen as opposites that in a sense deserve one other, but his real message is that the whole spectrum on which they walk should be exchanged for another. O'Hara appears biased in such a way that he misconceives how and why many reasonable others might not find cogent the ground that he cites for a positive epistemic status. I interpret Wittgenstein as holding that O'Hara misconceives the true (or at least proximate) origins of his Biblical beliefs by denying the fideistic aetiology of their uptake in favor of an evidentialist

rational reconstruction. This evidentialist apologetic in turn fails to distinguish the epistemology of narrative testimony from general, directly fact-asserting testimony.

B-C dualism and other views which emphasize testimony and trust of a testimonial tradition may be able to substantially complement Wittgenstein's account. But at the same time, Wittgenstein appears quite aware of the narrative nature of testimony behind his focal Day of Judgment example, and of the special problems in treating narrative testimony (perhaps on trust) as general or assertive testimony, leading to 'contradictions' which need not be so. Uncritical acceptance of normative testimony as assertive testimony heightens the perception of contradictions, which Wittgenstein clearly sees as best avoided. Carroll writes,

While Wittgenstein did not develop ideas on the ethics of trust, he was concerned with thinking scrupulously to the extent that one's mind was genuinely one's own, so that one was not unduly held captive by a picture. Recognizing differences between one's own views and claims made by people living according to a different way of life as not merely contradictions but as instances of intellectual distance is one example of Wittgenstein's pursuit of perspicuity. Of course, sometimes the conflict between epistemic stances is best thought of as a contradiction, but if one misses the intellectual distances that sometimes work to produce the contradiction, then one has missed a great deal about the epistemic conflict in question (2014, 167-8).

B-C dualism is a potential response to empiricist verificationism, and to evidentialist standards for being within one's intellectual rights. Wittgenstein, too, sought a response to Carnap's reduction of metaphysical and religious language to non-sensicality, which presents an

unnecessary opposition of proof and faith. Skeptical evidentialism, especially as ‘militant modern atheists’ use it, presents a Conflict view of reason. While B-C dualism responds to it, one wonders whether the alternative at the same time be a response to the over-simplistic opposition of proof and faith that confessionalism and religious fideism (and its close cousins) give rise to. If the dualist thesis is applied to the epistemology of religious belief only as a reply to the first motivation for a Conflict view but does not also address the second, then it appears symptomatic of problems with this *other* way of opposing proof and faith. It then leaves us with an imbalanced view rather than a viable permissivism which constrains the acutely risky cognitive strategies of religious absolutism. Relatedly, Buchak’s application of B-C dualism to philosophy of religion acknowledges risk in faith ventures, but the risk acknowledged appears to only be taken existentially. She highlights for example the risk of waiting too long to gather evidence, before committing to a course of action; and the risk of getting misleading information of a C-sort. Epistemic risk is not connected, as I argued it must be, to compliance or suspension inductive norms. Epistemic risk is involved in her general analysis of faith, but risk and responsibility are not connected such that issues like doxastic responsibility in religious faith ventures thereby largely left out of account.

This appears so also with Jackson’s application of doxastic states pluralism to the epistemology of religious belief. It identifies the widely varied things religious agents and texts count as B-reasons, including value-charged and pragmatic reasons, emotions, and especially trust in a testimonial faith tradition. The dualist proposal is nicely applied to ground permissivism, but the construal of permissivism does not distinguish it from the standard dogmatist or steadfast positions. Faith-based belief is construed by Jackson setting aside error

possibilities. But when error possibilities distanced by B-thinkers, yet those error possibilities have the support of inductive evidence, inductive risk abounds.

Doxastic states pluralism seems to be a big improvement over a credence first reductionism, which Jackson associates with evidentialism sort, and over misconstrued association of Wittgensteinian fideism with isolated and incommensurable language games, and of Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations as quietist. But the study of doxastic and sub-doxastic states necessarily draws us into question of aetiology (epistemic risk, safety and other truth-tracking conditions), and into the evidences of all of the human sciences which study religion. The imbalance in the B-C dualist proposal is that its dichotomous way of dividing C and B reasoning leaves aetiological concerns out of view. Future applications of doxastic states pluralism to the epistemology of religious belief will provide a platform which invites science of religion and cognitive and social psychology to the table as well.

In summary then, the suggestion then is to embrace the value of doxastic states pluralism for the epistemology of religious belief, but to radicalize that proposal further, by insisting on a triangulated rather than merely two-sided, philosophy-theology discourse. The applications of B-C dualism to philosophy of religion, while promising, do not seem to me as having yet risen far enough above a project of religious apologetics, to genuinely engage the strong connections between risky doxastic commitments, on the one hand, and doxastic responsibility on the other. Its proponents make it too easy to dismiss many of the epistemically-crucial connections between violations of inductive norms and assumption of epistemically risky belief. They do not consider the risk from a social epistemological, but only from the insider's perspective, and I worry that the view therefore invites us them theological polarities. Viewing all the risk-taking from an existential viewpoint, issues of epistemic injustice in exclusivist attitudes and in

religious enthusiasm and theological intolerance are neglected in favor of taking B-C dualism as a new form of apologetics for the “rationality” of steadfastness. B-C dualism falls into one kind of reductionism while trying to correct another. Apologetic strategies perhaps serve their task of defending the *reasonableness* of faith, but too often in the literature reasonableness is reduced to a thin conception of epistemic rationality. I argue that reasonableness is sometimes more and sometimes less demanding than rationality. What B-C dualism acknowledges (which the two forms of reductionism do not) is that enculturation weighs heavily on worldviews and values, and that this is enabling. To fulfill the promise which its proponents see in it to promote dialogue across philosophy and theology, and to ground permissivism while yet providing limits to it, doxastic states pluralism needs to evolve to be more than another apologetic strategy for religious fideistic particularism, acrimonious insider/outsider dichotomies. But to do this I have tried to show, it cannot abnegate moral and philosophical concerns with doxastic responsibility towards others in religious faith ventures. Whether in Continental or in analytical style, discussion of the risky nature of nurtured commitments of faith must expand. Hyphenated and non-hyphenated philosophers of religion must become partners in being “risk aware.” They must consider real-life examples of the harms and risks of intolerance towards religion, intolerance between religions, etc. Taking a risk and responsibility as coordinate concepts, they must consider past and present epistemic injustices which attend soteriological exclusivism, or what Rousseau just called attitudes of “theological intolerance.”

