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The Theological Thesis: Theology's Role in Western Epistemology

Thomas Rubino

The Theological Thesis: Theology's Role in Western Epistemology

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by

Thomas J. Rubino

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Kevin Vose, Director

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Alexander Angelov

_____
Jessica Stephens

Williamsburg, VA
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INTRODUCTION

The Theological Thesis explores faith and theology within, and tangential to, knowledge throughout the course of Western epistemological history. Chapter I studies qualifications for truth and knowledge in the pre-Enlightenment epistemologies of Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1274) and William of Ockham (c. 1285-1345) to uncover how the understanding of faith's relationship with knowledge changed throughout the Middle Ages. Chapter II does the same for the epistemologies of Enlightenment contemporaries David Hume (1711-1776) and Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), surveying epistemic modifications to the aforementioned relationship in the so-called Age of Reason. Chapter III looks at the foundation of the contemporary Western secular study of religion in Max Müller's (1823-1900) comparative theology and proposes a modified understanding of theology to allow for concurrent secular study of the natural world and a religious reality, without resorting to the dogmatic theologies of historical religions.

This project seeks to bridge the epistemic divide between materialist attitudes in the academy and idealist worldviews typically associated with theology or metaphysics. With the increasing secularization of the Western academy, materialism, the conception of reality composed exclusively of observable objects and relationships between those objects, has emerged as its predominant epistemological stance. Idealism, the conception of reality composed both of observable and immaterial objects, fails to meet the evidential stipulations materialist epistemology requires of knowledge. If, as I argue, materialist knowledge holds no superior claim to absolute truth than does idealist knowledge, the prevailing attitude in secular academia must adjust to consider those objects it abandoned in dispensing with the construction of theology. Dogmatic theology's general thesis affirming the real existence of immaterial

reality may thus be incorporated into fashioning a new methodology for studying the immaterial, an epistemic system I term "secular theology".

CHAPTER I

The Western academy emerged in the strictly Christian environment of medieval Europe. Scholasticism centered upon Christian theology and the legacy of Western learning is steeped in Catholic tradition. Although scholars of the age are often called theologians, their epistemological contributions range far beyond theology, including logic, metaphysics and science. To better understand the radical shift in Western epistemology brought on by the Enlightenment, it is necessary to study the words and teachings of scholars who preceded it. Three of the most influential thinkers of the Middle Ages, Saint Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham, build upon the ideas of their predecessors and contemporaries to advance understanding of knowledge, truth and ultimate reality.

Augustine

Augustine was born in 354 in the North African village of Tagaste to a pagan father and a Christian mother.[1] Christian influence in his early life and admiration for the reason and rhetoric of Cicero lead Augustine to Manicheism during his education in Carthage, a group which claimed to reconcile the teachings of Christ with study of the natural world.[2] Augustine began to doubt Manicheism when it could provide no solace following the death of a close friend and his doubt only deepened as he continued his education and discovered studies of the natural world contrary to the understanding of the Manichees.[3] Upon moving to Milan, Augustine had Christianity presented to him by the bishop Ambrose and saw, for the first time, how reason could corroborate the tenets of faith. Afterwards, Augustine studied Scripture and Platonic

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[1] Roy W. Battenhouse, "The Life of Saint Augustine" in *A Companion to the Study of Saint Augustine*, edited by Roy W. Battenhouse, New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, 19.
[2] Ibid., 24.
[3] Ibid., 26-27

philosophy concurrently, incorporating Platonic concepts into his understanding of Christianity.[4] After a long battle between his worldly aspirations and spiritual goals, Augustine met Pontitianus, who introduced him to Christian monasticism and incited religious fervor in his heart with stories of heroes such as Saint Anthony. Augustine experienced what he reports as a miraculous conversion, thus beginning his new life as a Christian.[5]

In 391, Augustine traveled to Hippo, where the bishop Valerius recruited him as a priest and gave him permission to build a monastery nearby.[6] Valerius had Augustine named co-bishop of Hippo in 395, and when the former died later that year, Augustine became sole bishop of the see.[7] During his episcopacy, Augustine penned the two works which this paper surveys, *The Confessions* in 400[8] and *On The City of God* between 413-426.[9] In 430, the bishop passed away.[10]

Augustine saw truth as inseparable from God. God is all that is true and all that is true is God. To Augustine, the words "God" and "truth" bore the same meaning and he often used "truth" in reference to God or as an epithet for God.[11] If God and truth are one and the same, any path toward one must lead also to knowledge of the other, and falsehood is nothing less than heresy. Augustine's path to true knowledge and his path to knowledge of God were one and the same because any true knowledge is necessarily knowledge of God.

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[4] Battenhouse, 29-30.
[5] Ibid., 34-35.
[6] Ibid., 39.
[7] Ibid., 41.
[8] Eugène Portalie, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine*, translated by Ralph J. Bastian, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960, 39.
[9] Ibid., 44.
[10] Ibid., 35.
[11] "Thee, who art the Truth, O God". Augustine, *Confessions*, translated. by Vernon J. Bourke, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953, X, 23.

An experienced scholar and philosopher prior to his conversion to Christianity, Augustine was no stranger to the Platonic principles of reason. In fact, the Neoplatonic writings of Plotinus led Augustine to eventually accept Christianity and he continued to extol the virtues of reason throughout his life.[12] However, reason could not operate as a path to truth on its own. Augustine argued that reason is secondary to faith because "*nisi credideritis, non intelligetis,* unless you believe, you will not understand".[13] If all truth is God, then any path to truth must be bound by faith in that God. Reason unguided by faith is just as likely to produce misinformation as it is to produce knowledge.[14] Pursuing virtue must be a religious venture, as without the influence of faith one would turn away from truth and fall into vice.[15] Because all things derive their existence from God, all which exists must be fundamentally true.[16] Falsehood arises when misinterpretation results in a marred understanding of existent truth. Augustine illustrates this point by saying that bread is inoffensive to a healthy palate but objectionable to an unhealthy one, light is needed by healthy eyes, but painful to sore ones and the justice of God is loved by the faithful but despised by the wicked.[17] Deceit is not in the bread itself, not in the light and not in the will of God, as each of these are proven true through their existence. Falsity is found in the human interpretation of each, when personal biases are applied to objective ultimate. Reason is subject to these same rules, as it is not itself corrupted but becomes blinded or misled by false interpretation.[18] Just as a healthy palate is needed to enjoy bread, healthy eyes are needed to

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[12] Portalie, 12-13,

[13] Robert E. Cushman, "Faith and Reason" in *A Companion to the Study of Saint Augustine*, edited by Roy W. Battenhouse, New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, 287.

[14] Ibid., 291.

[15] Augustine, *The City of God,* translated by Gerald G. Walsh and Daniel J. Honan, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954, XIX, 25.

[16] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 15.

[17] Augustine, *Confessiosn*, VII, 16.

[18] Cushman, 305.

utilize light and righteousness is needed to appreciate divine justice, a proper foundation is necessary to achieve knowledge through reason. For Augustine, this foundation was faith.

Although faith is prior to reason, reason is far from irrelevant in Augustine's thought. It serves a crucial role as a path to knowledge, even religious knowledge. Augustine wrote that religious knowledge is derived from two sources, authority and reason.[19] Faith and reason are deeply intertwined, and knowledge can only be achieved through belief followed by rationality. God, or truth, is the source of reason, and even *ratio naturalis*, natural reason, the study of physical phenomena which directs its attention away from the transcendent to the wholly material, is a commendable way to pursue knowledge. Augustine interpreted reason to be the image of God in which humanity is created, and through reason humans fulfill their nature and interact with the divine.[20] All reason is derived from God, the truth, and application of reason guided by faith illuminates both the divine and material worlds.

To help his readers recognize truth, Augustine described the qualities which define it. In an ever-changing world, God alone, and therefore truth, is immutable. The only constant, the only ultimate, is truth.[21] Furthermore, only God is incorruptible.[22] While all else can be changed through interaction with other things, God is always the transmuter, never the transmuted. As the source and ruler of all things, God is eternal truth and the fixture upon which the truth of God's creations depends. God does not seek to deceive, nor does God seek to mask truth. Humans hide truth from themselves by lack of faith or actions of the will.[23] Anyone who chases truth "piously, chastely and diligently" is able to ascertain it.[24] Augustine believed truth is not

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[19] Portalie, 115.
[20] Cushman, 292.
[21] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 12.
[22] Augustine, *Confessions,* VII, 4.
[23] Augustine, *Confessions,* X, 26.
[24] Portalie, 107.

inherently hidden or beyond human reach. Ignorance blinds one to the truth right before them, and recognizing truth is not so much unveiling the nature of reality as it is finally seeing what had been there all along. Truth is not hidden from us, we hide ourselves from it.

Augustine understood truth to be God and God to be truth. No truth in the world can exist separate from God because ultimate legitimacy is derived from the heavenly creator. Like God, truth is immutable and incorruptible. Because truth and God exist as one, knowledge of the unchanging and eternal is knowledge of God, no matter the path taken to arrive at it. As reason is the quality of God that humans alone among God's creations share, it leads one to this knowledge of the immutable but must be pointed in the correct direction by faith to avoid corruption. An important caveat to Augustine's understanding of knowledge is that none can understand God as God understands Godself. God is ultimate truth, and as corruptible, mutable beings, humans are fundamentally incapable of fully comprehending the everlasting.[25] Augustine understood God to be the "sun of the soul", and like the sun, is not something which can be perceived directly, but illuminates all else and is the means by which the soul is able to know.[26] The only being of perfect knowledge is God, but that does not mean humans cannot attain truth, and Augustine sets out pathways through which one can open their eyes to the eternal.

Augustine acknowledges that knowledge can exist without faith, but it cannot be fully trusted if lacking the confirmation of belief. Christ, as eternal truth made flesh, must be the *principium*, origin, of knowledge because materialized yet uncorrupted truth provides humans something familiar to follow in their own pursuit.[27] Augustine then points toward introspection and consideration of memory as an avenue to understanding. Memory, he believed, holds the key

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[25] Augustine, *Confessions*, XIII, 16.
[26] Portalie, 111.
[27] Cushman, 295.

to understanding, because it judges truly sensory perceptions and files away the experience of those things to be recalled and experienced again later.[28] Sensory memory cannot be used to reach the ultimate truth of immaterial God, but contemplation of its wondrous power reveals that remembering is what allows knowledge.[29] Although God is not present in sensory memory, Augustine wrote that God dwells in memory because after learning of God, wherever he found truth he also found God.[30] Truth does not dwell in the sensory memory nor in emotional memory, as these things are transmutable, but must reside somewhere in memory because it can be recalled.[31] Because memory of experience serves as a path to true judgement and God resides somewhere in the memory, Augustine taught that looking inwards at one's own experience, memory and soul can lead to understanding of truth.[32]

Despite believing faith's primacy over reason, Augustine did not stand opposed to philosophy or other forms of learning. Faith is the foundation and guiding principle which makes fruitful rational activity possible and using faith as the starting point for rational thought redeems reason as a pursuit of knowledge.[33] During Augustine's time, science was not conceived of as its own study but as a subset of the wider philosophical method. Therefore, little distinction existed in one's attitude toward philosophy as a whole and study of the natural world, termed "natural philosophy".[34] Augustine's support of reason guided by faith as a path to truth extends to study of the material world guided by faith, as he saw the latter to be one of many ways to practice reason. He affirmed that knowledge of the physical world is true and both

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[28] Augustine, *Confessions,* X, 9.
[29] Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 17.
[30] Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 24.
[31] Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 26.
[32] Battenhouse, 31.
[33] David C. Lindberg, "Augustine and the Scientific Tradition" in *Saint Augustine the Bishop: A Book of Essays*, edited by Fannie LeMoine and Christopher Kleinheinz, New York: Garland Publishing, 1994, 195.
[34] Lindberg, 193.

nature and the rational mind which seeks to understand it are informed and orchestrated by God.[35] He does not question the ultimate veracity of natural philosophy, nor the value of its pursuit. Augustine's greatest qualm with natural philosophy is simply that it is not theology. He maintained that natural philosophy lacks theological value for many because the potential exists for one to become so blinded by their study of the natural world that they may forget the divine as the source of their knowledge. Augustine taught that theological merit is found in natural philosophy only when one "compare[s] that voice received from without by the sense, with Truth which is within".[36] Far from degrading physical learning, Augustine sees it as subject to the same rules as all other philosophy: as long as natural reason is guided by the principles of faith and belief, it serves as a path to truth. Augustine's belief that God's creations are true because of their connection to the ultimate truth of the creator reinforce that the study of material existence can offer knowledge of God when used carefully. He may not have seen science as a worthwhile pursuit of its own accord, but Augustine thought it to be a viable source of knowledge in conjunction with religion, thus helping to ensure its preservation.[37]

Augustine identified truth as the ultimate, the immutable and God Godself. The journey to truth needed to begin with faith, relying upon the concept *credo ut intelligam,* I believe so that I may understand, as the guiding principle.[38] From this starting point, the path of knowledge could take countless forms ranging from theological inquiry to quantitative study, but every methodology must utilize reflection upon memory and personal experience while anchored by faith. Because Augustine equated God with truth, he saw the divine in everything true. When one accepted by faith the truth of God, that truth remained engrained in one's memory and

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[35] Cushman, 293.
[36] Ibid., 293-294.
[37] Lindberg, 196.
[38] Cushman, 300.

allowed for reflection upon other memories, whose truth likewise captured in memory then rang

with divine presence.

Thomas Aquinas

The great philosopher and theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas was born in late 1224 or

1225 in the Italian town of Roccasecca.[39] At the age of five, he began his education at the abbey

in Montecassino, where he spent the next nine years of his life learning the monastic way,

although it is unknown if he took monastic vows during this time.[40] In 1239, Thomas enrolled at

the university in Naples and during his years at the university, he joined the Dominican Order, a

group which advocated for the theological training of friars in keeping with the teaching of St.

Dominic. It was also during this time that Thomas first encountered the work of Aristotle whose

teachings had only recently been translated from the original Greek and disseminated throughout

European schools. The influx of Aristotelian philosophy challenged the entrenched Platonic

mold and the ancient, yet newly reintroduced works of Aristotle would have great influence on

Thomas's thinking and secular European education as a whole.[41]

Between 1245-1248, Thomas met and began to study under his mentor, the Aristotelian

commentator Albert the Great. Albert founded a school of theology in Cologne, where he took

Thomas under his wing as pupil, and later, assistant.[42] Thomas was a student at the University of

Paris from 1252-1256, where he became embroiled in the controversy over the teaching of

Aristotle in Catholic institutions. It was here that he also earned his Master of Theology and

following his graduation he accepted a three-year term as a chair of theology for the Dominican

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[39] Jan A. Aertsen, "Aquinas's Philosophy in its Historical Setting" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* edited by Norman Kretzmann & Eleonore Stump, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 12.
[40] Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004, 7.
[41] Ibid., 10.
[42] Ibid., 13.

order in Paris.[43] After departing Paris, Thomas returned to Italy and spent a decade traveling,

teaching and writing on the peninsula. In 1269, he was appointed for the second time as a

Dominican chair in Paris, where he defended the compatibility of Aristotle's philosophy and

Christianity during the ongoing controversy.[44] Thomas returned to Naples when his term ended

in 1272, and he passed away in 1274 after sustaining an injury while traveling to the council at

Lyon.[45]

      To understand Thomas's approach to knowledge and truth, it is necessary to first

understand his method of inquiry. Thomas viewed rationality as a uniquely human trait, the

source for which must be the soul. Rational capacity is what sets humans apart from all other

living creatures.[46] As a distinctively human activity, rational intellection ties the corporeal human

body to the immaterial plane on which thought occurs.[47] The defining characteristic of intellect

gives humanity its purpose, and Aquinas wrote that the proper action of the human being is

cognition.[48] Through cognition, humans perform the one operation they alone among living

creatures are capable of, proving cognition to be the most human effort possible. Thomas based

his approach to truth upon the principles of reason, which he saw as the tool mankind is given to

understand reality. He relied upon rational thinking to construct his noetic[49], and as will become

clear in the following paragraphs, his conception of truth and reality begin with a rational

construction of the material world.

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[43] McInerny, 14-15.
[44] Ibid., 20.
[45] Ibid., 25.
[46] Norman Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, edited by Norman Kretzmann & Eleanore Stump, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 131.
[47] Ibid., 136.
[48] Ibid., 137.
[49] A branch of metaphysics interested in the mind and intellect.

Central to Thomas's understanding of knowledge is that we acknowledge the existence of knowledge, and rather than seeking to construct a universe to verify our knowledge against, we should instead ask how the universe we know must be made to explain how we know it.[50] In other words, reality exists separate from human intellect and by seeking to understand reality we also find the path to understanding knowledge of it. Under this tenet, Thomas separated the beings of the world so that through knowledge of how reality is constructed, we may understand how knowledge is created. He drew distinction between natural beings, those which exist outside of human interference such as wood and stone, and artificial beings, which are fashioned by humans out of natural beings. For example, the artificial being of a chair is fashioned from the natural being wood, but if that chair were to collapse, it would cease being a chair and return to its natural state as wood.[51]

Thomas then looked at natural beings and separated them into knowing and unknowing beings. Some beings are capable of knowing other beings, while others cannot possess knowledge of anything but themselves. Knowing beings take into themselves awareness of the thing known and in doing so change themselves. When one gains knowledge of another, it adds in addition to itself the understanding of something else, an understanding which was not present in its original being.[52] A rock lacks the sensory ability to become aware of its surroundings and the intellectual ability to conceive of anything else; if it can be said to know anything, it knows only itself, for that is all that could ever exist within it. An animal, however, upon encountering that rock, takes into itself some idea of the rock, so that it may recognize it and step over it. Prior to the animal's encounter with the rock the animal had no knowledge of it, but following the

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[50] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas,* New York: Random House, 1956, 225.
[51] Ibid., 224.
[52] Ibid., 224-225.

encounter an understanding of the rock exists within the animal so that it may interact with it and remains so that it may interact with the rock in the future. In knowing the rock, the animal enters into a new state of being defined by its understanding of not only itself, but another as well. Therefore, the largest delineation between natural beings are those which are never anything but themselves and those which are able to change themselves to possess the being of another.[53] To know something is for the knower to assimilate itself to the thing being known.[54]

The argument is complicated by the simple observation that upon becoming known, an object does not in any way materially change, nor does the subject, upon knowing the object, transform its material characteristics. If knowing is for the object to enter into the subject, how does the subject maintain its own being without becoming the object entirely? The subject must take into itself the object intellectually, or, as a process which is wholly immaterial, spiritually. But this raises another concern, as if the object is an unknowing being with nothing but material existence, it should follow that the object cannot connect on a purely intellectual level. For an unknowing being to be assimilated into a subject, there must exist an intermediary aspect between the object's form and the subject's cognition, which Aquinas termed *species*.[55]

What enters into the subject's mind can be nothing less than the object itself, as a separate representation would cause the subject to lose sight of the object known and focus only on the mental representation of it. It cannot be an entity separate from the object which becomes present in the knower, but the object itself made intelligible.[56] When the form, the essence of the sensible subject, manifests intelligibly in the consciousness of the knower, we see the first step in establishing knowledge. The form, despite its presence in the mind, is not wholly of the mind

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[53] Gilson, 225.
[54] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae*, translated by Robert W. Mulligan, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994, QI AI.
[55] Gilson, 227.
[56] John Milbank & Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, London: Routledge, 2001, 9.

because its object exists materially and the two are not separate. Cognition itself must not be knowledge, as Thomas attested it is possible to have false cognition, so if the intellectual form of the object constitutes the true being of that object, there must be a final step of knowledge acclimation where error can emerge.[57] Within the mind, a word or concept is ascribed to the intelligible form and, as a construct of the mind, this substitutional representation is not inherently accurate.[58] An object enters into the mind as intelligible form which then becomes associated with a purely intellectual substitute of the object fashioned by the knower. The substitute then is responsible for intellectual truth or falsehood.

It is necessary to digress momentarily to a discussion on Thomas's understanding of the root of truth. Thomas saw the subject of metaphysical inquiry to be "being as being", accepting in this notion that things are proven real by virtue of their existence.[59] As the creative principle, God is the cause of all being and, while not the subject of metaphysics, is studied tangentially through it by means of studying created objects all of which are derived from God as the source. Study of being in general does not require faith as it asks not for belief in some divine revelation but in the simple acknowledgment of a creative force which, acting within the Christian framework, Thomas called "God".[60] All beings, although distinct in themselves, share with every other being the state of existence. When a being holds a trait which is found complete in a different source, that being is participating in the trait rather than becoming identical with the trait. Each being which holds part of this trait participates in the perfection of the trait.[61] Every

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[57] Scott Macdonald, "Theory of Knowledge", in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, edited by Norman Kretzmann & Eleonore Stump, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 163.
[58] Gilson. 229.
[59] John F. Wippel, "Metaphysics", in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas,* edited by Norman Kretzmann & Eleonore Stump, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 85.
[60] Ibid., 86.
[61] Wippel, 93.

being, because of its being, participates in existence itself.[62] Aquinas understood pure existence to be God.[63]

God is the pure representation of existence, the source of all things created and the first truth which provides every existent being its fidelity. It is God's essence to know everything and, checked against God's creative principle, all created things are found to be true.[64] Being is an operation of the divine intellect, the primary truth, and intrinsic truth is found in the entity of every being by its participation in the divine intellect.[65] There can be no false existence, as everything which exists does so under the auspices of divine intellect and through conformity to being itself can be said to have truth.[66] Therefore, every knowing being possess true knowledge of itself.

For one being to have true knowledge of another, some foundation of truth must exist for the subject to verify or invalidate its conception against. Justification for true knowledge is derived from the foundational truth of divine intellect, allowing inferential conclusions about beings to have some basis in the absolute.[67] Because every being is true in its own existence relating to the divine intellect, that being's existence in the world must true. True knowledge, then, is found in conceptions of the mind which conform to the truth of the thing known.[68] Truth is nothing more than agreement between the subject's conception of the object and the object's form.

For the term "truth" to hold any meaning, there need be distinction between intellect and its object. If two separate entities do not exist between the knower and thing known, the knower

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[62] Ibid., 94.
[63] Ibid., 96.
[64] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae,* Q1, A5.
[65] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae,* Q1, A4.
[66] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritrae,* Q1, A10.
[67] Macdonald, 168.
[68] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae*, Q1, A1.

has necessarily true knowledge of the thing known since it is simply knowing a distinct aspect of itself. Truth is possible only in intellect's judgement of that which exists outside of it.[69] Because created things hold the quality "true", the foundation against which conception need be validated is the existence of the object.[70] According to Thomistic theory of knowledge, reality must be objective and uninfluenced by human intellect.[71] Truth is not achieved when the object changes itself to match the intellect, but when the intellect reaches an accurate understanding of how that object exists in reality. To Thomas, being implied truth and truth implied being.[72] Within his system, knowledge constitutes accurate descriptions of "fundamental existential experience" available to all created beings.[73]

Seeing all created beings as true but understanding truth to exist as a function of the intellect against reality, Thomas's theory of knowledge requires that truth be found both in the intellect and the senses. The senses apprehend things as they really are, but sense lacks the capacity to understand itself. Sense can perceive truth but does not know its own truth. Judgement occurs in the intellect and by action of the intellect's reflection upon itself and the senses, truth can be elucidated. Truth exists in sense and intellect in different ways; sense recognizes the truth of all created beings and intellect properly judges objects of sense as true or untrue.[74]

Thomas Aquinas's understanding of how human beings ascertain truth can be summarized as thus. A human encounters an object, the perfect form of which is apprehended by the intellect and processed. The intellect creates from that form a concept, which exists only in

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[69] Gilson, 231.
[70] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae,* Q1, A4.
[71] Gilson, 230.
[72] Ibid., 232.
[73] Ibid., 233.
[74] St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritae*, Q1, A4

the mind and which the human holds indefinitely. Through judgement, the intellect adjusts and refines its concept until it settles upon one it understands to be accurate. This concept may still be invalid, however, as truth is found only when the concept conforms to the inherent truth of the object. Thomas understands knowledge to be not only the form of an object coming to exist in the mind, but the mind making for itself a perfect but purely intellectual signification for that form.

The concept of Thomistic truth is predicated upon belief in sensible, objective reality existing outside the realm of intellection. Through an action of the mind, the sensible is made intelligible and able to be interacted with and manipulated on an intellectual level.[75] Thomas revealed his theory of knowledge as a metaphysical endeavor, but this *scientia divina*, divine science, does not invalidate or overpower other theoretical sciences. Metaphysics is the study of being as being and Thomistic knowledge theory operates within the confines of metaphysics, but the discipline itself exists in tandem with natural philosophy.[76] In addition to explaining the relation between created beings and the creative force (God), Thomas metaphysically explained how knowledge of created beings comes to be. This is a mission distinct from that of natural philosophy, which looks to explain being subject to change and motion.[77] There exists no fundamental conflict between the study of interactions between beings and the study of being itself. Metaphysics asks its questions on a plane other than that upon which natural philosophy asks its questions, therefore a system of the former does not necessarily interfere with one of the latter, and the same individual can hold both a metaphysical and scientific understanding of the world, finding knowledge through each.

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[75] Gilson, 208.
[76] Wippel, 85.
[77] Ibid., 85.

William of Ockham

Unfortunately, little biographical information on William of Ockham exists and modern scholars must rely upon what details of his life can be gleaned from his writings. Likely born around 1285 in the village of Ockham southwest of London, he joined the Franciscan Order at a young age, began his education and was ordained subdeacon at the church of St. Mary, Southwark in 1306.[78] Around 1309, Ockham began studying theology at Oxford University and commented on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* between 1317-1319, earning him his degree of Bachelor of the *Sentences*. After earning his Master of Theology, Ockham was sent to the Franciscan house of studies in London, where he penned two of his major works, *Summa logicae* and *Quodlibeta*. In July of 1324, Pope John XXII called Ockham to Avignon to face charges of heresy, where he waited for four years as his case was considered. Although some of his writings were censured, none of his doctrines in question were formally condemned. However, Ockham was caught up in the apostolic poverty controversy[79] which arose during the time he was in Avignon, and he, along with several other Franciscans, fled Avignon to find protection under the German Emperor Louis of Bavaria. Ockham spent the last twenty years of his life living in Munich and never reconciled with the Church.[80]

Like many logicians before him, Ockham drew upon and developed theories of signification and supposition to inform his understanding of truth, knowledge and reality. These

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[78] Armand Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in the Light of Its Principles*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999, 1-2.

[79] Pope John XXII believed that Christ owned no individual personal property, but that he shared common possessions with his apostles, making it apostolic tradition to possess communal property among clergy. Some Franciscans, including William of Ockham and Michael of Cesena, opposed the Pope's declaration and sought a return to absolute poverty.

[80] Ibid., 2-3.

theories played a uniquely crucial role in Ockham's epistemology, as he eschews the classical

definition of truth representing *adaequatio rei et intellectus,* equality of things and the intellect.

Ockham believed the terms "truth" and "falsehood" to apply only to written, spoken and mental

propositions, which are expounded upon through supposition and which in turn relies upon

signification.[81] Theories of signification look to explain how signs, which Ockham defines

broadly as anything which, when apprehended, makes something other than itself of which

previous knowledge exists, known.[82] Cognition of the sign causes a second, "recordative

cognition" of the signified, in which previously obtained cognition of the signified is retrieved

from memory and brought into active awareness.[83] For example, smoke serves as a sign for fire,

as apprehension of it causes immediate cognition in the mind of the knower of fire. If, however,

an observer of smoke had no previous knowledge of fire, smoke itself would not be able to give

primary knowledge of fire and the observer would need to establish the link between the two via

inference or deduction.[84] Ockham establishes that a simple, incomplex and proper sign[85] is

incapable of providing primary knowledge of the simple, incomplex and proper term it

signifies.[86]

     While by its broad definition, sign can be used in reference to anything which makes

known another, the narrow definition of sign deals only with those signs composing language,

termed "language-signs" by Boehner.[87] Language-signs are found in the three types of language

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[81] Philotheus Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Truth" in *Collected Articles on Ockham* edited by Eligius M. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1958, 200.
[82] Philotheus Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Signification" in *Collected Articles on Ockham* edited by Eligius M. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1958, 202.
[83] Ibid., 203
[84] Ibid., 204-205.
[85] In reference to signs, Boehner defines the terms "simple" as "not composed of more than one notion", "incomplex" as "not a proposition" and "proper" as "not a notion common to several things" (ibid., 205). Propositions and universals will be treated with in the successive discussion on supposition.
[86] Ibid., 208.
[87] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Signification", 209.

described by Ockham, written, spoken and mental, but present and function differently in each. Written language is constructed of terms materially inscribed and apprehended by visual sensation while spoken language consists of uttered terms apprehended by auditory sensation. The symbol or symbols composing written terms and the vocal utterances composing spoken terms are human convention, fashioned by people and applied to the things they mean to signify without any natural link between the symbols or utterances and the object itself. Thus, these types of language are called conventional. Mental language-signs, also called concepts, derive their meaning not from human association but from direct cognition of the object itself. Concepts reflect the attributes of their object, so are called natural signs.[88]

Ockham's treatment of the relationship between natural signs, conventional signs and the object signified bring about his first major epistemological innovation. Prior to the writings of Duns Scotus, general academic opinion was consistent with that of Boethius, maintaining that conventional signs signify concepts first and objects themselves indirectly. Aquinas advanced this position with his argument that general words signify a nature abstracted from individual things rather than individuals themselves.[89] Scotus opposed his predecessors and laid the groundwork for Ockham by arguing that general words first signify something real and distinct from the concept and object, which he calls its essence. To exemplify the differences in each position, consider what is first signified by the word "human" in each system. Boethius would say that "human" signifies first the concept of human, Aquinas, that it signifies first the universally shared characteristics of all humans which combine to form the concept and Scotus, that it signifies first the essence of "human" which is its own discrete reality.

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[88] Maurer, 15.
[89] Ibid., 16.

Like that of Scotus, Ockham's opinion is that words are primarily signs of real things rather than concepts. However, he eschews the understanding Aquinas and Scotus share of general words signifying a collection of shared characteristics in favor of general words signifying each individual belonging to that group.[90] Forgoing previous epistemological convention, Ockham rejects the notion of real universals such as Aquinas's *species* or Scotus's essence, seeing reality as a collection of individual beings who are defined by their individuality.[91] If individuals can be said to have an essence or nature, it is, Ockham believes, the reality of the individual.[92] Therefore, Ockham supports the notion that the term "human" properly signifies each and every individual who belongs to the category human. His interpretation raises the criticism that without fundamental shared characteristics, it should be impossible to categorize any individual as human or non-human. Ockham assuages this contention through his theory of supposition, which will be discussed now.

Ockham provides no formal definition for supposition, indicating only that it is a property of terms only applicable when those terms are used in a proposition.[93] Propositions are constructed of terms, the simplest of which consist of a subject term, predicate term and copula such as the phrase "the dog is black".[94] The proposal here is that this individual dog is a thing which has blackness. The term "black" in this phrase is understood to refer back to the dog, so in this proposition "black" stands or supposes for this particular dog. According to Boehner, we can understand supposition to be "the use of a language-sign either as subject or as predicate and in

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[90] Maurer, 17.

[91] Philotheus Boehner, "The Realistic Conceptualism of William of Ockham" in *Collected Articles on Ockham* edited by Eligius M. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1958, 158.

[92] Maurer, 9.

[93] Philotheus Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth" in *Collected Articles on Ockham* edited by Eligius M. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1958, 234.

[94] Maurer, 14.

reference to each other within a proposition".[95] Ockham states that propositions can properly receive the labels of true or false; true propositions contain subject and predicate terms which stand for the same thing and false propositions lack this property.[96] In our example above, because subject "the dog" and predicate "black" both refer back to the same dog with the property of blackness, this proposition can be called true. Because language is the primary mode of human thought and communication and propositions are the grammatical tools used to convey statements of fact or falsehood, supposition is the mechanism responsible for human judgement of truth.

To properly discern relationships between terms, it is necessary to spend a moment discussing terms themselves. Terms are either categorematic or syncategorematic. Categorematic terms have definite meaning while syncategorematic terms have meaning in so far as they modify categorematic terms.[97] The categorematic terms "human" and "animal" hold meaning by themselves, but the syncategorematic terms "every" and "no" must accompany categorematic terms to hold meaning, as in "every human" or "no animal". Categorematic terms are further grouped in concrete and abstract terms, which share the same beginning but hold different endings, usually because most concrete terms are adjectival while most abstract terms are nouns.[98] For example, "human" is a concrete term while "humanity" is an abstract term

Ockham delineated three fundamental types of supposition, which he called personal, simple and material.[99] Personal supposition is found when a term in a proposition supposes for

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[95] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth", 236.
[96] William of Ockham, *Summa totius logicae,* II, c. ii in *Philosophical Writings* edited and translated by Philotheus Boehner, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1990, 76.
[97] Maurer, 17.
[98] Ibid., 18.
[99] Calvin G. Normore, "Some Aspects of Ockham's Logic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* edited by Paul Vincent Spade, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 35.

something it signifies and has significative function.[100] The phrase "Socrates is a person" is an

example of personal supposition, because "person" properly signifies Socrates (and, in

Ockham's system, equally signifies all other individual people).[101] When a term is used in a

non-significative function to stand for something it does not signify, either simple or material

supposition occurs. A term has simple supposition when it nonsignificatively stands for the type

of concept it is and material supposition when it nonsignificatively stands for the type of non-

mental language-sign it is.[102] "Human" in the phrase "human is a species" has simple

supposition, as it stands not for one or more individual humans but for the mental concept of

"human".[103] The term "human" here has nonsignificative function because if one of its

significates, say, "Socrates", were to be substituted, the resulting phrase "Socrates is a species"

would be false. Meanwhile, "human" in the phrase "human is a noun" has material supposition

because it stands only for its own written or spoken language-sign.[104] Taking it significatively

would result in a phrase such as "Socrates is a noun", which would be true only if the term

"human" signified the language-sign applied to the physical person of Socrates rather than

signifying the man himself.