5. Conclusion: Creeds are not Credences, but Risk and Responsibility are Co-ordinate

We have tried to show that in his religious epistemics, Wittgenstein recognized something like what analytical philosophers have recently termed belief-credence dualism. But Wittgenstein’s

prescriptive definition of philosophy is as a “battle against bewitchment of intelligence by means of language” (*PI* § 109), and this struggle it has been argued cannot be waged without also acknowledging important sources of concern with risky strategies of belief acquisition and maintenance. One cannot acknowledge acknowledging faith-based commitments as risky, and acknowledging the force of inductive norms for epistemic assessment and guidance.⁵⁸ What we can say, having kept our focus on methodology, is that the *versions* of B-C distinction most likely to be philosophically acceptable will be one’s which appropriately recognize how responsibilities come along with risk-taking. Hence, they won’t simply treat testimony and trust *only* as supportive of B-reasoning, but will also consider testimony reception not only in a counter-inductive way, but also under inductive patterns and norms.

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Notes

¹ AWL, 90. Compare especially *Zettel*: “Let us introduce two antithetical terms in order to avoid certain elementary confusions: To the question ‘How do you know that so-and-so is the case?’, we sometimes answer by giving 'criteria' and sometimes by giving 'symptoms'.” (p. 25 in CWW). [AWL is standard for *Wittgenstein’s Lectures, Cambridge 1932-35*. See bibliography for other abbreviations used here. I utilize the electronic *Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (CWW) for reference coordination. Fullest Wittgenstein citations are made readily available in this all Blackwell copyrighted edition, but compare other available texts and translations].

² Much of the interest in distinguishing belief and credence, or full and partial belief, comes from outside of concern for the distinction’s application to questions of religious epistemics, or of normative models of faith. Clayton Littlejohn (2015) for example, using everyday examples, holds that speaking of partial and degressed belief serves different purposes, and hence needs to

be recognized as answering to different norms. Another related view to B-C dualism is the *doxastic states pluralism* of Carter, Javin and Rubin (2016). “One of the deepest ideological divides in contemporary epistemology concerns the relative importance of belief versus credence.... Both belief and credal states qualify as doxastic attitudes, broadly construed. But, belief is an “on-or-off” attitude; believing a proposition stands in opposition to withholding belief with respect to that proposition. By contrast, credence comes in degrees; arguably, each of a continuum of opposing credal states is possible in principle (even if not in practice for limited human beings). Perhaps more importantly, the correctness of beliefs—their accuracy—is an all or nothing affair. A belief is correct if it is true, and incorrect if false. In contrast, to the extent that accuracy makes sense for credal states, it is a matter of degree” (§1 online first copy). The authors do not apply the view to philosophy of religion, but similarly to Jackson they distinguish strong and weak versions of credence-fundamentalist, belief-fundamentalist, and anti-fundamentalist. They argue for a version of the latter view, the anti-fundamentalist or pluralist view being that “Neither kind of epistemic status is more fundamental.”

³ Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, p. 25; from *Wittgenstein, Complete Works*.

⁴ Carroll writes that, “The interpretations of religion seen in the early philosophies of religion of Malcolm, Winch, and Phillips are problematic because they lean too heavily on narrow readings of the notions of ‘language-game’ and ‘form of life.’” Wittgenstein asked us to “keep the multiplicity of language-games in view” (*PI I*, 24); I ask us to keep the multiplicity of models of faith in view.

⁵ I appreciate Buchak’s acknowledgement that faith and risk taking are inseparable, and that a model of faith which prescribes cognitive risk-taking is historically prevalent in the Abrahamic religions at least. “It is important that our analysis express the relationship between the

proposition and the act. I have explained that a person can have faith that *X* only if he cares whether *X* is true or false, and presumably this is because the act of faith constitutes taking a risk on *X*.... Whether an act constitutes a risk on *X* will of course be relative to the individual performing the act. So, as a first pass, we might say: A person has faith that *X*, expressed by *A*, only if that person performs act *A* and performing *A* constitutes taking a risk on *X*.” Buchak 2012, 4-5.

⁶ Buchak 2017a, 129, emphasis added. In attributing belief to someone, we tend to think in terms of a triadic model: Belief is not fine-grained, but simply means to regard something as true. According to this model, belief is a doxastic attitude which takes a proposition as its object, and “there are three doxastic attitudes one can take toward a proposition *p*: believe *p*, disbelieve *p*, and withhold belief, being effectively undecided on whether *p*” (113). To capture attributions of *partial belief* or *degree of belief*, however, “epistemologists appeal to another propositional attitude, called *credence*... Credences are more fine-grained than beliefs and are often given a value on the [0,1] interval, where 1 represents maximal confidence *p* is true, and 0 represents maximal confidence *p* is false.”

⁷ Jackson 2019c, 4. Inductive reasoning based upon statistics of the number of tickets in a lottery is credence-generating, but not so easily belief-generating, and only doubtfully knowledge-generating. But Jackson’s dualist’s explanation isn’t that one ought not form beliefs on the basis of statistical evidence alone. Differences between rational credence and rational belief are better understood by focusing on the “on the possibilities that the evidence makes salient.” But obscuring these differences is the influence of the triad model in internalist epistemology, and various related views which have lent themselves to reductionist or eliminativist assumptions. “[F]ew epistemologists today defend credence-eliminativism, and

while there are more who defend belief-eliminativism” Jackson discusses cases which cast doubt on each form of eliminativism, and how belief-eliminativism in particular requires an extensive error theory about commonsense psychology and everyday discourse. If beliefs make the same prescriptions as credences, then one of the two is superfluous; but this seems not to be the case.

⁸ This seems to have been Jackson’s earliest view, though a recent draft paper presents of version of credence-reductionism. Hence, I added the qualifier ‘easily’ in final editing.

⁹ Jackson 2019c.

¹⁰ Jackson 2019c.

¹¹ Perhaps the need to keep descriptive and normative posits distinct is one of B-C dualisms greatest advantages, especially in application to the epistemology of religious belief, where I would add that this distinction, like that between criterial and symptomatic uses of language, it helps us keep better track both of the important distinction between descriptive and normative fideism, and claims on the part of religious apologetics of testimonial knowledge and warrant (or epistemological rationality/justification). *Problems of Religious Luck* (2019) argues that the descriptive/normative fideism distinction is crucial to the comparative study of religion, yet still too often neglected. See Chapter 5 for the most direct elaboration of my inductive risk account of epistemology’s normative tasks with reference to Carroll’s learned discussion of its place in Wittgenstein’s thought. More recent papers continue my development of a pragmatic pluralist epistemology for domains of controversial views.

¹² Jackson 2020a, 5090.

¹³ The diachronic nature of faith commitments also introduces issues of ‘pragmatic encroachment’ which I cannot deal with here, but are some of the issues which Jackson finds

B-C dualism to well-address. That the norms which should inform our ethics of belief are primarily diachronic, is something we agree on, and which shows against synchronically-focused evidential ‘fit.’ See Axtell 2011 in critique of Feldman and Conee’s evidentialism and 2012 papers on diachronic rather than synchronic norms as primary in an ethics of belief. See also Ross, J., & Schroeder, M. (2014).

¹⁴ I count among synchronic-fit principles the evidentialist’s Commutivity Principle:

“Commutativity of evidence holds that the order in which evidence is acquired should not influence what it is reasonable to believe based on that evidence” (Gardiner 2014, 83). See also Gardiner (2021) and Axtell (2020) for connections with culturally nurtured beliefs in domains of controversial views (morals, politics, religion, and philosophy). The differences the dualists allege are sometimes between beliefs and credences as distinct states, and sometimes more normatively between “credence evidence” and “belief evidence.” My own reflections lead me to think that different sorts of “reasoning,” not different sorts of evidence or even propositional attitudes are the better philosophical focus, and the one best aligned with agent-focused virtue epistemology, and inquiry-focused (*zetetic*) responsibilism. I have long argued, in the classical pragmatist tradition, for the advantages of approaching epistemology as “theory of inquiry,” a term which immediately implicates objects of study, problems of practice, methods, and inquiring *agents*. The focus on “reasoning” emphasizes agents and their methods or strategies of inquiry. This term need not overstate or beg the question about the ‘incommensurability’ of the respective aims of belief and credence. Carter like Jackson is critical of the influential Triad model of belief, which pluralism provides an alternative to, yet sympathetic to the need for the concept of belief. Carter (2018) goes on from Carter, Javin and Rubin (2016) to further develop an impermissive (“anti-permissive”) ethics of belief which he terms *controversial view*

agnosticism. There he argues for a principled duty to suspend “believing that p” while permitting “suspecting that p” and related doxastic attitudes. I compare and contrast his epistemology for domains of controversial views with my pragmatic pluralism, or more formally, *inductive risk-limited* permissivism in Axtell 2020).

¹⁵ Jackson distinguishes the *eliminative* views, which say that the object of the study of the other *does not exist*, from the two forms of *reductionism* (the two x-first views). The latter are technically both forms of dualism, but still by their attempted reductions leave too much unexplained. Full-blooded dualism is still divided by stronger and weaker varieties. I am glossing over some of these distinctions, but see especially Jackson 2019c. Jackson holds that “whether a reduction in the belief-credence realm is successful is a significant and pivotal question in epistemology.” Each view one might take –belief-first, credence-first, or dualism/pluralism –has significant implications for other debates in epistemology. When, as has often been the case, epistemologists do not recognize the differences between the attitudes, important questions that inform central epistemological debates will be begged.

¹⁶ Jackson and Turnbull, 2021, 1.

¹⁷ I find Jackson’s term ‘credal’ permissivism misleading and will use instead use ‘credence’ consistently, since the Dualists’ main claim seems to be that (religious) creeds *aren’t credences*.

¹⁸ Jackson 1919a. Carter, Javin and Rubin (2016) might agree with Jackson to a point, but not in this support of permissivism. The agreement seems to be over some form of doxastic states pluralism (DSP). A big part of what virtue responsibilists and B-C dualists agree upon is captured in the Jamesian recognition that “the aim of possessing the truth is best understood as a mixture of two competing aims: truly representing and not misrepresenting in a novel

direction: different ways of mixing these two aims correspond to doxastic attitudes at different places in the hierarchy.” This recognition is connected not just with permissivism flowing from pragmatic needs and temperament in finding a balance between believing too little and too much, too cautiously or too credulously, etc., but also with more specific moral and intellectual virtues, such as open-mindedness (See Wayne Riggs (ed.) 2021).