  With this understanding of signification and supposition, we may finally enter into a

discussion concerning their relation to truth and falsehood. Through these theories, Ockham

studied a different kind of truth from the ontological and metaphysical truth pursued by Aquinas

and Augustine, although as we will see later, Ockham did address this other form of truth. Here,

we examine the meanings of the terms "true" and "false", so that we know what they reference,

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[100] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth", 237.
[101] Maurer, 27-28.
[102] Ernest A. Moody, *The Logic of William of Ockham*, New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965, 41.
[103] Maurer, 29.
[104] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth", 239.

where they apply and what is connoted in our usage of the terms. Both terms bear meaning in reference to other propositions, also called intentions, so belong to a class of terms Ockham called "second intentions".[105] As earlier mentioned, truth in reference to propositions is had when both subject and predicate of the proposition suppose for the same thing, while falsehood is had when the two suppose for different things. The phrase "Socrates is human" can accurately be called true, and so stands for itself. However, the proposition "Socrates is human, is true" must be false in personal supposition because the true proposition "Socrates is human" stands for a state of affairs, the humanity of Socrates. The proposition "the humanity of Socrates is true" is false in personal supposition, as states of affairs are not themselves propositions and second intention terms apply only to other propositions.[106] For Ockham, the terms "true" and "false" apply only to statements about states of affairs, never to states of affairs themselves. If the proposition "Socrates is human" is taken as a term with simple supposition in the proposition "Socrates is human, is true", the latter proposition is true, for the former no longer stands for the humanity of Socrates it signifies, but nonsignificatively for the mental concept of a true proposition. If the proposition "Socrates is human" were to be assigned the name "A" so that "A" signifies it, the proposition "A is true" would be true when "A" has personal supposition because the proposition properly signified by that sign is true.[107]

Returning now to our discussion of the second intention terms "true" and "false", we may see the meanings these terms hold in various logical contexts. The first-level proposition "Socrates is human" concerns reality and can be deemed true if it accurately reflects a state of affairs present in the world. The second-level proposition "Socrates is human, is true" deals with

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[105] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth", 254.
[106] Ibid., 255.
[107] Ibid., 256.

another proposition and can be called true only if the proposition it concerns is not taken in its significative sense. Finally, the third-level proposition "A is true" when "A" stands for "Socrates is human" can be called true when "A" is taken significatively because "A" signifies only the true proposition "Socrates is human", not the state of affairs "the humanity of Socrates" signified by "Socrates is human".[108]

Ockham's theory of supposition displays that the term "true" can be applied to propositions about the material world when the subject and predicate of the proposition signify the same thing and that truth and falsehood of propositions about propositions can be ascertained through judicious understanding of the three types of signification. The logical argument made by Ockham provides us with the terminology and knowledge to know what is meant by the terms "true" and "false" as they function within language as a means of communicating ideas. But what about propositions which concern not material reality but metaphysical, theological or immaterial realities? Propositions concerning such topics cannot be affirmed or denied based on some perceivable state of affairs. Ockham conceived of two forms of knowledge, the intuitive, which is had by intellectually apprehending a present object through the five senses, and abstractive, which is had through cognition of an object even if it is neither present nor sensible.[109]

Ockham viewed thought to be generally determined by reality through intuitive knowledge. Here, the object is an active force, making itself known to the intellect, while the intellect changes by its knowing of the object.[110] Intuitive thought forms univocally with the

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[108] Boehner, "Ockham's Theory of Supposition and the Notion of Truth", 257.
[109] Elizabeth Karger, "Ockham's Misunderstood Theory of Intuitive and Abstractive Cognition" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* edited by Paul Vincent Spade, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 207.
[110] Boehner, "The Realistic Conceptualism of William of Ockham", 159.

object so that intuitive knowledge presents in conformity with the reality of the object.[111]

Universal concepts which are drawn from intuitive knowledge of individuals exist only as

concepts in the mind, similar to but not perfectly reflective of the myriad unique subjects

informing them.[112] Similarity between the individuals which inform a universal is had by virtue

of the individuals themselves rather than by an independent relational quality.[113] Ockham's

metaphysics hold the key to his notion of reality as radically individual, as if the relational

quality defining universals were to be independent of its holders, God, being necessarily

omnipotent, would be able to create a real and perfect manifestation of this quality. As the

primary cause, God holds the power to create all which is contingent upon other creations

independent of other beings. If universals were *res*, God would be able to create, say, two beings

with nothing in common yet who still shared a relational quality, or a physical being whose

essence is no more than the quality "whiteness".[114] Such manifestations lie outside the abilities

of even an omnipotent God so cannot belong to reality. Thus, intuitive cognition is direct

knowledge of present, real individuals.

Abstractive knowledge can be caused by an object directly or by recalling earlier intuitive

cognition of the object. Abstractive and intuitive knowledge share the same object, differing

primarily in their persistence once their object is no longer present.[115] Intuitive knowledge exists

only in the presence of the object but is a perfectly accurate representation of the object,

catalyzing evident assent to the mental sentence applied by the intellect to the object.[116]

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[111] Ibid., 161.

[112] Boehner, "The Realistic Conceptualism of William of Ockham", 162.

[113] Maurer, 48.

[114] Ibid., 49-50.

[115] Boehner, "The Realistic Conceptualism of William of Ockham", 159.

[116] The three conditions necessary for evident assent are: 1) truth of the mental sentence assented to, 2) by its present cognitive acts, the intellect has no choice but to assent to the mental sentence, and 3) any other intellect undergoing the same cognitive acts would also have to assent to the mental sentence (Karger, 208).

Abstractive knowledge can be had without the material presence of the object, but lacks the

capacity to engender evident assent.[117] It abstracts from an existent object and is therefore

vulnerable to inaccurate representation of that object.[118] For example, I may cognize intuitively

a dog, and through my sensible knowledge form true mental propositions as to its size, color and

perhaps even breed, all of which are immediately confirmed through evident assent. However, if

later that afternoon I reflect upon my earlier intuitive knowledge, sparking abstractive cognition

of the dog, I cannot check the mental propositions I propose against the being of the dog. My

mental image of the dog may suggest it to be larger than its actual size, possess a lighter coat, or

to be a Yellow Labrador when it in fact is a Golden Retriever. Each faulty quality sparks false

mental propositions about the dog. Or, my abstractive knowledge of the dog may reflect it

without error, but without further intuitive cognition of the dog I am unable to confidently

confirm my abstractions. Such thinking leads to the conclusion that truth can be dependably

predicated only about propositions drawn from intuitive cognition.

Intuitive knowledge is had in the present tense through intellection of a sensible object,

but Ockham acknowledged a distinction between abstractive knowledge of non-existents and

abstractive knowledge concerning past existence. The latter he called imperfect intuitive

knowledge, in opposition to the perfect intuitive knowledge which exists in the present. The

example given earlier of reflecting upon a dog when it is no longer present illustrates the

imperfection of this subtype of abstractive knowledge.[119] Considered by Ockham to be distinct

entities in the mind, intuitive knowledge occurs when a present object acts upon the mind in such

a way that the mind then comes to know it. It must then be subject to an inverse of the same

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[117]Karger, 210.

[118] Philotheus Boehner, "The Notitia Intuitiva of Non-existents according to William Ockham" in *Collected Articles on Ockham* edited by Eligius M. Buytaert, St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1958, 271.

[119] Ibid., 271.

logic used to argue against universals; because intuitive knowledge is an independent being

caused in the mind by another created being, an omnipotent God is able to cause intuitive

knowledge without the real presence of its object.[120] Boehner is careful to point out that, despite

Ockham's tendency to integrate philosophy into theology and vice-versa, the issue raised by this

understanding of intuitive knowledge is theological in nature and does not concern mundane

cases but only those intuitive cognitions of non-existents caused directly by God.[121]

Ockham reasoned that any naturally occurring absolute thing can exist through the divine

power without some other naturally occurring absolute thing so that God may cause sensitive or

intellective[122] intuitive knowledge directly rather than mediately through a causal chain.[123] In

support of this conclusion, Ockham defaulted to the article of faith that by God's omnipotence,

God is capable of all which does not contain contradiction. To prove that no contradiction exists

in allowing for intuitive cognition without an object, Ockham pointed to God's omniscience,

arguing that God has perfect, and thereby intuitive, knowledge of every existent and non-existent

thing. After establishing intuitive knowledge of non-existents to be possible in absolute terms,

Ockham conceded that humans are incapable of achieving this knowledge through any natural

process, as human intuitive knowledge is drawn from contingent facts while God's is not.[124]

Through grace, however, God may bestow upon us that which we could not achieve without it,

including God's own knowledge.[125]

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[120] Boehner, "The Notitia Intuitiva of Non-existents according to William Ockham", 275.
[121] Ibid., 276.
[122] Although the general definition of intuitive knowledge provided earlier refers only to knowledge acquired of a sensibly present object, Ockham does allow for intuitive knowledge of real immaterials such as our own emotions or thoughts, which, when present, are apprehended by the inner sense aware of them rather than the five outer senses (ibid., 270).
[123] Ibid., 277.
[124] Ibid., 278-279.
[125] Ibid., 280.

God's ability to bestow intuitive knowledge of non-existents seems to contradict the infallibility of intuitive knowledge, a quality which Ockham wholly affirmed. His steadfast conviction was that intuition cannot lead the mind to error, that intuition provides perfectly accurate knowledge of its object.[126] Intuitive cognition causes nothing less than true knowledge of the object, whether that knowledge be of a necessary or contingent truth of the object.[127] To maintain both the omnipotence of God and the infallibility of intuition, both of which he accepted to be necessary, Ockham concluded that intuitive knowledge of non-existents must only be able to lead the intellect to judge that object as non-existent. Evident assent to an existential proposition must therefore require both intuitive knowledge of the object and existence of the object.[128]

This conclusion raises another apparent contradiction. Would an omnipotent God not be able to produce cognition of an object not present, but which appears to be? In other words, can God not cause cognition of a non-existent which the intellect understands to be real? There appears to be no contradiction limiting God's ability to do so, as Ockham affirmed God through divine omnipotence may cause directly anything which would God could cause indirectly. Such a cognition could not be intuitive, as it concerns not existence but presence, and could not be abstractive because abstractive cognition cannot provide knowledge of presence or non-presence. Ockham pointed out the contradiction inherent in this objection, as the evident assent required to affirm reality cannot be had without the true existence of the object.[129] There still, however, remains the threat to God's omnipotence posed by implying God cannot catalyze false conclusions of reality, something which also contradicts human experiential knowledge that

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[126] Maurer, 486.
[127] Karger, 215-216.
[128] Boehner, "The Notitia Intuitiva of Non-existents according to William Ockham", 280.
[129] Ibid., 281.

things not present may appear to be viz. hallucinations. This, Ockham said, is well within God's

capacity, but that it cannot be done through intuitive cognition as intuitive cognition can lead

only to the conclusion of existence when the object exists or of non-existence when the object

does not. Through abstractive cognition, God can engender false belief which convinces the

intellect a non-existent is real.[130] God is incapable of deceiving the intellect through intuitive

cognition, to do so would be contradictory, but may cause false assent to an abstractive

cognition, leading the intellect to conclude its present existence.[131]

Some scholars object to Boehner's interpretation of Ockham regarding intuitive and

abstractive cognition, disagreeing with the infallibility of intuitive cognition Boehner attributes

to Ockham. Elizabeth Karger quotes Ockham that "nothing which leads the intellect into error

should be posited in the intellect", supporting a conclusion, quite contrary to Boehner's, that

Ockham did not think any cognition, whether abstractive or intuitive, could be deceptive by

nature.[132] Karger supports a reading of Ockham which posits abstractive cognitions as able to

cause evident assent to necessary truths of the apprehended object, with intuitive cognition able

to provide present-tense contingent truths of the object. Under this reading, the two forms of

cognition are equally able to provide truth of the same object in different circumstances. False

judgement of a cognition, then, is not had on account of that cognition's deceptive nature but

occurs due to peculiar circumstances corrupting the intellect's judgement of the object.[133]

Pointing to sensory illusions, Karger shows certain cases of false intuitive knowledge accepted

by Ockham to be within her understanding of falsehood by circumstance. Defined by Ockham to

be erroneous judgements of sensible objects attaching to those objects false contingent

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[130] Boehner, "The Notitia Intuitiva of Non-existents according to William Ockham", 282.
[131] Ibid., 285.
[132] Karger, 215-216.
[133] Karger, 216.

properties, sensory illusions occur in the present and are of external objects, and are therefore apprehended through intuitive cognition.[134]

Objects seen in a mirror appear, to the viewer, to lie behind the mirror when they are really located before it. To the sensible intellect, the object's location in space seems to be somewhere it is not, causing intuitive knowledge which contradicts reality. An intellect knowing of mirrors would judge that the condition of reflection alters the sensible contingent properties of the object so that it could conclude the object's true location despite the sensory illusion. Although the intellect may reach the correct conclusion, intuitive cognition occurs separately from and prior to rational consideration of the object, and the intuitive knowledge of the reflected object is assuredly false.[135] In the case of sensory illusion, intuitive cognition alone is insufficient to provide true knowledge of the object's contingent properties and must be tempered by the rational mind. Karger concludes that Ockham gives no privileged position to intuitive knowledge, allowing for truth to be evidentially derived and falsehood to stem from both intuitive and abstractive cognition.[136]

In light of Karger's contribution, it seems most constructive and in-line with Ockham to think of intuitive cognition not as inherently prone to failure but as infallible when not accompanied by the peculiar conditions which cause sensory illusion. However, it still remains that Ockham understood evident assent of existence only able to be drawn from an object really present, as the false intuitive cognition of sensory illusions requires the presence of a real object to inspire faulty contingencies. Boehner's understanding of Ockham's doctrine on intuitive cognition of non-existents and his reasoning of how God may cause false belief of existence

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[134] Ibid., 219.
[135] Karger, 220.
[136] Ibid., 221.

withstand the addition of Karger's conclusion without contradiction. Ockham's notion of intuitive and abstractive cognition regarding non-existents and false affirmation of existence can be summarized as follows. God is able to cause intuitive cognition of a non-existent in the intellect, but the object must be evidently unreal, otherwise the cognition could not be intuitive. Intuitive cognition is infallible barring the presence of peculiar circumstances, in which case rational judgement along with knowledge of the circumstances can result in understanding of the object's contingent truths. God may interfere with the natural process of intuitive cognition, causing the same sensory distortions as would arise from the presence of peculiar circumstances, given that the object is initially present. Through abstractive cognition, God may cause the intellect to affirm belief in the existence of a non-existent object, as assent to an abstractive existential proposition does not require presence of the object.

Human acquisition of knowledge of the material world occurs by intuitive cognition of individuals, which can be trusted as accurate except in the unique cases it is distorted by circumstantial factors. A proposition concerning the material world, whether mental, written or spoken, qualifies as true when the terms composing it properly suppose for the same individual, while a proposition about another proposition is true when the terms of the proposition suppose for the same thing without simply establishing a state of affairs. Intuitive cognition is able to evidently confirm whether an object belongs to reality and is thus able to be signified in a true proposition. In cases where intuitive cognition is impossible, a proposition concerning present contingencies cannot be declared true, but abstractive cognition may be used to propose necessary truths.

Ockham's philosophy of truth and knowledge makes concurrent use of reason and faith. Despite acknowledging distinctions between theology and philosophy, Ockham had no qualms

drawing upon one in discussing the other, for example using the revealed truth of divine omnipotence to argue against real universals.[137] He understood *scientia* to refer generally to any known truth including that known by faith, although his more restricted understanding of the term to include contingent or necessary truth known by evident experience is in agreement with the scientific method.[138] Thus, it would be unnecessarily limiting to separate truths of faith from philosophical discourse entirely. Ockham stopped short of classifying theology as a science, however, as he believed something known by its principles to be more evident than the same thing known by reasoned conclusion, such that the same thing cannot be known equally by both faith and science.[139] In other words, the evidence required to make a conclusion according to empirical science cannot prove the conclusions of theology without one first affirming its principles.[140] Every theological act had by a believer could be also had by a non-believer trained in theology, who could argue in favor of the conclusions of faith without accepting their truth themselves.[141] Affirming the mysteries of faith is better than concluding them evidently, as their truth cannot be concluded by scientific methodology alone. The revealed truth of theology is beyond the capacity of evidential science and to state otherwise would be both a misinterpretation of Aristotle's *scientia* and reductive to the divine source of revealed truth.

Ockham thought reason capable of establishing natural theology to a limited degree, but that theology established in such a way was not able to reach revealed Christian truth. He saw it demonstrable that there is a foundationally primary being unrivaled in perfection, but not that there is only one such being such nor that it possesses infinite absolute perfection.[142] These

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[137] Maurer, 132-133.
[138] Maurer, 135.
[139] Alfred J. Freddoso, "Ockham on Faith and Reason" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* edited by Paul Vincent Spade, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 333.
[140] Ibid., 336.
[141] Ibid., 337.
[142] Freddoso, 342.

conclusions and other mysteries of faith can only be had by affirmation of Christian faith. Rather than attempting to evidentially prove the truth of Christianity to nonbelievers, something he himself believed could not be done, Ockham at times accepted contradictions between the conclusions of faith and reason. Despite firm disbelief in real universals, Ockham accepted the independent relational quality which ties the distinct personas of the Trinity to a singular divine being.[143] Some mysteries of faith are by nature contradictory to natural reason such that Ockham accepted conclusions of natural reason, including his own rejection of universals, to be valid in all cases when they do not conflict with the mysteries of faith.[144] Revealed truth is had from a perfect, omniscient source and when that truth conflicts with human reason, reason should be understood as incomplete yet valid and the revealed truth admitted.

Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham in Conversation

The epistemologies advanced by Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham represent distinct understandings of truth and knowledge within the Christian framework as it evolved over the course of a millennium. Each thinker affirmed the truth of Christian faith and the validity of knowledge had solely through faith, differing vastly in how conflicts between faith and reason are to be resolved. Augustine held to the primacy of faith, believing reason to be prone to corruption without the guiding principle of faith. Belief precedes understanding, and belief in God as perfect truth results in acceptance of all truth derived from the original source. The fault for conflict between theological truth and reason falls squarely on the shoulders of reason, as reason properly guided by faith should produce no such conflict. God is the ultimate truth and anything contradicting revealed truth must be reassessed and found fallacious. Aquinas too believed in the ultimacy of revealed truth but asserted much of that truth to be achievable

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[143]Freddoso, 344.
[144] Ibid., 345.

through reason as well as faith. The five proofs used by Aquinas to prove the existence of God[145]

and his insistence upon the classification of theology as *scientia*[146] show his conviction in the

demonstrability of many conclusions of faith. Those conclusions of faith which reason cannot

yield should be accepted *sola fides*, by faith alone.[147] Being consummates existence in Aquinas

such that truth is conformity between knowing intellect and thing known, leaving natural reason

as a capable method of inquiry into the objective world of being. Ockham's extensive use of

reason shows that he too saw it is a valid and worthwhile path to truth. However, like Augustine,

Ockham supported the primacy of faith, believing some truths to be beyond the grasp of reason.

While Aquinas sought to rectify contradictions between faith and reason so that the two could to

some extent yield the same conclusions, Ockham believed the mysteries of faith to actively

contradict reason so that in many cases the believer must simply accept reason to not apply in

that instance.

Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham each supported the validity yet incompleteness of

natural reason as path to truth concerning created beings to varying degrees. Augustine believed

natural reason guided by faith to be a legitimate way to discover truth derived from God's truth

but warned against allowing study of the natural world to distract one from the superior pursuit

of theology. Aquinas supported natural reason's capacity to ascertain truth of not only created

beings but of some divine truths as well, reflecting greater (but not perfect) confidence in its

potential than either Augustine or Ockham. Ockham did acknowledge the usefulness of natural

reason although he advocated against ever ruling in favor of natural reason when it conflicts with

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[145] Not discussed elsewhere in this paper, Aquinas famously argues in favor of the existence of God using an entirely rational approach, concluding that the reality of the Christian God is a demonstrated certitude (Gilson, 57). The proofs are contained first in *Summa Theologiae* P1 Q2.
[146] Aquinas saw Christian theology as the completion of classical philosophy, maintaining its status as the best possible *scientia* (Freddoso, 332).
[147] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* B1 C6.

faith, always placing revealed truth higher than any conclusion drawn from human methodology. These three seminal thinkers each valued natural reason within their Christian framework, demonstrating that tension between faith and reason does not necessarily force an advocate of one to fully reject the other.

As we move from Augustine's epistemology to Aquinas', we see faith relinquish its position as the only path to ultimate truth. Aquinas understands faith and reason as able to yield the same knowledge, conflicting directly with Augustine's doctrine of faith's epistemic primacy. Ockham delineates the objects of faith and reason entirely, affirming the efficaciousness of reason unguided by faith while establishing some knowledge as producible only by faith. This gradual decentralization of faith within epistemology and delineation of their objects sets the stage for Enlightenment era thinkers to divorce faith from epistemology.

CHAPTER II

The European Enlightenment catalyzed sweeping change in Western epistemology, favoring as true the conclusions of evidential reason over necessary conclusions deductively reasoned from faith in a transcendental ultimate. Academia during the Age of Reason furthered Aquinas' and Ockham's displacement of the Augustinian understanding of faith as requisite to knowledge. David Hume and Friedrich Schleiermacher each express distinct conceptions of faith's capacity to yield knowledge, the former denying faith any such capacity and the later situating faith and knowledge within separate, yet mutually necessary, spheres of human nature.

David Hume

Considered by many the father of contemporary materialism, David Hume was born in 1711, in Edinburgh, Scotland.[148] His father passed away when he was just two years old and Hume was raised by his mother, a devout practitioner in the Church of Scotland. At the age of ten, Hume enrolled in the University at Edinburgh where he studied Latin, Greek and philosophy in the traditions of metaphysics, logic and natural reason. Hume wrote that by age 18 he had decided to devote his life to the elucidation of human nature, a passion which his youthful studies had deeply engrained in him.[149] With this academic tenacity, Hume entered into a life of philosophical consideration and authorship.

Humean interpreters face the difficult task of elucidating Hume's religious leanings, or lack thereof, from his esoteric writings on the topic. His *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* are written in the style of Classical dialogues, confounding attempts at extracting Hume's personal beliefs from the characters of Demea, Philo and Cleanthes with inconsistencies in the

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[148] David Hume, *My Own Life* in *Principal Writings on Religion* edited by J.C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 3.

[149] Tom L. Beauchamp, "Introduction" in *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume,* edited by Tom L. Beauchamp, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, xii.

arguments each presents and a lack of narrative bias in clear favor of a single participant, while

The Natural History of Religion may not reflect his theological understanding either.

Nonetheless, the complex arguments that Hume offers provide us the reasoning necessary to

understand the various religious standings he portrays, and astute readers can theorize the

scholar's personal beliefs from consistencies between his works on religion.

Hume worked during the European Enlightenment, a time of scholastic revolution which

reformed the boundaries of knowledge, emphasizing reason, rationality and evidential

conclusions over the truth of faith so revered by earlier thinkers. It was into this environment that

Hume released his philosophical musings. As confirmed by the *Dialogues* and *Natural History*,

Hume advanced inductive reason as a means of religious inquiry, contrasting with previously

dominant deductive systems.

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion reports a fictional debate between the characters

Cleanthes, Philo and Demea as told by a student of Cleanthes who witnessed the discourse.[150]

Each participant expounds the philosophical virtues of a distinct religious standpoint as they

debate over the nature of divinity, which all three agree exists.[151] Hume does not write in favor

of any participant, trying to portray each ideology and the arguments supporting it without bias.

Demea begins the conversation with his teaching methodology, explaining that he "season[s]

their minds [of his pupils] with early piety" but that a mind must first be enriched with logic,

ethics and physics before it can be trusted with contemplation of natural theology. The

uncertainties present in these more mundane studies prepare the mind to consider natural

theology.[152] Philo points out the limits of human reason, its failure to apprehend even all aspects

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[150] David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part I* in *Principal Writings on Religion* edited by J.C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: Oxford, 1993, 32.
[151] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part II,* 43.
[152] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part I,* 32.

of common life, to argue that reason should not be counted on to produce knowledge of
something so sublime and "remote from common life and experiences".[153] Cleanthes responds
with biting criticism of skepticism's practicality, arguing that no person can adopt theoretical
skepticism as a lasting suspension of belief in the senses. To do so would render that person
incapable of participating in the world.[154] Cleanthes affirms truth *ex ratio* and believes reason
capable of constructing a rational theology.[155]

Demea employs a deductive methodology, imparting the principles of faith and
knowledge of reason upon his students so that they support those principles with reason and
understand principles which conflict with reason to constitute the mysteries of faith. His system
resembles traditional Catholic scholarly consideration of the divine. Philo takes up the role of
skeptic, arguing the flaws demonstrable in reason leave it unable to elucidate any theological
tenets. Finally, Cleanthes constructs a system devoid of Demea's principles of faith which
discovers the divine through rational processes. *Dialogues* thus reports a debate between the
traditional idealist, philosophical skeptic and natural theological positions.

Demea asserts humans are incapable of elucidating the mysteries of faith and any attempt
to do so is a profane subversion of the natural order. We know by faith and the law of first effect
God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, qualities which humans cannot hope to
prove through reason.[156] Philo agrees nothing exists without cause but argues against the
qualities Demea ascribes to God, claiming these are perfections of human attributes we bestow to
God as worship but we have no reason to believe God is absolutely perfect, only more perfect
than created beings. In addition, ascribing God perfections of human moralities profanes the

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[153] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part I*, 33.
[154] Ibid., 39.
[155] Ibid., 40.
[156] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part II*, 43.

divine by shaping it in our ideal likeness.[157] Cleanthes believes the wondrous order of natural

laws belie a divine author who fashioned reality with consciousness similar to "human mind and

intelligence".[158] Philo responds that Cleanthes' conclusion lacks deductive merit, inferencing

divine arrangement through faulty analogy of the universe to a house. Just because we can

properly infer a rational builder from the existence of a house does not mean we can infer a

similar cause from the existence of the universe.[159] If order is found in mind rather than matter,

we are only able to conclude what we have experienced, so cannot conclude a divine author from

the apparent order of nature because we lack experience of that author.[160] Cleanthes retorts that

these same contentions could be applied erroneously to any experience. If, for example, a

tremendously loud voice rang out and spoke to all the world, imparting in every language words

of "just sense and meaning" which "convey some instruction altogether worthy of a benevolent

Being, superior to mankind", one could argue that because we have no experience of any being

capable of such speech, it is more reasonable to conclude the phenomenon arose not from divine

intelligence but from an "accidental whistling of the winds".[161]

Cleanthes' response to Philo's criticism encapsulates his sentiments concerning the

practicality of skepticism; even when sense and experience point toward a likely cause,

skepticism precludes one from accepting said cause. Demea's initial concerns with Cleanthes'

natural theology arise from its anthropomorphizing of the divine, not through attributing

perfected qualities to God as Demea himself does but through identifying man and God, thus

making "ourselves the model of the whole universe".[162] According to Demea, the deity must be

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[157] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part II*, 44.
[158] Ibid., 45.
[159] Ibid., 46-47.
[160] Ibid., 51
[161] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part III*, 55.
[162] Ibid., 58.

wholly immutable, never undertaking discrete action and perfect and unchanging in judgement. This is quite unlike the human mind so, if true, would invalidate the similarity between people and God proposed by Cleanthes. Cleanthes retorts that such immutable perfection is incomprehensible for a reason; a mind with no thought, reason, successive action, sentience, will or emotion is "no mind at all", such that belief in a divine mind of this sort is no different from atheism.[163]

Philo argues transcendent reality requires a cause as much as a physical world does and concluding a divine author from observation of nature lends itself toward infinite inference where even this author must be part of a greater design. He sees the lack of a foundational conclusion unsatisfactory.[164] Cleanthes thinks the natural order established by his design argument as sufficient knowledge, and, concerning the cause of our reality's cause, "I know not; I care not… I have found a Deity and here I stop my enquiry".[165] Acknowledging his contention falls into erroneous speculation, Philo revokes this criticism before offering a new one.[166] If, as Cleanthes suggests, like effects prove like causes, every created being which bears no similarity to some human invention is evidence against a God acting with human reason. Effects such as the astrological bodies bear no resemblance to "the effects of human art and contrivance" so cannot be ascribed the same root cause.[167] Cleanthes responds that scientific discovery elucidates workings of the universal machine which resembles machines constructed by human rationality, to which Philo raises two further issues: first, Cleanthes' reasoning invalidates an infinite deity, as there are no infinite effects from which to conclude an infinite cause. Second,

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[163] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part IV,* 61.
[164] Ibid., 62-63.
[165] Ibid., 65.
[166] Ibid., 66.
[167] Hume *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part V*, 67.

likeness between the human and divine mind indicates an imperfect deity, as, without *a priori* assumption of perfection, the "inexplicable difference in the works of nature" must arise from error on the part of the creator, as do imperfections in human creations.[168]

Philo raises criticisms which, were they to go unaddressed, would bring natural theology into irreconcilable conflict with Demea's idealism. Basing theology on human experience implies, in addition to the aforementioned concerns, that mind must always accompany body as we have no measurable access to some alternative, so that Cleanthes' divine author must hold corporeal form.[169] In fact, our world may just be an imperfect designer's first crude attempt at creation, abandoned in favor of their next experiment as soon as its faults became evident. Cleanthes utterly denounces Philo's suggestions and acknowledges that no issue raised here by the skeptic invalidates the system of natural theology, instead exposing implications the system suggests. Working within the confines of natural theology, no contention Philo has yet raised invalidates the whole theory.[170]

The skeptic then proposes a new theory conceiving of the universe as a body and the divine as the soul animating it. In this case, the universe would not be a creation of the divine but an embodied manifestation of it.[171] Cleanthes has no ready response to Philo's theory but raises two potential objections. First, the material universe bears no sensory organs or "seat of thought", so it resembles the body of a vegetable more than an animal and bearing likeness to a vegetable, possesses no soul.[172] Second, Philo implies universal eternity, a notion which Cleanthes thinks "can be refuted by the strongest reasons and probabilities". Humans

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[168] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part V*, 68-69.
[169] Ibid., 70.
[170] Ibid.,71.
[171] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part VI*, 72-73.
[172] Ibid., 74.

irreversibly alter the world through their actions, such as bringing the cherry tree from Asia to Europe. Europe's environment is so conducive to growth of the cherry tree that it grows in the wild and no human societal changes will blockade this new course of nature. The effects of human action, Cleanthes states, prove the universe holds no inherent, eternal principle.[173] Philo disagrees, and the conversation turns toward the implications of Philo's theory.

If, as Philo states, the universe is more aptly compared to an animal or vegetable body than to a human machine, its origin must lie in generation or vegetation rather than rational design.[174] Demea wonders how the world could possibly arise through such sources, so Philo explains that the planetary system produces seeds or eggs in the form of comets which are cast into the surrounding chaos and sprout into new worlds. Demea objects to the suppositions drawn by Philo because no data exists to support them, and Philo reveals this to have been his point all along. Imperfect human experience cannot produce the data needed to establish any cosmological system. If we must construct cosmological theories, we may only do so by following some rule. The rule proposed by Cleanthes is "greater similarity of the objects compared".[175]

Demea understands Philo's argument[176] to support the conclusion of a divine author, as order should only spring from something aware of the order it creates.[177] Philo employs a defense earlier used by Cleanthes, arguing that the impossibility of satisfying questions of primary cause cannot be allowed as an objection to his theory. Just as Cleanthes did not need to explain the creation of his designer, Philo cannot be asked to explain how universal generation

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[173] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part VI*, 75-76.
[174] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion VII,* 78.
[175] Ibid., 79.
[176] Of creation by generation or vegetation.
[177] Ibid., 80-81.

occurs. It may be as Demea suggests, that cosmic eggs are strewn by a divine author, but this author may in turn have generated from just such an egg; argument could continue *ad infinitum* because humans lack access to the cosmic first cause.[178]

Philo proposes yet another cosmological theory, holding that if matter is finite, throughout eternity every possible arrangement of matter will be hit upon infinite times. Finite matter in perpetual motion will eventually hit an ordered arrangement, and this order will support and perpetuate itself so that forms maintain constancy despite matter's constant agitation.[179] Cleanthes rejects Philo's theory because humans have conveniences not entirely necessary to order, which should not have arisen if the universe is nothing more than some chaotic trial-and-error. It is far-flung speculation to assume the universal order would have collapsed had there been no camels or horses for people to ride or magnetic poles to guide the compass needle. These conveniences are greater evidence for a benevolent author than for haphazardly constructed order.[180]

After eight sections debating the difficulties posed by argument *a posteriori*[181], Demea asks why it is not better to adhere to argument *a priori*.[182] Every effect is necessarily finite, so none can prove an infinite cause, and the works of nature cannot prove divine unity.[183] Cleanthes first attacks the ability of argument *a priori* to demonstrate the existence of God. Something is only demonstrable if a contrary state of affairs would be contradictory, and nothing conceivable bears contradiction. Any being we conceive to exist we can also conceive to not-exist, including God. Because we may conceive God's nonexistence without contradiction,

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[178] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part VII*, 81.
[179] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part VIII,* 84-85,
[180] Ibid., 87.
[181] Drawing theological conclusions from material experience.
[182] Acceptance of a necessary first cause, which we call God.
[183] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part IX*, 91.