¹⁹ Jackson 2019d first notes that “uniqueness is a universal claim and permissivism is an existential claim; permissivists do not maintain that every body of evidence is permissive, but merely that some are.” She points out other distinctions that she thinks the literature on epistemology of disagreement does not adequately take account of, including the difference between credal and belief permissivism: “Credal Permissivism: there are evidential situations that rationally permit more than one credence toward a proposition. Belief Permissivism: there are evidential situations that rationally permit more than one belief-attitude toward a proposition.” It is belief permissivism that she primarily sets out to support, using both every day and religious examples/cases. I would add that when appropriately limited, permissivism invites “friendly” attitudes towards diverse beliefs in domains of controversial views. But criticism and censure seem invited rather than denied when one gets to specific agents or collectives and what they claim, especially about believers and disbelievers, on the basis of their faith.

²⁰ Jackson 2019c, 9.

²¹ Yet Jackson (2019c, 9) concedes that “while rational faith that *p* is consistent with *C* evidence against *p*, it isn’t consistent with any amount of *C* evidence against *p*.”

²² See also Matthew Siebert (2018) who connects his account with Buchak’s explicitly: “Given that we value truthfulness intrinsically, we can now see the point of the distinction between

mere reliability and trustworthiness” (8). However, most would agree that trust cannot be responsible or intellectually virtuous where unregulated by acquired sensitivity to indicators of *trustworthiness*. While the distinction is useful, trust is partly an affective attitude, and even minimally fideistic models of faith prescribe genuine faith not as *merely* passive but as to some extent actively engaging effort, will, passion, affect, and value-laden choice. In broader view, the trust/reliability distinction informs the debate between testimonial reductivism and non-reductivism: “Testimonial reductivists, for instance, typically argue that testimonial justification requires an inductive inference from the testifier’s trustworthiness to the truth of what she testifies. Testimonial anti-reductivists, on the other hand, typically claim either that a speaker’s trustworthiness is a necessary background condition for successful transmission of justified belief, or that a hearer is justified in believing some testimony only if she is sensitive to potential indications that the speaker is not trustworthy. David Henderson has noted this common ground among reductivists and anti-reductivists and argued that both camps are committed to the view that “warranted testimonial belief formation on the part of normal adult humans must be regulated by a rich acquired sensitivity to indicators of degrees of trustworthiness” (2018, 2).

²³ Buchak 2012, 4-5. Jackson does not seem to follow either Buchak, or her own points about the connection between B-reasoning and underdetermination, to lead to the centrality of risk. This will be one of my concerns about her form of permissivism. It does not of course follow from a generic analysis of faith as involving risk that ‘the greater the risk, the greater the faith,’ a formula that we find in Kierkegaard which smacks of hyper-fideism, and should be seen as a normative not descriptive claim. An essential part of accepting the fallibilist upshot of fideistic faith -- the point Buchak insists upon that *evidence* “must leave it open that the proposition is

false” would seem to be that *persons* at some level, or perhaps better, in dialogue with philosophy and the human sciences, must leave it open that their faith-based, evidentially-underdetermined assumption that the pattern ‘stops here’ may be the object of serious aetiological challenges.

²⁴ Jackson 2019a, 2481. Jackson takes B-first, C-first, and B-C Dualism to be descriptive theses, implying that their application to normative issues like permissivism and impermissivism is indirect, and potentially quite varied. Especially on a dualist model, dualist picture, credal permissivism and belief permissivism potentially might come apart quite a bit. There are ‘more combinations on the dualist view, the only claim. Still, B-C Dualism and permissivism tend to be natural partners, as Jackson develops them in further recent papers.

²⁵ Jackson 2019a, 2479. More assertively, the dualist holds that what arguments there are for reductionism are lacking, and accepting this allows improved ways of approaching numerous related debates in epistemology. Neither belief nor credence are reducible to the other, reducible in a sense that one can always be defined in terms of the other, or in a sense enabling easy generalizations across these evaluative approaches. Jackson’s most recent papers defend a primacy of belief, however, so she does not presently seem to hold this stronger claim, though it is discussed in her earlier papers. It seems more Wittgensteinian and more pragmatist to think about the relationship as contextualized and related to use. ‘Believes’ and “knows” are not necessarily used in different non-philosophical ways in scripture and theology, and a favored model of faith will affect these terms along with the relationship of faith and evidence/reason.

²⁶ Wittgenstein is perhaps considered fideistic because like James and Kierkegaard he acknowledges the attitude of certainty differs from the epistemic sense “faith is faith in what is

needed by my heart, my soul, not my speculative intelligence” (CV, 33). But while this is expressive of what he thinks faith requires (prescriptive fideism) it is also descriptive of how faith-based beliefs originate, and how they function. In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein more carefully seems to distinguish ‘certainty’ as referring to a credence function, and something else, perhaps ‘certitude,’ to refer to faith as an abiding and resilient commitment.

²⁷ LRB, 56-57.

²⁸ LRB, 57. Together with Wittgenstein’s broader account of disparate language games, these passages go some distance in explaining Wittgenstein as articulating an Independence model of the relationship between scientific and religious thought. The narrative nature of testimony in the Abrahamic and so many other testimonial traditions is an underappreciated problem for religious epistemics. Propositionally, there is of course a *knowing that* even with fictional narratives: one can know events and characters *within* a story. But knowing or even believing *that* ancient events and personages featured in narrative testimony were historical events is quite another matter, a matter involving interpretation of authors, texts, and contexts of oral or written transmission, and also independent corroborating or contrary artifacts and testimonies. This question about the historicity of a narrative testimonies is a different question about testimony, and often its correct answer is one of degrees, rather than all or nothing. “Trusting” a source for answers to that question, especially all-or-nothing answers, is especially problematic and can hardly be carried on without due respect for inductive reasoning, as several philosophers of religion have recently argued (Rinard; Fraser). Vainio and others point to a troubling “slide to ‘Wittgensteinian fideism’ in narrative theology.” But this can be a healthy shift if it means trading in a Conflict for an Independence model of faith and reason. The question becomes whether the insulation of beliefs from evidential challenge which

Independence affords does not come at the cost of ceding historical claims (“propositions”) to evidence-based objective reasoning. This is why charges of relativism regularly attend critical examination not only of particularist exclusivism, but also of any conception of religious language games that insulate religious assertions from the need for rational justification. Following this line of thought there is a kind of cognitive dissonance that we would expect to arise for agents in such a situation of prescribed certainty that events, such as miracle events in a purported special revelation, in fact transpired. Where the ‘slide’ because unhealthy it seems to me is with staunchly realist readings of one’s own religion’s narrative testimony, as we see in Robert Plant’s (2011) rebuttal to Wittgenstein.

²⁹ This suggests kind of pluralism about disagreement, where full belief and agnosticism are rightly to be treated philosophically as non-contradictory, are not necessarily contradictory, even if theology so often treats agnostic stances as culpable ‘unbelief,’ and analytic epistemology so often treats religious belief *that p* on analogy with atomistic empirical propositions. Michele Palmira’s (2017; 2021) aptly titled *Kinship* account aims to account for the relationships between not just between full and degreed doxastic attitudes, but also between *believing* and *not having belief*; between *not having a belief* and *disbelief*; between each of these latter two and *middling or low credence*, etc. Palmira’s form of epistemic pluralism would seem to articulate Wittgenstein’s point here, and to complement or extend the appealing characteristics of Wittgenstein’s account as well as the B-C dualists. To expand, epistemic pluralism draws directly from the different doxastic states which epistemologists and social psychologists posit; epistemic permissivism draws in turn from epistemic (or doxastic states) pluralism.

³⁰ Natural theology aims to proceed without appeal to scripture, but whatever one thinks of religious rationalism with respect to monotheism, it is dubious to think this proof-procedure could work to rationalize *religion-specific* teachings, or theological teaching routed in particular texts taken as scripture. “I believe that every human being has two human parents; but Catholics believe that Jesus only had a human mother. And other people might believe that there are human beings with no parents, and give no credence to all the contrary evidence. Catholics believe as well that in certain circumstances a wafer completely changes its nature, and at the same time that all evidence proves the contrary. And so if Moore said ‘I know that this is wine and not blood,’ Catholics would contradict him.” (OC 239). Even if we surmise that Wittgenstein would criticize the value of natural theology, he is not just reflecting a more Protestant view of faith, but noting an important distinction. Father O’Hara is an outlier even among Catholic priests for his taking religious rationalism to apply to proving religion-specific or scriptural teachings. With rationalism there are always two claims: that a rationalistic justification is *required* for the domain of an assertion; and that this standard of justification is *indeed met*. But after denying the first, fideistic faith may be all over the map with respect to the second question, as some suffice for negative response and mysticism, others for positive response and an ‘expanded’ foundationalism such that the home religion’s phenomenology, etc. are always able to meet whatever bar of grounding rationalists or skeptics might set. Hence some like Swinburne adopt Christian evidentialist apologetics, and for some the search for Noah’s Ark, or the Ark of the Covenant has meaning that it lacks for most others.

³¹ Wittgenstein says of the Day of Judgment believer *not* that s/he’s unreasonable, but rather just that s/he’s “not reasonable.” This *could* mean a blunder, but for the generic believer would not necessarily be censure, or as Wittgenstein puts it, “rebuke.” It could mean “they don’t use

reason here.” But right after this Wittgenstein, rather stunningly, turns back to father O’Hara and writes, “ I would definitely call O’Hara unreasonable. I would say, if this is religious belief, then it’s all superstition. But I would ridicule it, not by saying it is based on insufficient evidence. I would say: here is a man who is cheating himself. You can say: this man is ridiculous because he believes, and bases it on weak reasons” (LRB, p. 58). O’Hara’s failure to knowledge what James calls be ‘mood of faith’ in his attempt to be reasonable by offering an evidentialist apologetic, Wittgenstein says is “ludicrous” to him. This surely is a term of censure or rebuke associated with making a “blunder,” even if “a blunder in a particular [game or] system.” These passages from Wittgenstein have fascinated readers in part because he is usually clear in distinguishing his description of the religious insider’s use of language (psychological fideism) from advocacy or censure on his own part. But here and elsewhere we see his own anti-rationalistic conception of faith expressed, together with what he takes, more philosophically, as its ‘skeptical’ fideist upshot, where ‘skeptical’ merely means acknowledgment that one does not *know* in any normal sense of that word. *That O’Hara does not recognize or accept the non-historical basis of his belief means that his attitude evokes the worst connotations of fideism, that which is usually used to condemn those who leave based on weak evidence.*

³² As Carroll points out, “Evangelical Christian philosophers have typically sought realist interpretations of doctrinal statements and faith commitments and thus have been wary of the tendencies of Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion to focus on the practical manifestation, rather than the propositional content, of religious belief. This propensity towards metaphysical realism also explains the appeal of Reformed Epistemology, with its defense of the rational parity of belief in the existence of God with other basic beliefs, among Evangelical Christian philosophers” (Carroll, 93).

³³ In his study of James and Wittgenstein, Russell Goodman (2002, 123-4) writes, “Language, as James depicts it in the last sentence, is something we put to work in the activities of daily life – to pay our bills or procure our food. There is thus an incipient pragmatism in James’s statement, which fits hand in glove with Wittgenstein’s suggestion that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (PI §43), and his comparison of language to a set of tools (PI §11). Yet James does not – as Wittgenstein does – think of the uses of words as constituting the *meanings* of those words. In fact, James is not particularly interested in what constitutes linguistic meaning, which is of course a central question for Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, when James states that language may furnish “material in which to think” he anticipates *exactly* Wittgenstein’s point in §329 of the *Investigations*: “When I think in language, there aren’t ‘meanings’ going through my mind in addition to the verbal expressions: the language is itself the vehicle of thought.”