God's being is not demonstrable.[184] If one insists on calling some being necessary, why not choose matter itself? We know not all the qualities of matter and there may be an attribute yet to be discovered which proves matter must exist. We may conceive of matter being annihilated or altered, so such alteration or destruction holds no contradiction unless matter necessarily exists, which could only be concluded if some attribute of matter proved its necessity. The same logic exposes the fallacy of argument *a priori*.[185]

Demea replies that each person knows the truth of religion deep in their own heart and chooses to follow their natural inclination to worship the divine being to seek protection and hope in the face of a wretched world.[186] Philo agrees this truth to be evident, and believes the way to bring everyone to "a due sense of religion" is through "just representation of the misery and wickedness of men".[187] Suffering, Demea believes, characterizes material existence so that no created being is safe from its clutches.[188] Only humans are capable of banding together to subvert natural order and dispel fear of other creatures in the food chain. Philo too believes humans able to overcome all real fears, but argues once material fears are addressed, humans immediately construct imaginary enemies. After conquering natural enemies, peopole turn toward each other and fight amongst themselves.[189]

Cleanthes confesses he feels none of the inevitable misery discussed by his peers, a claim which Demea finds absurd. Demea points to Emperor Charles V, Cicero and Cato, men who in their times amassed power and fortune but spoke or wrote of their dissatisfaction, to show even the most successful are subject to misery.[190] Philo asks Cleanthes how his benevolent author

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[184] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part IX*, 91.
[185] Ibid., 92.
[186] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part X*, 95.
[187] Ibid., 95.
[188] Ibid., 96.
[189] Ibid., 97.
[190] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part X*, 100.

could create a world so wretched. The latter responds that should Philo prove mankind to be

inherently corrupted, religion itself would end, as there is no reason to question the deity's

natural attributes when its moral qualities are unknown. Only by denying inherent human

wickedness can one support divine benevolence. Philo retorts that Cleanthes implies people

should prefer to live in their present world with all its suffering rather than one with hope for a

future free from suffering. The natural theologian has established human misery not to conflict

with divine benevolence but must prove human happiness exceeds human suffering for Philo to

back down from this contention.[191]

     Cleanthes begins by affirming analogical comparisons between humanity and God, as

without analogy we lose our concept of the divine. We should not immediately conclude God's

perfection, however; God may be finitely perfect yet more perfect than all created beings. A

finitely perfect God does not have the capacity to eliminate suffering altogether but maintains

benevolence by allowing the lesser evil over the greater evil and allowing inconveniences to

"reach a desirable end", resulting in a world much like our own.[192] Philo demands that Cleanthes

abandon his approach dependent upon one's prior understanding of God and support the notion

of a good world with evidence drawn from experience. He likens the world to a poorly designed

house, and who better to blame for a faulty building than its architect?[193] Cleanthes never

responds to Philo's critique, as the skeptic undertakes a lengthy soliloquy, after which an angered

Demea realizes he is alone in his firm idealism and departs.[194]

     The final section of Hume's *Dialogues* seems so disjointed from the rest of the work that

some commentators suggest approaching it separately from earlier sections and limiting

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[191] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part X,* 102-103.
[192] Hume *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part XI,* 105.
[193] Ibid., 106.
[194] Ibid., 114-115.

interpretations of it to inform only our understanding of Part XII.[195] We would be remiss to

accept such proposals and isolate Part XII entirely. Despite its overt differences from the greater

work, Hume included it in the *Dialogues* for a reason. To ignore Part XII would ignore Hume's

intent and purpose, blinding ourselves to something the author thought coherent with the rest of

Dialogues' content for the sake of an easier interpretation. The change in tone evident in Part

XII is better interpreted as a natural narrative shift following Demea's departure than as some

arcane commentary so removed from the rest of the text it can be safely dispensed with.

Part XII begins with the two remaining participants acknowledging the change in tone

brought on by Demea's absence. Philo relinquishes his skeptical position, telling Cleanthes

"nature does nothing in vain" and "all the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a

first intelligent Author".[196] A God our senses are unable to understand could provide no better

proof of its existence than nature, plainly setting forth its creations and providing occasional

glimpses of "still greater artifices".[197] Cleanthes and Philo agree that no system of cosmology

exists more convincing or complete than the former's theism and that the works of nature lead to

the rational conclusion of a divine author.[198] Philo then proposes that the theistic debate is over

terms not foundation, as the atheist and theist both affirm a foundational principal of order which

they call by different names.[199] He also rectifies moral equation of the human and divine, saying

that although God's works bear resemblance to human works and thus must emerge from a

similar source, God's benevolence and justice bear no similarity to our own so may come from a

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[195] Keith E. Yandell, *Hume's Inexplicable Mystery: His Views on Religion*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990, 35.
[196] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part XII*, 116-117.
[197] Ibid., 117-118.
[198] Ibid., 118-119.
[199] Ibid., 120.

different, greater source. God and humans resemble each other only in natural attributes, not in

moral ones.[200]

Although Philo and Cleanthes agree reason fairly establishes the conclusion of religion,

their opinions differ concerning religion's role in and overall effect on society. Cleanthes argues

"[t]he proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men", and when greedy individuals

abuse religious social institutions and push them beyond their proper sphere, religion is perverted

to support faulty morals. But blame here falls upon those who corrupt religion; Cleanthes thinks

religion inherently good so that in its proper role it strengthens human morals. Philo thinks it

impossible for religion to supersede natural inclination as one's moral guide, as religious

motivations are transient and external while natural proclivities are ever-present and internal.[201]

By directing moral accountability away from society and to the divine, religion actively distracts

one from societal right and wrong, posing, in its popular institutions, a threat to society. Philo

believes false religion[202] holds dire consequence for society but true religion lacks such

effects.[203] *Dialogues* ends with this discussion of religion's effect on societal morals.

Interpreters struggle with *Dialogues* because Hume's religious beliefs are not represented

wholly by any of its three speakers. We may dispense with any notion of Demea's ideology

matching Hume's own, as Demea's deductive approach contradicts evidential experience as a

method of transcendent inquiry, the same method employed by Cleanthes and Philo throughout

the *Dialogues* and, as we will see later, Hume in *The Natural History*. Philo and Cleanthes

debate whether aspects of divine nature are revealed through material effects, while Demea

ascertains divine nature by faith. Demea approaches religion in a manner fundamentally

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[200] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part XII*, 121.
[201] Ibid., 122-123.
[202] Popular religion
[203] Ibid., 124-125.

different from his counterparts, and thus engages in a radically different conversation, one where God's attributes need not be established by reason because they have already been revealed.[204] *Dialogues'* narrator, Pamphilus, even ranks Demea's principles last, stating "Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth".[205] It is safe to remove Demea from the conversation of who in *Dialogues*, if anyone, Hume meant to represent himself.

We cannot take Pamphilus' opinions of the three systems presented in *Dialogues* to emulate Hume's own. First, if Hume's reluctance to share his personal beliefs was at all fueled by his fear of persecution by the Scottish Church, the narrator's end decision to prefer moderate theism over borderline atheistic skepticism may have been written to lessen perceived antagonism of his highly critical document against institutionalized religion. After all, the Church should prefer belief in a benevolent and potent god concluded through reason over belief in a god or gods whose attributes cannot be described, as the former more closely resembles the Christian God. Furthermore, Hume narrates not as himself, but as a young pupil of Cleanthes. It makes sense within the narrative for Pamphilus to side with his mentor, so we cannot groundlessly assume the beliefs of *Dialogues'* narrator to mirror those of Hume. Any attempt to sift Hume's religious beliefs from the text of *Dialogues* must be guided by Hume's other major work on religion.

In *The Natural History of Religion*, Hume gives his account of humanity's development of religion. Because religious beliefs vary widely between cultures and individuals, Hume writes religious inclinations are not primary natural instincts. As secondary instincts, religious principles are readily corruptible and beliefs springing from them are able to be obstructed.

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[204] Greg Moses, "Hume's Playful Metaphysics" in *Hume Studies*, Vol. 18, Number 1, April 1992, Hume Society, 65.
[205] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part XII*, 130.

Natural History attempts to expose the principles that cause belief and the accidents which hinder it.[206]

Hume begins his history by considering polytheism, the religious structure he concludes emerged first. He uses the cultural context of ancient polytheism and of polytheism practiced by contemporary tribes in Asia, America and Africa to argue that such systems are less-developed than monotheistic alternatives and appeal to "the ignorant multitude".[207] Hume sees polytheism as a necessary precursor to monotheism, providing a culture some sense of transcendental power as its intellectual tradition develops to comprehend a single, perfect being.[208] Human religious development operates on a dialectic, progressing from primitive polytheism to the monotheistic systems nature indicates. If monotheism had emerged before polytheism, people would have never strayed from it, as the frame of nature clearly bespeaks a single author.[209]

Religious proclivity supported by consideration of nature invariably leads to monotheism, so polytheistic founders must have colored their spiritual inclination with some other understanding. Equating human events with divine action, however, lends toward a conception of multiple imperfect deities acting upon a chaotic world.[210] Instead of founding religious ideology in observation of nature, polytheism founds it in human fears and anxieties, as adherents appeal to whatever particular deity has providence over the realm of their current worry. The negative human passion of fear fuels polytheism, resulting in concentration upon human events and ignorance of natural order, corrupting the religious inclination and erroneously constructing imperfect, anthropomorphic deities.[211]

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[206] Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* in *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of David Hume* edited by Tom L. Beauchamp, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, 34.
[207] Ibid., 34.
[208] Ibid., 35.
[209] Ibid., 36.
[210] Ibid., 37.
[211] Ibid., 38-39.

Polytheism relies on a lack of understanding of the natural world. When the causes of phenomena such as natural disasters are unknown, they are attributed to some deity.[212] Although any passion could lead to religious awareness, it is human tendency to attribute misfortune to an external cause and credit ourselves for success.[213] Thus, popular religion harnesses human fear and promises respite from it; supplication to and worship of the deity or deities is rewarded with deliverance from fear. Superstition emerges from such fearful practice and appeals to the weak and timid by shedding false light on unknown causes of human misery.[214]

Theism grows from polytheism, as people shower higher and higher praise upon the chief deity of their pantheon. Their hyperbolic adulation swells as each worshipper seeks to outdo the flattery of their predecessor. Eventually, idolaters hoping to garner their god's favor begin to call the deity infinite, claiming no power exists in the universe outside the god's auspice.[215] By chance, fearful supplication guides polytheists to theism's true conclusion of a single, perfect and omnipotent deity.[216] But, theism is not permanent, as worshippers construct intermediaries between the divine and human realms who soon become objects of adoration. As a religion drifts back toward polytheism, it begins to self-destruct until its ideology becomes once again concerned with the sublime and immaterial ultimate.[217]

When people see the deity as infinitely superior to them, they resort to total obsequience as a means of waylaying their superstitious fears. Theistic virtues of penance, humility, passive suffering and mortification emerge as the proper mode of worshipping the supreme deity.[218] Philosophy is comfortably incorporated into theistic theology but is invariably perverted to act

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[212] Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 40.
[213] Ibid., 42.
[214] Ibid., 42-43.
[215] Ibid., 53.
[216] Ibid., 54.
[217] Ibid., 58-59.
[218] Ibid., 63.

not as a regulating principle, but to affirm the baseless superstitions of the system. When someone challenges theological incoherencies, proposing some more reasonable alternative, they are condemned by the ecclesiastical hierarchy for sullying the sacred mysteries with profane reason.[219] Thus, the religious alter their material lives in accordance with their absurd, superstitious dogma, for to challenge dogma is heresy and to ignore it is sin.[220]

Popular religion, by encouraging superstitious orthopraxis, degenerates societal morality. It provides an all-powerful scapegoat onto whom the faithful shift blame for their transgressions, attributing their misfortune to lapses in belief or ritual instead of their own worldly faults.[221] Morality falters when its fruits are credited to superstition, as people pursue reward by means of religious ritual over moral conduct. By fasting, praying or self-flagellating, one engages in actions with no positive societal impact yet believes themselves to garner divine favor and good fortune in the material world. Morality is then contingent on an individual's private praxis, allowing the superstitious to claim their own good virtue without benefiting society and at times even opposing societal morals.[222]

Superstition blinds people to the abundantly clear religious truth that all of nature operates according to a principle of order which belies design by an intelligent author. There is an unshakeable universal balance so that every extreme brings about its own antithesis. The greatest pleasures arise from the sharpest pains, the most desired advantages are attended by the most contemptable disadvantages. Any promise of a purely blissful existence is delusion, as exuberance must be balanced with despair. As such, the most stable life is one of temperance and

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[219] Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 65-66.
[220] Ibid., 71.
[221] Ibid., 81.
[222] Ibid., 83.

moderation.[223] The popular religions of the world pervert humanity's inherent proclivity to believe in transcendental power, anthropomorphizing divinity into nothing more than "sick men's dreams".[224] Religious truth will never be ascertained through zealous piety; tempered philosophy offers the only path toward true enlightenment.[225]

Between *Dialogues* and *Natural History*, Hume reflects varied opinions on religion and its role in society. The position he adopts in *Natural History* contains beliefs of both Cleanthes and Philo, further confounding interpretive attempts. We may shed light on Hume's personal beliefs by surveying interpretations of these works and considering instances where Cleanthes' or Philo's position matches one Hume holds in *Natural History* to see if the belief is adequately dismantled by the opposition.

Healthy debate concerning Hume's religious leanings rages among contemporary interpreters. Interpretations of his personal religion range from staunch atheism to Philo-like skepticism to Cleanthes-like theism. Scholar Greg Moses argues Hume allows, through the character Philo, a kind of "playful metaphysics". Moses understands metaphysics in a Humean context to refer to "enquiry concerning ultimate principles/causes", and ultimate causes to mean relative connection between a subject's essence and its external form such that we may know its principle from knowledge of its essence without experience of its form and may give reason for its existence derived from its essence.[226] In his more philosophical works, Hume advises the reader to abandon inquiry into ultimate causes because such matters are incapable of demonstration, so incompatible with scientific ideals.[227] However, the skeptic Philo argues

[223] Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 85.
[224] Ibid., 86.
[225] Ibid., 87.
[226] Moses, 63.
[227] Ibid., 64.

against requiring a suspension of judgment to hold personal religious beliefs, accepting as true

the existence of divinity which, after careful consideration, all rational thinkers must be expected

to affirm.[228] Philo contradicts Hume's philosophy elsewhere in believing it possible to

demonstrate fact and existence, and concluding necessary connections between objects in nature.

This may seem to disqualify Philo as Hume's representative in *Dialogues*, but Moses argues

Humean philosophy allows for such belief.[229]

As a skeptic, Philo displays inherent doubt toward any conclusion of universal truth yet

thinks it possible to demonstrate matters of fact. If "demonstrate" is taken in a loose sense to

mean "prove the truth of some position to oneself or others", Philo does not attempt to make any

universal metaphysical claim. He simply demonstrates truth as he understands it, proof which

may not apply to any other rational being. Although Philo employs argumentation *a priori* to

conclude a necessary first, he deviates from such methodology when explaining where the

original principle is inherent. His *a posteriori* argument in favor of mind arising from matter,

avoidance of infinite regress by limiting his discussion to the mundane world and

acknowledgement of the influence of personal preference allow Philo to maintain a skeptical,

materialist stance without disavowing all theism.[230] Furthermore, Philo phrases many of his

metaphysical ideas as contrafactual conditional statements, avoiding charges of meaninglessness

which could be levied at him for concluding an "original, inherent principle of order". This

statement may bear no clear meaning in our present world but every contrafactual statement is

both conceivable and possible, rendering us able to imagine a world in which an "original,

inherent principle of order" holds clear meaning and is metaphysical truth. Thus, we may debate

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[228] Moses, 66.
[229] Ibid., 67.
[230] Ibid., 67-68

the circumstances under which the principle is inherent.[231] With these considerations, playful metaphysics allows us to engage in questions of ultimate cause without needing to prove order to be more essential to mind than to matter.[232]

Moses argues that Humean skepticism allows for metaphysical inquiry similar to Philo's; one undertakes it for amusement rather than hope for truth, acknowledges the role preference plays in shaping personal belief and replaces harmful superstition with harmless philosophy.[233] Moses concludes Hume to be an even greater skeptic than Philo, but that he too engages playfully in speculative metaphysics.[234]

Throughout his writing, Hume acknowledges the existence of a special class of belief that commentators term "natural beliefs". These beliefs emerge from universal and necessary aspects of human nature and include convictions such as "belief in causal action" and "belief in the identity or unity of the self".[235] Norman Kemp Smith used Hume's doctrine of unavoidable belief to argue the philosopher believed there to be no reason to excoriate natural belief and valued feeling over reason, disqualifying him as an extreme skeptic.[236] R.J. Butler argued Hume thought belief in God arises from the necessary human proclivity to believe in an ordered cosmos, qualifying belief in God as a natural belief.[237] Miriam McCormick builds off Kemp Smith's work to determine whether or not belief in divinity qualifies as a Humean natural belief as Butler attests.

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[231] Moses, 69.
[232] Ibid., 69-70
[233] Ibid., 70
[234] Ibid., 71.
[235] Miriam McCormick, "Hume on Natural Belief and Original Principles" in *Hume Studies*, Vol. 19, Number 1, April 1993, Hume Society, 103.
[236] Ibid., 104.
[237] McCormick, 104-105.

McCormick cites the four criteria of a natural belief J.C.A. Gaskin extracted from Hume's work, which are: 1) justified by naïve common sense, 2) non-rational, 3) a required precursor to action and 4) universally, invariably held. Natural beliefs have no evidence to the contrary that would allow one to conclude their fallacy. Although it is debatable whether or not belief in God meets the first criteria, such conviction is not a required precursor to action, nor is it universally held, leading Gaskin to conclude belief in God is not a natural belief.[238] Although Gaskin set forth competent criteria for natural belief, there remains no coherent definition for "natural" in a Humean context. McCormick describes three manners Hume uses the word "natural" to mean, first, "ordinary", second, "part of nature" and third, "inseparable from the species". Belief in God may be commonly held but its ubiquity is not reason enough to establish its unshakeable tenability. Therefore, the first definition of natural is not applicable in our present discussion, although belief in God is natural in this sense.[239]

Belief in God qualifies as natural in the second sense, even if it does not rise immediately from the ultimate principles of human nature. According to Hume, any invention both "obvious" and "absolutely necessary" must find its roots in human nature, so can be called natural. This second sense of natural does not establish a belief's indispensability so cannot be the meaning utilized by Kemp Smith, Butler or Gaskin.[240] Hume's third usage of natural, to mean "inseparable from the species", implies that one cannot be human without holding said belief as the belief is "a necessary outgrowth" of human nature's original principles.[241] Hume terms belief in external reality as natural in this sense, as imagination ascribes continuous existence to

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[238] McCormick, 105.
[239] Ibid., 106.
[240] Ibid., 106-107.
[241] Ibid., 107.

the sensible coherence of objects.[242] Although skeptics may theorize theant impermanence of the

external world through rigorous philosophy, it is impossible for anyone to maintain this doubt

post-reflection and relinquish belief in reality. Human nature disallows us from avoiding belief

in external reality.[243]

Hume affirms as universal our propensity to believe in God but acknowledges humans do

not invariably hold the belief itself and so never calls it necessary.[244] Some understanding of

natural order is inherent in human experience, but Butler erroneously presumed belief in God to

necessarily emerge from belief in an ordered cosmos. It may be human inclination to believe in a

divine orderer from the fact of natural order, but this belief can be resisted whereas belief in the

external world cannot be. Thus, McCormick concludes, belief in God is neither necessary nor

universal, so is not natural in Hume's third sense and does not meet the third and fourth criteria

Gaskin established.[245]

The findings of Moses and McCormick complement one another well. McCormick

establishes belief in divinity is not a natural, unavoidable phenomena. With no necessary

foundation in human nature and no empirical evidence to justify any conclusion of divinity, the

only recourse left to would-be theologians is unverifiable speculation. Moses describes just such

a form of playful metaphysical consideration. To agree with McCormick's conclusion that belief

in God does not qualify as a natural belief all but requires adoption of at least mild skepticism, as

religious truth then resides not in human nature but in an individual's preferences. Playful

metaphysics as described by Moses and practiced by Philo offers skeptics a *modus operandi* for

speculation concerning the divine nature without compromising their philosophical system. In

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[242] McCormick, 110.
[243] Ibid., 111.
[244] Ibid., 111.
[245] Ibid., 112.

Natural History, Hume adopts a theistic position seemingly in-line with that of Cleanthes, yet never attempts to construct a vast cosmological system around it. He affirms only those principles agreed upon by Cleanthes and Philo in Part XII of *Dialogues*, described by Philo as "[a] purpose, an intention, a design [which] strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it".[246] The skeptic acknowledges here the impossibility of maintaining his skepticism concerning Cleanthes' system, as natural order seems so apparent no one can entirely suspend belief in it. The Hume of *Natural History* echoes these sentiments but opposes the anthropomorphized deities and unfounded superstitions that human religion has perverted from the reasonable conclusion of a rational creator.[247]

In *Natural History*, Hume, like Philo, sets his own skeptical tendencies aside to affirm belief in a divine author. He derides popular religion for its effects on human morality and action, without engaging in any theological theorizing of his own. For the skeptical Hume, the only rational religious claim is the general claim set forth by Cleanthes; it is more reasonable to conclude the overwhelming consistency of natural order to result from some ordering principle than from chaotic happenstance. To claim as true any theology built on this principle would construct a system no different from the "sick men's dreams" he so vehemently denies. Playful metaphysical inquiry avoids falling into the delusions of popular religion because those who engage in it do not claim the truth of their musings.

When it comes to religion, we may rightly postulate that Hume recognized his own inability to maintain skepticism when confronted with natural religion and, much like Philo in *Dialogues XII*, begrudgingly accepted belief in an ordered world constructed by some divine

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[246] Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion Part XII*, 116.
[247] Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 86.

creator as the most reasonable conclusion, albeit one far from proven truth. Hume did not allow

this tentative faith to influence his conception of faith's role in epistemology, however. He

thought empirical evidence the only grounds for declarations of truth, a qualification which faith,

necessarily devoid of evidence, could not reach. For Hume, faith and theology were fully

divorced from epistemology, as he thought belief unable to fulfill the proof necessary for

knowledge. In this way, Hume differs entirely from those thinkers discussed in the previous

chapter, as each considered faith a path to knowledge in varying degrees. Hume represents an

academic shift away not from just Christianity-based epistemology, but from deductive

reasoning's ability to qualify its religious conclusions as truth.

Friedrich Schleiermacher

Born in 1768 in modern-day Poland, Friedrich Schleiermacher operated during the latter

days of the European Enlightenment. In 1783, Schleiermacher joined the Moravian school at

Niesky before transferring to the Moravian seminary at Barby in 1785.[248] At Barby, he drifted

from the faith of his teachers, questioning the doctrine of humble acceptance of Christ's sacrifice

as atonement for the sins of humanity and the peaceful bliss such acceptance was expected to

catalyze.[249] Schleiermacher concluded he would find no answer to his rationalist inquiries in the

Moravian seminary, so enrolled at the University of Halle in 1787 to explore his doubts in a free-

thinking environment.[250] While his years at Halle are historically unexciting, he was

reinvigorated intellectually when, after passing the theological examination to qualify as a

minister of the Reformed Church, Count Wilhelm Dohna hired the young scholar as a family

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[248] Keith Clements, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Pioneer of Modern Theology*, London: Collins Publishers, 1987, 15.
[249] Ibid., 16.
[250] Ibid., 17.

tutor. This experience in domestic life ignited warm religious feelings Schleiermacher could not kindle with erudite theology and inspired his later understanding of religion as feeling and experience. Schleiermacher accepted his first professional position in 1796 as Reformed preacher at Berlin's Charite hospital.[251] While holding this role, Schleiermacher published his first work and the primary work we will study here, *On Religion. Speeches to its Cultured Despisers.*[252]

 Speeches consists of five rhetorical pieces intended to highlight then deconstruct materialist misconceptions of religious consciousness. Schleiermacher's second *Speech*, "On the Essence of Religion", redefines religion and religious praxis to show that detracting criticism of religious artifices fails to compromise the essence of religion.[253] Schleiermacher first asks his audience to leave behind all preconceived notions of religion, for these hinder one from apprehending the religion he presents on its own terms.[254] From the start, Schleiermacher makes clear that he will challenge the very concept of religion his audience holds. He laments religion's inability to be presented in its pure, recognizable form, as anything presented externally "is no longer quite its own" by its communication through the edifice of language and each recipient's personal apprehension of it.[255] Whatever the essence of religion may be, it must lie beneath and be obscured by the human artifice employed to communicate it.

 Religion according to its despisers, says Schleiermacher, is in one moment faith and worldview and in another action, yet never convergence of theory and practice.[256] He divides

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[251] Clements, 18.

[252] Ibid., 22.

[253] Julia A. Lamm, "Schleiermacher's Spirituality: An Introduction" in *Schleiermacher: Christmas Dialogue, The Second Speech, and Other Selections* edited and translated by Julia A. Lamm, New York: Paulist Press, 2014, 16.

[254] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*: "On the Essence of Religion" in *Schleiermacher: Christmas Dialogue, The Second Speech and Other Selections* edited and translated by Julia A. Lamm, New York: Paulist Press, 2014, 152-153.

[255] Ibid., 153.

[256] Ibid., 154.

acting into life, characterized by seriousness, duty, moral obligation and virtue as guiding principles, and art, characterized by bliss, imagination and genius as guiding principles. One can live a "good" life without art, and the artist, on account of their imaginative genius, is allowed looser adherence to societal norms and ethics. If piety is an action of life, it would lessen the authority of ethics, presenting an indifferent and commendable guiding principle next to ethics. If, however, piety is considered a virtue extending from ethics, the root of piety must be ethics, a position religion's antagonists are unwilling to concede.[257] Religion similarly falters as a purely artistic action, as a pious artist is not awarded the same exemptions from ethical expectations afforded a secular artist. Religion considered as action is not religion itself, for the influence of both spheres of action render religion considered in this way a corrupted shadow of its pure essence. If religion were to truly be a permeation of ethics and genius, both ethics and genius would be "the one-sided ruins of religion" left behind when the religion bearing both, and therefore greater together than either part alone, collapses. Since this too grates against materialism, it cannot be the conception held by religion's despisers.[258]

What then, about religion as a mode of thinking? All sciences fall either within those which describe the nature of things and human nature as defined by causal relations or those which describe human nature itself and how one should live their life. Religion as thinking and as a route to knowing holds the same goal as these sciences. It seeks to define human relations to the divine and to the divinely-created world. Religion by its nature incorporates the pursuits of both scientific categories yet is denied the certitude given to philosophy. Its detractors consider it an inept route to causal knowledge, for they assert its ignorance in "distinguishing what is demonstrable from what is apparent" and that religion is a faulty purveyor of ethical guidelines

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[257] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*., 155.
[258] Ibid., 156.

because of the "exceedingly strange guidelines" it sometimes posits.[259] As an intellectual mode, religion refuses to conform to the categories set forth, but the fundamentally opposed methodology of sciences in these antagonist classes bar religion from occupying space as a mixture of theoretical and practical knowledge. Such an "arbitrary compilation" poses no threat to the epistemological establishment, appealing only to beginners as an entry into serious thinking. The misguided attack on religion must then emerge from polemic against preexisting knowledge, the belief that for science to succeed, its predecessor must be vanquished, rather than from some aspect of religion itself.[260] Unless religion's antagonists consider wisdom and piety mutually exclusive virtues, religion holds no inherent threat to science.

Schleiermacher proposes religion to be the "highest restored unity of knowledge", as it fills the gap in human nature left by the bipartite action-thought model. Religion is subordinate to neither action nor thought but equal to both. The "indefensible" construct argued against by its despisers is but a mere shadow of religion, and their criticisms are empty when turned toward the truth of religion.[261] The critic may cite religious scriptures of any tradition as proof religion is no more than thought concerning divine nature and action according to divine will, yet these scriptures too are human edifice obscuring the religious essence within them.[262] Scripture is an entry-point to faith, overlaying esoteric truth with recognizable trappings to ameliorate apprehension of its concepts.[263] To understand the essence of religion, then, we must divorce from religion those aspects belonging to science and ethics by which its despisers hope to know it. Religion is not knowing, nor is an individual's piety measured by their knowledge. Religion

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[259] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 157.
[260] Ibid., 158.
[261] Ibid., 159.
[262] Ibid., 160.
[263] Ibid., 161.

as thought is immediate contemplation and recognition of each finite thing's existence in the

infinite[264] and awareness of the infinite presence in each finite thing.[265] Religious ethical

contemplation discerns the actions of God through finite maneuvers and does not attempt to

construct ethical systems. Religion is not action either, but an awareness of divine action. Ethics

require free will and instruct the individual on how to operate within the whole. Religion is to

allow oneself to be moved by the whole, it is not action in and of itself, nor does it incite the

individual to action as do ethics. Therefore, religion must be considered a sphere of its own,

existing in necessary tandem with those other two spheres of human nature.[266]

As the third sphere of human nature, religion fills the gap between science and praxis,

establishing a unity among the two that cannot be had without it. Schleiermacher is careful to

point out that the division he draws between thought, action and religion is purely theoretical; as

indispensable components of human nature, no right action can be had without right thought and

vice versa.[267] "True science is perfected intuition; true praxis is self-generated cultivation and art;

true religion is sensation and taste for the infinite".[268] With this statement, Schleiermacher

establishes the impossibility of success in one sphere without success in the others. Perfect

intuition requires ascertaining the present as it really is, necessitating awareness of the infinite

working through the finite. One achieves self-generation of cultivation and art only through

allowing the infinite to move oneself. And sensation and taste for the infinite is cultivated by

proper consideration and aware action. Science is the existence of external things in your reason

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[264] Schleiermacher uses "infinite" interchangeably with "God".
[265] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 161-162.
[266] Ibid., 163-164.
[267] Ibid., 165.
[268] Ibid., 165.

and art is the existence of you in some external form. Without union of reason and nature, of the infinite in your finite being, neither thought nor praxis may flourish within you.[269]

Schleiermacher recognizes that, by the nature of thought, praxis and religion as internal phenomena, he cannot communicate us the distinct appearance of our personal religious inclination. He may, however, provide us the tools necessary to recognize it in ourselves. When drawing an object, we apprehend said object with intuition and render our concept of it through action. The object impresses itself into our consciousness and flows through us onto the page, merging intuition, feeling and action in one moment of complete unity.[270] More generally, every moment of life is just such a moment of unity. We exist in the world through our senses and exist in ourselves through our consciousness, which unites with the senses. Therefore, we exist both in the world and in ourselves through synonymous means. Life is a constant termination and renewal of experiential moments; those oft-experienced yet rarely acknowledged moments when we "become sense and the universe becomes object".[271] And with awareness of these moments, the individual recognizes their unity with the whole.[272] Either the infinite presents itself to the finite through the sublime or intuition or the consciousness brings forward an enthralling feeling; in both situations the underlying unity of subject and object, thought and action, consciousness and material reigns supreme. Feeling and intuition emerge from knowing, as objects "draw you into the circle of their existence" and you discover them in yourself, and from doing, as you "impress your existence upon objects and imagine yourself in them". Whether inclined toward

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[269] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 166.
[270] Ibid., 168-169.
[271] Ibid., 169.
[272] Ibid., 170.

thought or action, the consciousness naturally pursues unity of self and other.[273] Thus, human nature necessitates corequisite knowing, acting and feeling.

The coincidence of knowing, acting and feeling, those instances of pure intuition which materialists would call "practical life" or "scientific life" depending on whether they are produced by thought or action, Schleiermacher calls "religious life". Here, we find the essence of religion. Religion reveals itself to the individual as the infinite in the finite through actions of the universe upon their senses.[274] This description may qualify as knowledge of religion but is far from qualifying as religion itself. Religion has hold only in personal moments of intuition or feeling, not in communicating those moments or discussing their nature.[275]

Schleiermacher acridly derides those who claim piety without having ever experienced moments of genuine intuition themselves. No formulas braided "one over another into a system of belief" such as Hume's natural theology can substitute for union with the infinite. Likewise, to "weave a scared order out of… regulations" is not to recognize the infinite in yourself. Knowing these systems to be empty without the feeling they are meant to evoke, adherents quibble over what formulas to incorporate or which additional regulations to follow, ignorant of the result they hope their methods to produce.[276] To call such empty formulas or meaningless rules religion shows the speaker to be devoid of religious feeling. No human machination replicates life, and no "piteous imitation" stands for naturally-arising religious feeling. To view each individual as part of the whole and to allow oneself to be moved by the whole is religion; to look beyond this into the nature and substance of things is not.[277]

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[273] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 171.
[274] Ibid., 172.
[275] Ibid., 173.
[276] Ibid., 174-175.
[277] Ibid., 175.

When existence operates as an indispensable whole which reveals itself through the operations of its infinite parts, divinity cannot be restricted to a far-off transcendental realm or attributed only to one being. The whole itself is divine, and each finite being operating within it is therefore also divine. Limiting divinity to a discrete god is "empty mythology", as detrimental to true religion as is natural theology.[278] Divinity is the essential oneness of existence, not dissimilar from Augustine's concept of finite truth being derived from the ultimate, divine truth. True piety is recognition of the wholeness, the divinity, present in the finite world.

As it is rooted in personal experience, religion presents itself uniquely in each individual. Schleiermacher finds its most apt comparison to be music, for each of the various pieces of music forms a "particular revelation of the world in itself", yet the whole of music is divided by genre and culture down to the unique expression of the individual musician.[279] Within the musician, music distills further yet down to measures and notes, assembled by free-choice of the composer.[280] Music encapsulates the boundless individuality Schleiermacher holds integral to religion. Via its composer's imagination, it captures their mood at the moment of composition, appreciating feeling without attempting to describe it. This too belongs to religion, as the essence of religion is appreciation of feeling, which engenders further feeling.[281] Schleiermacher thus holds music to share the religious pursuit and in doing so to qualify as religious itself.