³⁴ Post-liberal and post-modern thinking, and far ‘Right’ and far ‘Left’ Wittgensteinians as well, have been appropriated to foster “insulation” from rational criticism. But I will here focus only on problems with post-liberal apologetics, since these additionally can be used to foster cultural isolation, exclusivist soteriologies, and polarized and polemical apologetics.

³⁵ Labron (2009, 129) makes a distinction which perhaps helps interpret Wittgenstein’s viewpoint: “The theology of glory offers a Christian philosophy that competes with various world views, while the theology of the cross is not a philosophy or system, it does not place the individual as an observer of principles which can then be judged; rather, it is the individual who is judged – and perhaps redeemed.... The theologians of glory fall under Wittgenstein’s criticism of Father O’ Hara for trying to defend Christian belief by making it into a sort of

science.” This is the religious rationalist side of the ‘harm’ he alleges Russell and O’Hara to each and together create.

³⁶ A more basic concern might be that the dualists emphasize propositional faith, or faith *that* p, whereas Wittgenstein’s account seems to deemphasize propositional faith in favor an active and diachronic commitment. Treating faith in terms of acceptance (i.e. acting as if some proposition is true), allows for the special role that faith plays in justifying long-term commitments. The dualists incorporate this: “Accepting that p is acting as if p. When one accepts a proposition, one treats it as true in one’s practical reasoning, and, upon taking will action, acts as if it were true” (Jackson 2020c, 2). This is also especially so in what Andrejč terms Wittgenstein’s existential conception. For Wittgenstein “it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game” (OC §204). Andrejč (2016) develops the thesis that there are more “conceptions of religion” apparent in Wittgenstein’s writings than are often recognized by his interpreters. These include not just the early the early *non-sensicalist conception* of the *Tractatus* depicting religious language as ‘[running] against the boundaries of language’ and the *grammaticalist conception* of his later work, the one most closely associated with “Wittgensteinian fideism.” Also running through his writings and strongly in his later one’s are those Andrejč’s terms *existentialist* and *instinctivist* conceptions of religion.

³⁷ In her aim for a general theory of faith, Buchak, as Howard-Snyder and McKaughan [2020d, 4-5] summarize, “does not imply that you have faith that p only if you believe p, or only if you are certain that p, or only if you are not in doubt about whether p, or only if you have insufficient evidence to believe p, or only if it is caused by an act of will. It thereby avoids the excesses of Thomistic and other cognitively demanding theories of faith.” She also allows that faith that p, or at least in practical view can be degressed, allowing for cognitive and conative

‘troughs’ people naturally-enough go through, rather than expecting an unrealistically ideal steadiness. They applaud what she calls her ‘practical account of faith’ cashed out in terms of a person’s willingness to take risks on *p*. See also the authors’ 2020a on the faith and humility, and Howard-Snyder 2016 on the faith-as-belief debate among and beyond Christian philosophy. It is unclear how far Jackson’s account aligns with Buchak’s in these regards, since she seems to contrast faith with degreed doxa, which she identifies with credence. But accounting for the resilience or steadfastness of faith is important to both authors.

³⁸ Wittgenstein writes in a journal entry from 1937: “I believe: the word ‘believing’ has wrought horrible havoc in religion. All the knotty thoughts [in Kierkegaard] about ‘the [absolute] paradox’ ... and the like. But if instead of “belief in Christ” you would say: ‘love of Christ,’ the paradox vanishes, i.e., the irritation to the intellect ... //It’s not that now one could say: Yes, finally everything is ... intelligible. ... [I]t is just not *unintelligible*.” (*PPO*, p. 247).

³⁹ “Belief is not any kind of occupation with the object of belief. Fear, however, longing, and hope, occupy themselves with their objects....” (CV §64). B-C dualism is supposed to give us needed respite from religious and skeptical rationalism, yet religious rationalists such as Richard Swinburne hold it on authority of tradition (and Aquinas) the view that faith is “a matter of having certain beliefs”; “to have faith in God is simply to have a belief-that, to believe that God exists” (Swinburne 2005, 138-141). This seems mistaken. There is also a distinction between believing-in and believing that, which this view obscures. Howard-Snyder and McKaughan formalize it as a distinction between *relational faith* and *propositional faith*. Jackson says she is interested only in proposition faith in her B-C dualism papers, yet often her descriptions stray to what seems better characterized as relational, or believing *in*. But it would

be ironic if the B-C dualist were simply repeating the errors they allege to the belief and credence-first views, by assuming that relational faith can be reduced to terms of propositional faith. Jackson cites Howard-Snyder and McKaughan's papers, and in a footnote addresses the worry that their defense of the claim that faith does not entail belief might clash with the emphasis on propositional faith qua *believing that* in B-C dualism. There she makes a rather accommodating reply, which may assuage my concerns: "In response, note that all I have argued above is that faith and belief share a certain necessary condition that involves sensitivity to evidence. This need not rule out the idea that it is possible to have faith that p without believing that p; the attitudes can otherwise come apart in many ways" (2018, 15 Note 30).

⁴⁰ Buchak 2012, 12. Note that O'Hara is epistemically rational on Buchak's account since that concept is defined weakly in terms of consistency of belief with *what one takes as good epistemic grounds*. But this does not mean he is "reasonable," or violates no epistemic norms; indeed, he is unreasonable and "ludicrous" according to Wittgenstein. This is what I suggest not just B-C dualists but religious epistemologists more generally should reflect upon when they approach epistemology of religious belief with Jackson's *essentially apologetic* question and stated purpose: "However, suppose that we don't want to say that faith is epistemically irrational. What other options do we have?" (2018, 1). But I do not see how this squares with doxastically responsible acknowledgment of risk. In-sourcing to phenomenological qualia and outsourcing to revelation or tradition have can be ways of failing to be doxastically responsible. The most relevant issue for risk aware social epistemologists should be that which Kierkegaard, but so few others ask: What am I doing if I "suspend" the universal by putting myself above it? We can ask the same thing of such a teleological suspension of the universal in the moral, epistemic, or logical.

⁴¹ Howard-Snyder and McKaughan 2020d. Blöser and Stahl (2017) argue that “fundamental hopes” may be not only instrumentally but also non-instrumentally rational if “essential to the hopeful person’s being who she is.” See Benton (2019) for extended discussion both of these authors and of other recent treatments of hope and hopefulness in relationship to a general account of faith. As Benton points out, to be *hopeful that p* indicates an attitude significantly stronger than *hoping that p*: “If I am to be hopeful as opposed to merely having hope, I would need to be somewhat resistant to giving up my projects aimed at, or otherwise linked to, the outcomes for which I hope. In addition, I would need to be disposed, within limits, to act in ways that suggest some minimal measure of confidence that these outcomes will turn out as I desire.”⁴² I take this difference to indicate that hopefulness meshes well with the resilience of faith, despite its being a more affective attitude than belief. In terms of the present account, hopefulness but not belief may remain rational when an evidential situation goes beyond acknowledged uncertainty to acknowledgment that C-evidence is strongly negative, i.e., a neutral person would not put much credence in it, or it has many undefeated defeaters. But philosophical and scientific reasoning will take note when theologians make a further exceptionalist claim to ‘defeat’ the defeater (see Grube and Van Herck (eds.) 2018). The better explanation could be that this move confirms the counter-inductive and hence risky nature of the response, rather than supplying the independence needed for symmetry-breaking.

⁴² The normative epistemic evaluation of religious beliefs as neither based upon nor expected to meet objective or probative C-standing is, in each of these three authors, quite explicit. This claim they each make is important for understanding their broader thought about the relationships between faith and reason, and again, between religion and science. Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein as I interpret them, are able and also willing to agree with the penultimate

normative conclusion of *Varieties of Religious Experience* defending the ‘indispensability’ of religious overbeliefs for those who have them, *together with* recognition of their objectively (epistemically and perhaps also ethically) risky nature. “It may be that possibility and permission of this sort are all that the religious consciousness requires to live on...No fact human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance (1902, 526).

⁴³ Aside from notice of the affective motivations for faith-based belief, the “No induction. Fear” comment deserves a good deal of amplification. The sayer is here a nay-sayer in some potentially strong ways. They are saying more than that their use is grammatical, or a hinge proposition for them, and more than that this *domain* of discourse is an exception. Rather, they are acknowledging that there are or may be patterns in how others acquire their religious beliefs which may bear negatively on reliability and responsibility, but that the pattern stops here, with one’s own conviction, or one’s own sect, religion, or metaphysical worldview.

⁴⁴ One of the central loci of risk assessment is the risk of relying on a belief for action. As Georgi Gardiner (2020) puts it, "It asks whether and how practical stakes can affect the amount of evidence needed to properly rely on a judgement in action, where those stakes concern the costs of p being false." While I generally applaud those definitions of faith which leave the positive cognitive attitude unspecified, we should note that this does not obviate our focus of risk assessment. Gardiner adds, "But proponents of pragmatic encroachment hold that even when p is true, and so the bad consequences do not obtain, there can be something wrong with relying on p with insufficient evidence given the high costs involved were p false. It is too risky." (note 3). This point is one that I hold further pressures theological methods with a strongly fideistic profile. Gardiner's third of three loci for engaging the epistemology of risk “concerns ways we

are vulnerable as epistemic agents, particularly focusing on vulnerabilities stemming from social features [or social embeddedness] of epistemic agency." (np)

⁴⁵ Howard-Snyder and McKaughan 2020a. Resilience is different from dogmatic denial of the weight of counter-evidence, and is has a primarily diachronic connotation, in contrast to the synchronic focus that we might worry an approach through proposition faith saddles us with. The diachronic aspect of commitment is apparent also in the fact that people often have “trajectories” in relationship to their early-acquired or “nurtured” beliefs. These trajectories should be treated in light of moral and intellectual growth, rather than as simply incompatible with faith’s prescribed steadiness/resilience. There is much to be said for ‘struggling’ faith, and for the value of doubt along with the value of careful reflection more generally. So if B-C dualists or proponents of other religious accounts become overly prescriptive by characterizing genuine faith a matter of ‘believing that,’ it is subject to their prescription to seek “a better understanding of faith: one according to which faith is compatible with serious doubt, even belief-cancelling doubt; one that allows you to own your doubt, to struggle with it in all honesty, while you continue to practice with integrity.” np

⁴⁶ Positive cognitive and conative attitudes are generally held to be elements in faith. This is enough to make propositional problematic, even if differences between believing in and believing that often glossed over. To insist that the cognitive attitude involved must be doxastic rather than sub-doxastic, seems to introduce an element that lacks the sought generality in a philosophical analysis of faith. Howard-Snyder and McKaughan (2020) further argue that riskiness and uncertainty should be distinguished. The exchange between these authors and Lara Buchak strongly recalls aspects an earlier exchange between Andrei Buckareff (2005) and John Bishop (2005), where Buckareff utilizes a belief/acceptance distinction in critiquing John

Bishop account of “doxastic” faith ventures, while Bishop defends the possibility of believing by faith. Assent or acceptance, if we want to use these as more neutral terms, take multiple objects; the intentional mental state has many more, dependent upon social roles and the context of inquiry. C.S. Peirce was among the first to distinguish credence from belief, where he found that the distinction both illuminated differences between scientific realism and anti-realism, and allowed attitudes other than belief proper to be proper within scientific practice. Somewhat ironically, however, it is credence, not belief, that in science is supposed to delineate a commitment sufficient for acceptance and pursuit, that is, a ground for practical reasoning.