To consider feeling in the moment and attempt to describe it inwardly or outwardly detracts from pure experience of that feeling and makes scientific what would be otherwise religious. Doing so emphasizes the inner workings of consciousness to the detriment of emotional experience. It belongs to religion only to notice and appreciate feeling, not to corrupt

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[278] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 176.
[279] Ibid., 177.
[280] Ibid., 177-178.
[281] Ibid., 178.

that feeling with "cold calculation and shrewdness".[282] Those who would systematize religion by looking only to conclude about the whole close their eyes to religious experience rooted in the individual, so can only propose corrupt, uninformed systems. Such theorists subordinate individual experience to the whole in their search for something greater still, in perfect antithesis with religious feeling. To even attempt to draw these conclusions conflicts with the independence of each thing, true in and of itself and dependent only upon the original matter of fact.[283] Every feeling depends on nothing but religion and cannot be produced or possessed if "severed from its source".[284] Due to this necessary link, religion can be studied only through feeling.[285]

According to Schleiermacher, no one system or theology can capture all religion or be rightly termed universal. Religion's scope is infinite and must be apprehended under "the totality of all forms". Each religious organization operates within a circumscribed sphere, providing no knowledge of things outside that sphere and manifesting the elements of religion in its own way. Religion is infinite because it includes all true things, whose number are infinite, and is always developing anew in accordance with change and the growing relationship between humanity and the world. A truly religious consciousness accepts its place as an integral thing in an infinite whole. Thus, the oppression and bloodshed historically caused by some religious institutions stem from outside encroachment into religious territory. Definitions do not belong to religion, nor does uniformity. Conflicts fought over definitions of terms or for the sake of ideological uniformity were catalyzed by corrupt religious institutions rather than the essence of

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[282] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 178
[283] The original matter of fact referred to here is conclusion *a priori*, that of an initial mover upon which all other action depends.
[284] Ibid., 179.
[285] Ibid., 179-180.

religion, which seeks only to recognize the individual's entirely unique consciousness in the boundless whole.[286]

Religion views all that exists in its relation to the whole and therefore considers even the most adverse objects necessary and intrinsically valuable. Every possibility is a window into the infinite potential. The truly pious detest one-sidedness, considering everything worthy including those things outside their own system of thought. To blame religion itself rather than its cultural trappings and borrowed pedantry for the abominable acts its detractors wish to ascribe it would then require proof that piety, as a separate entity from ethics, influenced reprobates to undertake their crimes. As already established, the religious essence lies in feeling while the ethical essence lies in acting. It is more correct, therefore, to say that these people would have been unethical with or without their religion. The religious essence spurs no person to commit atrocities, as it does not demand one act, only feel.[287] Piety elicits inner enjoyment of universal unity so that the individual may become ever-aware of their union with the whole, and acting arises from this internal unity as a distinct branch of life.[288] No one should ever take action out of religion, but should act in every moment with religion, letting religious feelings "accompany the active life continually like a holy music.[289] And so the truly pious treat with equal indifference good and evil acts performed in the name of religion and empty rituals meant to invoke the divine.[290]

Religion is not had by holding knowledge of feeling or by imitating the actions of those who possess religious feeling. Second-degree, theoretical understanding of feeling is not feeling itself, and imitation of another may give the external impression of religion but is action born

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[286] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 180-181.
[287] Ibid., 183-184.
[288] Ibid., 185.
[289] Ibid., 185-186.
[290] Ibid., 186-187.

from thought dissociated entirely from the feeling which gives that action meaning. Just as a person may appear ethical by emulating the actions of truly ethical people without harboring any of the sentiments indicative of true ethicality, a person may appear religious by engaging in superstitious rituals without holding any true religious feeling.[291] Superstitious hypocrites look outward and model their actions after what those around them perform and expect; the truly religious engage the world with their piety in following their own path.[292]

Schleiermacher ends his explanation of the religious essence and moves on to elucidate where in life religion is found- wherever a person engages in the outer world primarily with feeling, they experience religion. These transient moments pass quickly but the living world constantly offers new opportunities for feeling and intuition. If, as Hume suggested, humans first turned toward piety to waylay fear of the natural world, piety should have disappeared once civilization provided adequate safety from natural terrors. Yet piety remains. While humans may no longer fear the plague-bearing arrows of Apollo or the awesome lightning of Jupiter, we still marvel at the protective and maintaining intricacies of the natural world.[293] Fear encourages the individual to seek safety in the stability of human systems, religious and societal. Only when one sets aside this fear do they experience the "holy awe" foundational to true religion.[294] Likewise, rapturous enthrallment with the natural world is not necessarily religious. If one experiences joy when beholding a flower in a field but not a flower grown in a dim room, it is the beauty and circumstance they appreciate, not the infinite's presence in that flower. Feeling borne from

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[291] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 188.
[292] Ibid., 188-189.
[293] Ibid., 189-190.
[294] Ibid., 190-191.

direct intuition "without pondering or wanting something else" constitutes true religious experience.[295]

We may intuit the divine as well through the eternal laws of the external world. From the heavenly bodies to a mote of dust, natural law dictates their existence and thus encompasses the whole. The order explicable from eternal law confers a "less vivid" religious feeling than does immediate intuition of existence. Schleiermacher likens each law to a section of a great piece of art. If, intricately and perfectly beautiful in its own right, the individual section deserves recognition as a work of art in and of itself, the whole would constitute no more than an amalgamation of beautiful works, lacking coherent design as a full piece. But if each section viewed alone appears imperfect, yet contributes to a grand, ambitious and beautiful whole, the entire piece would be better off for it. We are able to view only a section of the immaculate art that is existence, and the inconsistencies in our comprehension of nature indicate "a higher unity, a bolder combination" we cannot intuit from natural law alone.[296] One who considers only the order indicated by human understanding of natural law still appreciates a great and ordered whole. But this whole pales in comparison to that acknowledged by those who conclude an even greater and more ambitious ordered whole from the chaos apparently implied by our limited understanding of eternal law.

Schleiermacher asserts religious feeling depends upon interaction between humans. When God created Adam, the first man did not grow religious awe of his immaculate paradise in his heart, nor did the world reveal itself to him. Only when God created Eve did Adam recognize his own humanity by seeing it in another and apply the relation he felt between them to the whole of nature. Upon seeing his state reflected in another, Adam recognized the unity of

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[295] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 191-192.
[296] Ibid., 193-194.

all things and encountered for the first time religion.[297] Schleiermacher refers to the creation

narrative of Genesis to illustrate that only when we recognize humanity in another do we value

our own.[298] Love allows us to discover the humanity of another person. We love most dearly the

person who holds what we ourselves lack, composing in our unity a whole picture of

humanity.[299] Humanity realized in this way opens our hearts to the infinite presence in the

natural world.

Enemies of religion emphasize humanity as well but do so under different pretenses.

They make humanity central to the universe such that they define everything by its relationship

to humanity. Where no such relationship exists, that thing does not belong to their universe.[300]

The role humanity plays in their system is contrary to that of humanity as Schleiermacher

describes it. For Schleiermacher, humanity is radically individual and each individual

manifestation of humanity conglomerates into a beautiful whole. His humanity is the means by

which the individual places themselves in the whole, not that by which the non-human is

defined. Rather than defining the whole from some uniform conception of humanity,

Schleiermacher advises we seek how humanity reveals itself uniquely in the individual form of

each discrete human.[301] We each should search in the myriad manifestations of divine order for

a religious genius, an enlightened mentor who will lead us individually to illumination via

intuition of the world's "eternal limits".[302]

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[297] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech,* 197.
[298] Schleiermacher does not incorporate Genesis to claim the truth of its creation narrative, but to display the importance of companionship to recognizing inner humanity and catalyzing religious feeling. This truth, he maintains, was known by ancient theologians and reflected in their mythology.
[299] Ibid., 198.
[300] Ibid., 198.
[301] Ibid., 199.
[302] Ibid., 200.

Every person holds something unique in their humanity which makes them distinct from all others. At some moment in each person's life, Schleiermacher believes, this unique quality will spring forth and the individual will fulfill their purpose in life. In this moment of perfect intuition, the individual engages their defining quality to become "what they can be".[303] By the entirely unique humanity of every human being, each person is an indispensable part of the ineffable whole. The whole would not be the same were an individual who now exists to have never existed, nor would the whole of humanity include the unique quality manifested only in that individual.[304] Even if some people represent humanity greater than others, the highest representative and the lowest bear equal importance to the whole.[305] When we consider life from this standpoint of connected, worthy individuals, each appears good and divine. But if we do so from the typical perspective of self-obsession, the world becomes no more than a collection of isolated existences upon which the individual exercises their free-will. What then could be, Schleiermacher asks, "more natural than the most genial sympathy for all the pain and suffering that arises… than sincere regret over everything in us that is hostile toward the genius of humanity?".[306]

After experiencing the full range of emotions and the loss of their isolated existence within the infinite, the individual recognizes they possess within themselves all they had previously considered aspects or sides of humanity. The religious feeling leads one on a journey spanning "the most beautiful and most base… the most noble and most contemptible", before settling once again in interior consciousness and revealing the self to possess all these aspects.

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[303] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 200-201.
[304] Ibid., 201.
[305] Ibid., 202.
[306] Ibid., 203-204.

Only by recognizing and experiencing the external infinite can we become aware of the infinite's presence within ourselves.[307]

Feeling as a relationship between individual and world is not limited to the present. Schleiermacher argues history's place as "the highest object of religion", for through history we observe the action of the universe over time. Science will never comprehend the most sublime feature of history, that after a long period in which nothing the same is produced, a particular manifestation of humanity reemerges exactly as it was in previous manifestations. Moments in history repeat themselves, so the discerning may conclude from the same moment's different causes "the progress of the universe and the formula of its laws". Since every moving thing must have been set in motion by something else, we may understand the present by looking to the past.[308] History reveals that nothing is dead and gone, nor is there any greater enemy to humanity than death. In everything there is unity, connection, destruction and repurposing of that finite thing for some new life. Allowing oneself to be ruled by passive impulse or unthinking obedience may as well be death; embracing the eternal feeling of love is truly living.[309]

Schleiermacher says religion, properly conceived as intuitive feeling, has been experienced even by its detractors, albeit limitedly. Religion presented as Schleiermacher does is foreign to no human, as feeling comes naturally to us. Its cultured despisers only deceive themselves as to the root of their intuition. They want to believe feeling is in some way derived from ethical acting and in revoking what they ought to consider the religious essence from religion, they label mere cultural institutions and superstitious dogma religion.[310] In appropriating feeling to action, they corrupt the purity of the former and cloud their own morals.

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[307] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 204-205.
[308] Ibid., 205.
[309] Ibid., 207.
[310] Ibid., 208-209.

They attribute feelings born from tension between the individual and the whole to ethical action, implying love, joy and all other emotions immediately catalyze action, sundering their own ethical system.[311]

If the religious essence is as Schleiermacher argues, the doctrines and dogmas of organized religions constitute reflections upon the religious feeling and propositions drawn from these reflections. But religion knows nothing of thinking about feeling, only feeling itself. One can be exceedingly pious without holding any concept of miracles or revelations. These concepts properly belong in the religious sphere but are human constructions to communicate the religious essence.[312] "Miracle" is merely the religious name for any event, reflecting the mindset of the person considering that event. Every finite thing is a sign of the infinite and in every finite action the religious may intuit action of the infinite. From the religious mindset, every event is a miracle.[313] Likewise, "revelation" is the religious term for "new and original" communications of the infinite to humans. Every scientific discovery, every novel philosophy, is in this sense a revelation.[314] These terms do not establish anything about the objects to which they refer but indicate the religious consciousness of the person using them.[315] To consider the world by these terms, to feel connection to the external world, bask in its majesty, allow it to permeate you and to recognize your feelings as irreproducible actions of the infinite is faith. True religious belief is belief in every finite thing's place within the infinite and the unique manifestation of the whole in each individual.[316]

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[311] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 209-210.
[312] Ibid., 212.
[313] Ibid., 213.
[314] Ibid., 213-214.
[315] Ibid., 214.
[316] Ibid., 215.

Those who merely mimic religious actions or cling to dead scripture as proof and truth over their own intuition hold no true faith. Sacred scriptures themselves are valid, splendid reflections upon feeling. But to the sycophantic practitioner, "scripture is merely a mausoleum", an empty reminder of the spirit that once inspired it. The truly religious engage with scripture as living documents and would be still be religious without it.[317]

Schleiermacher's *Second Speech* is a rhetorical piece addressing a specific audience. It defines and explains the religious essence by identifying inconsistencies of the antireligious viewpoint, then argues this essence, separate from the cultural infrastructure surrounding it, belongs to universal human experience.[318] With this argument, Schleiermacher frames religion as an indispensable facet of human life unavoidable even to the staunchest materialist. They may deny the implications or source of their feeling, but intuition itself is ingrained in the human consciousness.[319] How, then, does Schleiermacher construe religion to interact with epistemology?

Schleiermacher understands religion to be intimately individualistic. Feeling is an internal phenomenon, occurring within the bounds of one's own consciousness and communicable only through fabricated human terms unable to capture their grandeur. Action, thought and feeling comprise the three pillars of human life, each a necessary complement to the others. Thinking and doing are active operations in which we impose upon the world something of our own. Feeling, however, is primarily receptive, in which the universe imposes something of itself upon us. This universal imposition attunes us to the greater whole so that our actions upon the external world may be colored by its impression on us.[320] Here, we find Schleiermacher's

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[317] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 215-216.
[318] Lamm, 17.
[319] Clements, 36.
[320] Lamm, 19.

placement of religion relative to knowledge. Faith holds no role within epistemology, for the

two belong to entirely separate spheres of life; the former belongs to the realm of feeling and the

latter to the realm of thought.[321] Feeling provides no knowledge of the external world, nor does

it claim to. It sits wholly outside the boundaries of thought and in no way catalyzes knowledge.

Pure feeling is intuitive experience of an infinite action upon the individual.

This does not mean no interplay exists between feeling and thought. The two may emerge

from distinct spheres of life, neither causing the other, but they are constant mutual influences.

Without feeling, thought is left as a "one-sided ruin", aimless and devoid of universal

awareness.[322] Feeling allows us to assimilate operations of the universe into our own being,

becoming aware of those operations by surrendering ourselves to the whole and noting its actions

upon us, then reproducing said operations internally. "[C]reativity, freedom, and individuality"

are the fruits of consciousness rooted in feeling as feeling opens the heart to universal activity

which may then influence our thought and action.[323] For the religious to engage exclusively in

feeling and deny thought and action is, for Schleiermacher, likewise negligent. Those pious

folks who retreat from society into isolation for the purpose of "idle meditation" reject two

pillars of human life and thus do not engage fully in the infinite universe.[324]

Schleiermacher released his *Second Speech* into an academic environment rife with both

Enlightenment principles of rationality and evidential-proof and Romantic ideals relating to the

value of individual feeling, however irrational that feeling may be.[325] *Second Speech* addresses

these seemingly incoherent principles and construes them as thought and feeling respectively,

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[321] Clements, 76.
[322] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 156.
[323] Lamm, 65.
[324] Schleiermacher, *The Second Speech*, 184.
[325] Clements, 12.

equally important and inherent spheres of human nature. In doing so, Schleiermacher redefines what it means to be fully human in accordance with the emphasis the Enlightenment and Romanticism place on remaining true to your nature. Feeling serves as the core of humanity, unifying and grounding the spheres of thought and action in a universal awareness.[326] The children of the Enlightenment whom *Second Speeches* addresses detest what they misconceive to be religion so greatly that they reject their own feelings as inconsequential, thereby compromising the integrity of their thoughts and actions.[327]

Foregrounding thought in human experience as religion's materialist objectors do jeopardizes their capacity to engage with the universe in a way that foregrounding feeling does not. Enlightenment-influenced rationality demands evidential proof of a conclusion for that conclusion to merit consideration. Living a life guided chiefly by rational thought leads one to engage with a reality composed exclusively of provable conclusions. Such a mindset denies the value of inherently irrational feeling and intuition, for these phenomena bear no immediate ubiquitous cause nor effect. Thus, the materialist rejects an indelible piece of human nature. Foregrounding feeling dispenses with neither remaining sphere of life. Feeling and intuition represent infinite actions upon the individual and comprise Schleiermacher's essence of religion.[328] To foreground feeling as *modus operandi* for experiencing the world is simply to immediately recognize the presence of the infinite in each finite thing. Feeling does not claim to know every action solely as one of the infinite. Schleiermacher accepts causal conclusions indicating the "interdependence of Nature" as valid productions of reasoned thought.[329] The

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[326] Clements, 14.

[327] David E. Klemm, "Culture, Arts and Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* edited by Jacqueline Mariña, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 256.

[328] Ibid., 255.

[329] Clements, 49.

complementary systems governing our natural world maintain validity even when feeling is the primary mode through which one engages with external reality. One who foregrounds feeling in their consciousness recognizes the natural systems of cause and effect *and* intuits the infinite within those systems. Living a religious life means experiencing the world first through feeling, then understanding it through thought and affecting it through action. It is the fullest possible experience of human nature.

Schleiermacher's redefinition of religion responded to the academic popularity of natural theologies akin to Hume's. Natural religion dispensed with the irrational and often contradictory faith of revealed religion in favor of universal philosophical principles held in common by various revealed religions and confidence in reason's ability to ascertain the divine. These systems understand god as the designer of our ordered world; a conclusion Schleiermacher steadfastly denies.[330] According to Schleiermacher, every finite thing has absolute dependence on god. God is not an absentee designer or an object but the infinite itself, the very fabric of manifestation. God is the whole to which every finite being belongs. The unity of all things in god necessitates breaking down strict delineations between human operations. Culture and religion do not operate independently of one another but, along with all other human constructions, are expressions of the infinite through the finite. In this light, all human operations are fundamentally reflections of the infinite.[331] Whether or not we are aware of our absolute dependence on the whole, every action we perform is an action of the infinite through us so is properly religious.

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[330] Klemm, 254.

[331] J. Harold Ellens, "Schleiermacher's Vision of the Unity of Religion and Culture" in *Schleiermacher in Context* edited by Ruth Drucilla Richardson, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991, 356.

The idea of religion Schleiermacher proposes depends on the relationship between the individual and the group to which the individual belongs. Feelings are "inward witnesses and responses to realities other than they self".[332] Without a relationship between self and other as belonging to a greater whole, there would be no feeling. Schleiermacher always construes the individual in relation to their group, affecting and affected by the whole. Although he sees the individual and their particular relationship with the infinite through feeling to be unique, Schleiermacher writes there can be no antisocial religion.[333] He believes in a relational aspect to human nature and language as its clearest manifestation. Individual feeling reaches a level of intensity at which it must be outwardly communicated through voice and gesture.[334] Communication is a necessary component of religious self-consciousness, for it epitomizes relational existence within the whole.

Theology, or thinking about religion, may not fall under the sphere of feeling but is necessary for communication of feeling among a social circle. Schleiermacher claims we cannot readily apprehend the meaning of theology by name alone, so he defines how we are meant to understand it.[335] Given the concurrent formation of religious communities across the globe, Schleiermacher concludes such communities are "a necessary element for the development of the religious spirit". In other words, the world-wide phenomenon of religious community indicates human nature directs the universally attuned to seek out and associate with like-minded individuals. Pious communities logically and historically predate the theologies those communities construct.[336] Theology relates the essence of its group's piety to the context in

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[332] Clements, 37.
[333] Ibid., 38.
[334] Ibid., 45.
[335] Richard Crouter, "Shaping an Academic Discipline: The *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* edited by Jacqueline Mariña, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 112.
[336] Ibid., 116.

which the group operates and is of particular import to community leaders.[337] Therefore,

theology is specific to a certain group and advises group leadership on how to govern the

community within its cultural context. Dogma, ritual and historical narrative are aspects of

theology and likewise community specific.