⁴⁷ The diachronic aspect of faith and of its resilience helps the authors to argue against the over-prescriptive view of faith which prescribes that “*if you have enough doubt to cancel belief, then you can’t have faith.*” They alternatively support Markan faith, while criticizing as over-strong both the “belief-only” and “belief-plus” conceptions of the positive conative and cognitive attitudes involved in propositional faith. For instance, according to Belief-Plus, “you have faith in someone, as an *x*, only if you *believe* that they will come through as an *x*. No other type of attitude will do. Not seeming, not credence, not trust, not acceptance, not hope, not beliefless assuming. Only belief is allowed. The sheer implausibility of requiring that unique attitude-type counts against Belief-Plus, especially since other attitude-types can play any role that belief plays in faith.”

⁴⁸ Sands 2014, 147. We have seen how Mill, James, Kierkegaard, and Wittgenstein make a defense of the meaningfulness of fideistically-acquired beliefs, while qualifying their reasonableness by not ascribing the same kind of epistemic standing to them as to beliefs of an everyday or scientific nature, or for which the grounds are objective. Do we also see this humility with respect to the *epistemic* limits of faith-based belief with respect objective warrant

or cogent argument, *a priori* or empirical, in John Henry Newman, whose account Duncan Pritchard describes as a strong influence over Wittgenstein's thinking about hinge propositions in *On Certainty*? I would argue that this is so, but I will restrict myself to just these three.

Another question is whether it is true of what Pritchard describes as Newman's 'quasi fideism'? See Pritchard (2017) and this volume for Pritchard's account, and compare Michael Williams criticisms of quasi-fideism and hinge epistemology (this volume) more generally.

⁴⁹ Compare OC 7: "'Our acting' forms the background against which our language-games take shape. Our linguistic practices 'show' the background against which they appear. But the background shows things on which these linguistic practices depend: 'My *life* shows that I know, am certain, etc.'"

⁵⁰ Jackson holds that "Faith's sensitivity to testimonial B-evidence more than C-evidence explains why community and personal interaction is so important to faith"; this also explains "why having a tight-knit religious community, a close relationship with God, and religious experiences are important aspects of religious faith" These points go together with her concession that, "while rational faith that p is consistent with C-evidence against p, it isn't consistent with any amount of C-evidence against p" (2019c, 11; 9). While I am not especially interested in the rational/non-rational/irrational issue with faith-based belief, the question arises as to whether the B-heavy reasoner would be *open* to recognizing safety failures or knowledge and justification defeaters if they were present, or whether they would always be given a theological explanation which defangs them.

⁵¹ See also McKaughan 2013 on the importance of *acknowledged* risk to the reasonableness of faith. While risk is still treated only as personal or existential risk in works whose main aim is religious apologetics, philosophy of luck and risk should bring in social dimensions of risk, and

concern with epistemic injustice towards others. See for example Gardiner (2020), who distinguishes risk and cost, and relates concern with epistemic injustice to each. In my own work I argue that moral risk similarly abounds when asymmetric traits are ascribed to religious insiders and outsiders on the basis of favoring one testimonial faith tradition over others.

⁵² Buchak does not make this concession, although she does allow that a general fallibilism is carried by the definition of faith as risky or evidentially underdetermined.

⁵³ Another area of concern for Howard Snyder and McKaughan is what they see as Buchak's commitment to Closed: "Necessarily, if S maintains their faith that p, then S will be *closed* to looking at further evidence in the matter of p, in so far as it might bear on how S acts." The authors argue that Closed is likely false with respect at least to faith as personal relationship, and suggest that it equally false if one is thinking of faith as a character-trait, or the role of faith other domains of inquiry, such as the sciences. I share concerns of this general type about the treatment of faith by B-C dualists. The broader methodological point is put well by Howard-Snyder and McKaughan make a similar point: "In theorizing about faith or components that are partly constitutive of faith, don't be unnecessarily specific about what's required. If there is a given functional role that needs to be filled, often there are lots of suitable candidates that might play the needed role." np

⁵⁴ So, when are faith ventures *censurably* risky, in the moral and not merely epistemic sense? Neither Wittgenstein nor many others (James, Kierkegaard) say much about it, but Bishop explains how moderate fideism constrains faith ventures. I want to insist the presumption that "the pattern stops here" is central also to where serious questions arise of epistemic justice to others (especially of the trait-ascriptions applied to religious outsiders), and of moral virtue and openness of dialogue.

⁵⁵ Axtell (2019; 2020) argues that beliefs so risky that they “mirror” known personal and social biases, and those that violate what Rawls calls the ‘burdens of judgment,’ are excluded as censurably risky on my risk-limited permissivism. “Reasonable pluralism”, in Rawls’ use of the term, describes the diversity of doctrines that “reasonable citizens” affirm (1993: 36).

“Reasonable” is here to be understood in the context of Rawls’ distinction between the reasonable and the rational (1993: 48ff).

⁵⁶ The issue among secularist philosophers like myself or Philip Kitcher and theologians is not nearly the same as the issue between impermissivists and theologians. Compare Pittard (2019), who argues that philosophers need to avoid commitment to rigorous epistemic impartiality that leads to disagreement-motivated religious skepticism, as well as accounts of disagreement make unproblematic the privileging of one's first-person perspective.

⁵⁷ A comment to Drury alleged by Monk. See Labron (2019, 86) for commentary and full citation.

⁵⁸ I distinguish epistemic assessment, which concerns assessment of epistemic states and standings, from guidance-giving projects such as the ethics of belief. See Axtell (2021a and 2021b) for fuller development.