Schleiermacher's religious understanding reconciles Enlightenment reason with the

inherently irrational faith of traditional revealed religions. He grounds the religious essence in an

essential aspect of human nature, defines religion as conscious awareness of individual

dependence upon the whole and understands theology as internal communication among a

community of religion. In doing so, he deftly navigates the contemporary argument between

natural theologians and revealed religion without compromising the integrity of either, while

maintaining the radical individuality valued by Romantics. Natural theology fits neatly into

Schleiermacher's system as a valid yet incomplete analysis of natural systems, veracious in its

attribution of universal order to a divine source but small-minded in its refusal to intuit the

infinite. Religious institutions communicate understanding of the religious essence to their

members through community-specific theology. Natural theology and religious theology emerge

from separate catalysts and pursue distinct goals; the former concludes what feeling already

knows to be true through reason while the latter begins with confidence in feeling and governs

communities formed around shared recognition of feeling's source. True religion requires from

the individual that they understand their own feeling as an operation of the infinite upon them,

and let their feeling guide their thought, action and relationships within the ever-united whole.

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[337] Crouter, 114.

Hume and Schleiermacher in Conversation

David Hume and Friedrich Schleiermacher remain seminal figures in the academic study of religion and early modern forefathers of contemporary materialism and idealism respectively. The two agree faith holds no role within epistemology but differ fundamentally in their defenses of this stance. To Hume, faith is an antiquated epistemological tool inferior to evidential reason. He thinks faith peddles misnomered knowledge of natural systems without the sufficient evidence required of real knowledge. Reason offers an avenue for metaphysical inquiry, yet its conclusions still lack evidential merit. Natural theology may yield a metaphysical understanding more reasonable than all others but any claim about natural systems without supporting physical evidence fails to qualify as knowledge and constitutes, at best, probable hypothesis. Schleiermacher differentiates faith from reason entirely, explaining the two belong to separate integral spheres of human existence and work toward separate goals. For Schleiermacher, reason is an operation of thought by which humans understand the universe and conclude knowledge of its systems, while faith is recognition of feeling's ultimate source and subsequent surrendering of the self to the infinite. Faith and reason cannot be set against each other as Hume does because their discrete foundations in human nature render the two incomparable.

Hume's and Schleiermacher's dissonant justifications for removing faith from epistemology reflect their individual understanding of faith's classification as a human process. Hume delegitimizes faith as a worthwhile human endeavor entirely. Faith as provider of knowledge must be discarded for a superior alternative in reason. He sees the two operations as pursuants of the same end-goal: understanding of the world around us. Naturally, Hume does away with what he sees as the less fruitful of two alternatives. Schleiermacher gives no such privileged position to faith or reason, construing them not as competitors but as adjacent human

processes with their own respective objects. Reason is an operation of thought which produces knowledge, but faith claims to "know" nothing. It intuits finite beings as belonging to an infinite whole and feels actions of that whole upon the self-consciousness. Thus, reason and faith are not only compatible, but are both natural and necessary. The broadened view of human nature Schleiermacher offers provides a more flexible template for human operations than that which Hume presents and permits coexistence of faith and reason.

Hume and Schleiermacher in Conversation with Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham

In the writings of David Hume, we see a continuation of the epistemological thread carried by Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham. All four thinkers understand faith to provide knowledge. Augustine thinks God is the ultimate truth knowable only by faith, by which all created beings derive their veracity and upon which all other truth is therefore dependent. Faith to Augustine is a necessarily primary to knowledge, for claims unguided by faith are prone to contradict ultimate truth. Aquinas holds confidence in reason's capacity to ascertain the truths of faith and considers the two operations distinct methods of acquiring knowledge. Ockham argues certain truths of faith are demonstrable by reason, but some knowledge is had only by faith. These "mysteries of faith" are no less true than knowledge promulgated by reason. Hume works within the epistemological mold of Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham relative to faith, as he construes faith to pursue knowledge. He, however, breaks with his three predecessors by necessitating evidential proof to consider a claim knowledge. Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham each believe faith alone may provide true knowledge. Hume thinks faith unable to conclude any knowledge by its own virtue, for it neither requires nor gives evidence supporting its claims.

Schleiermacher disagrees with the other four thinkers' placement of faith as an epistemological process. His faith exists entirely separate from knowing and makes no claims of

truth. Faith emerges from human nature alongside thinking, and only when an individual's

emotional development culminates in their recognition of the unity of all reality does the sphere

of faith begin to influence the sphere of thinking. Schleiermacher's understanding of faith is

similar to Augustine's in that it recognizes the absolute dependence of all finite beings on their

infinite source and grounds the operation of knowing but, in opposition with the latter, places

faith outside the bounds of epistemology. Unlike Augustine, Schleiermacher does not understand

faith to provide ultimate knowledge or to demand conclusions of reason to cohere with truths of

faith. There are no truths of faith according to Schleiermacher, and faith and reason never

intersect in their operation or conclusions, for faith draws no conclusions. Augustine thinks faith

must guide reason as faith is the only way to know ultimate truth. Schleiermacher believes

feeling properly developed leads to faith and the individual's new-found religious conception

should ground their thinking, but that faith influences knowledge by relating it to the eternal

principle of unity, not by demanding knowledge produced from secular sources cohere with

knowledge by faith.

  Hume and Schleiermacher take distinct approaches to engaging with faith in the post-

Enlightenment world. The former follows in the epistemological footsteps of medieval

theologians by understanding faith as an epistemological tool, then dispenses with faith in favor

of a process he thinks more apt to produce knowledge. The latter breaks earlier theological

tradition by removing faith from epistemology entirely yet claiming equal veracity of faith and

reason. Hume shows that in an academic environment which values reason over all else, faith is

simply inferior to rationality. Schleiermacher reconciles faith with reason by ensuring the two do

not compete, carrying idealism into the Age of Reason. Hume rejects our capacity to confidently

ascertain knowledge of the immaterial, but Schleiermacher provides sound reasoning defending

our ability to intuitively apprehend the infinite and scientifically know the finite. Therefore, Schleiermacher's argument validating our ability to jointly consider the immaterial and the material will be the primary textual influence on Chapter III's reconstruction of idealist metaphysics as secular theology.

CHAPTER III

Modern Western epistemology locates truth in the materially sensible and holds empirical

verifiability as the premier signifier of demonstrable knowledge. Within the secular academic

study of religion, scholars generally reject serious consideration of the divine in favor of social-

scientific study of religious communities or phenomenological inquiry into conscious

experience.[338] This chapter presents a repose to the materialist leaning of Western epistemology,

in which I adumbrate a secular theology and argue for its value as an academic topic.

Max Müller

If we seek to introduce secular theology as a worthy field in the modern secular study of

religion, we ought to first look back to the discipline's foundation. Perhaps no thinker was more

influential to the formation of Western religious studies than Max Müller. Born on December 6,

1823 in the town of Dessau southwest of Berlin, Müller lost his father early in his youth and

spent the majority of his childhood with his maternal grandparents. At age twelve, his mother

enrolled him in a boarding school in Leipzig, where he developed interest in music and poetry.

Müller decided to pursue a life of academia, and in 1841 matriculated into the University of

Leipzig.[339] Here he studied classics and philosophy and, having mastered Latin and Greek in his

earlier studies, learned Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic.[340] Müller completed his doctorate by

September 1843 and remained in Leipzig studying philosophy and Sanskrit before traveling to

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[338] Phenomenology studies first-person, subjective conscious experience. Edmund Husserl, the discipline's founder, suggests we do so by "bracketing" existence of the external world to focus on how we consciously experience it. Phenomenology asks not "what do I experience?", but "how do I experience it?". For more on phenomenology and bracketing, see: David Woodruff Smith, "Phenomenology" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, URL=
https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/.
[339] Jon R. Stone, "Introduction" in *The Essential Max Müller: On Language, Mythology, and Religion*, edited by Jon R. Stone, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 6-7.
[340] Ibid., 8.

Berlin in 1844 to attend lectures of Franz Bopp, founder of comparative philology[341], and

Friedrich von Schelling, who at the time spoke on the philosophy of mythology.[342] Under these

two great minds, Müller cultivated his interest in comparative philology and mythology. He

traveled to Paris in 1845, where he studied under the French Sanskritist Eugène Burnouf and

began a twenty-four-year long project of compiling a critical edition of the sacred Hindu Rg

Veda.[343] This project led him to Oxford University in 1846, where he would spend most of the

remainder of his life. In 1856, Müller published his "Comparative Mythology" and in 1861 and

1863 delivered two series of lectures on comparative philology, for which he received

widespread acclaim. Müller delivered in 1870 a series of speeches he termed "Lectures in the

Science of Religion".[344] It is the first lecture in this series we will now discuss.

The first of Müller's "Lectures in the Science of Religion" argues for the establishment of

comparative theology as a field of study. The knowledge yielded by comparative philology,

Müller contends, proves the scholarly potential of the comparative method. He acknowledges

that for some theology is akin to astrology or alchemy, seemingly devoid of any truth. Yet in

astrology we find "a yearning… after the true science of astronomy" and in alchemy "the seed of

chemistry".[345] For others, religion is too sacred a subject to be explored through profane

scientific inquiry. But comparative philology has lessened our esteem for neither the languages

of antiquity nor our own tongues. Quite the contrary, Müller claims, comparative philology

reveals the wisdom and order the human faculty of language lends all its manifestations.[346]

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[341] The comparative study of languages

[342] Stone, 10-11.

[343] Ibid., 14.

[344] Ibid., 15.

[345] Max Müller, *The Science of Religion: Lecture One* in *The Essential Max Müller: On Language, Mythology, and Religion* edited by Jon R. Stone, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 110.

[346] Ibid., 112.

Placing the theologies of the world on even ground to be compared as equals does not

consequence reduction of religion's true essence.[347]

Müller provides two meanings for the term religion in common parlance. Religion may

refer to a faith tradition contained in transmitted doctrine or canonical texts. Islam, Hinduism and

Christianity are examples of religion in this sense. It may also connote the capacity for religion

inherent in human nature, what Müller calls "the faculty of faith". He thinks this faculty to be the

defining characteristic of human nature by which the human being differs from other conscious

beings. Nowhere else in nature do we find a creature with the tendency to "turn… [its] face to

heaven" and seek something "neither sense nor reason can supply". Müller thus places the

faculty of faith alongside the faculties of sense and reason as deserving a philosophical discipline

devoted to its study.[348]

In accordance with the dual modalities of religion, Müller divides the scientific study of

religion into two processes. Comparative theology concerns the historical forms of religion while

theoretic theology postulates the conditions under which religion is possible. The latter draws

conclusions about the schematic essence of religion in humanity's faculty of faith from

descriptions provided by the former. To ensure the veracity of theoretic theology's conclusions,

Müller advises scholars to delay engagement in it until "all the evidence that can possibly be

gained from a comparative study of the religions of the world has been fully collected, classified,

and analyzed".[349] The complete picture of human religion throughout history that Müller argues

comparative theology will produce is a requisite precursor to engagement in theoretic theology.

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[347] Müller, 111.
[348] Ibid., 113.
[349] Ibid., 114.

Comparative theology must employ philology if it is to succeed. Scholarship of languages allows for accurate translation of religious texts, the primary subject of comparative theology's efforts. Knowledge of languages will also help scholars determine which passages within a text belong to its original edition and which were added by later editors. Müller thinks it imperative in our understanding of a text to remove "the corruptions of later ages". Before we may compare any theology to another, we must first procure a clear picture of its religion in its most primitive form.[350] Later conventions of a religious tradition often do not match the beliefs espoused by its founders, and if we seek the essence of religion in human nature through its worldly manifestations, we must study those manifestations at their core.[351] The scriptures deemed canonical in a religion's history rarely were afforded that privileged position by virtue of their evidential merit, but by pejorative defamation of excluded texts as heretical. We thus should not trust all sacred texts implicitly, but subject each to the harshest scholarly criticism in apprehending their foundational essence.[352]

The goal of comparative theology, according to Müller, is "to get at the most ancient, the most original intention of sacred traditions".[353] He disavows the theory that there once existed a primeval religion revealed to the first humans of which all historical religions are corrupt outgrowths.[354] Müller's comparative theology seeks the root of religion in human nature, viewing world religions as embodiments of the faculty of faith from which we might derive knowledge of that basic human capacity. By clearing away "the rust of the ages" we may reveal

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[350] Müller, 115.
[351] Ibid., 116.
[352] Ibid., 117.
[353] Ibid., 120.
[354] Ibid., 119.

a religion in all its ancient splendor and, considering it alongside other religions likewise restored, elucidate our own inner workings.[355]

Although it has fallen out of favor in recent years, comparative theology comprised much of the 20th century study of religion in western academia and is thus the foundation upon which our modern study lies. That secular religious academia today leans away from engagement in philosophy of religion should stand as no surprise given its legacy of comparative theology. In outlining the comparative method for religious inquiry, Müller is careful to prohibit theoretic theology until scholars reach a complete understanding of every world religion in its primitive state. According to Müller, there should be no scholarly construction of theology without first distilling every manifestation of human religion to its core. Our current preoccupation with critically analyzing others' theology over constructing our own owes just as much to comparative theology as it does to materialist epistemology. But if, as I hope to convince you, the comparative foundation underlying our contemporary religious study is flawed, the structure we have built atop it teeters on a precarious fallacy.

We may logically predict the outcome of comparative theology without ever engaging in it ourselves. Müller hoped comparing the theologies of every religion to one another would uncover a common schema which could explicate the roots of religion in human nature.[356] It is no secret that, as of yet, there exists no formal, universally applicable definition of religion. The schema comparative theology intends to yield would be the most comprehensive understanding of the human faculty of faith to date. Let us imagine comparative theology succeeds at the daunting task of constructing such a schema from astute study of world religions. The novel

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[355] Müller, 121.
[356] Comparative study has, in fact, proven a fruitful tool in the study of world religions, albeit not in the manner Müller expected. Comparative theology has revealed the incredible diversity of historical religions but has failed to produce an underlying structure common among them.

definition of religion it presents would be truly groundbreaking. We would be remiss, however,

to immediately declare it complete. Our comparative study would have included only those

systems we, operating off our incomplete definition of religion, understood to be religious. We

have succeeded only in defining religion as that which we already understood it to be! The initial

comparative study pertains only to those systems immediately recognizable as religions, and the

definition it yields, while certainly the most comprehensive to date, does nothing to expand our

understanding of religion. It shows religion to be only what we already knew religion was.

A definition for religion ascertained through comparative theology does, however, open

the door for a second, more informative, comparative study. Here, we refine our newly acquired

definition by considering all those systems which match it save for one contradictory quality. In

doing so, we realize our first definition to be incomplete. For those systems just outside the

boundaries of our definition of religion, is it more reasonable to exclude them from the religious

sphere because they differ just barely from the uninformed concept of religion we held prior to

beginning our comparative study, or to expand our definition? I contend the later. After all, we

undertook comparative theology to produce a new understanding of religion. Refusing to refine

the produced understanding simply because it would then cease to match our preconceived

definition of religion would be antithetical to our original intent.

The second comparative study will eventually yield another, more comprehensive idea of

religion, but we will again be confronted with the same question. Is it more reasonable to

exclude those systems just outside our new definition or to expand it further? Again, we must

continue our inquiry. If we strive for the essence of religion, we cannot choose an arbitrary

stopping point and call our mission a success. We must undertake a third comparative study,

after that a fourth, and after that a fifth, on and on, refining our definition of religion as long as

there exists some system just barely excluded by our previous understanding, until finally all human systems of understanding are subsumed under the name religion[357].

Comparative theology only fulfills its purpose when it at long last reveals the inherent equity of all human systems of thought. Theology, science, philosophy; each at its core is a human method of understanding, none with any greater claim to ultimate truth than the others. These systems exist only by action of the human mind, thus boundaries between them are arbitrarily drawn. Each is a lens through which to direct conscious thought in the search for knowledge, none of which are ultimate or objective. None may rightly claim to be anything other than a human fabrication producing human knowledge. At a fundamental level, every human system of understanding requires faith for its operation. Traditional theology requires faith in metaphysical reality; science, in empirical study's capacity to accurately determine the systems governing interaction of objects; philosophy, in reason as able to apprehend truth; and even the materialist worldview, in the physical world as ultimate truth. Irrational, unempirical faith necessarily precedes engagement in any human method of understanding.

Critics may argue science, with its materially sensible conclusions, provides more than enough justification for faith in its veracity to qualify as rational. All this evidence, however, is meaningless outside a system which values it. Science, like theology, is proven only through its own process. To conclude empirical evidence proves science's validity requires prior faith in the scientific process as apt to produce accurate knowledge. Without faith in the validity of its

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[357] Religion, in this scenario, becomes the name under which we recognize the base similarity of all human methods of understanding only because this conclusion was yielded by secular theology's mission to define religion. Religion is merely the term comparative religion applies to its eventual conclusion. I do not claim all systems of human understanding fall under religion, I claim all these systems *including* world religions merit no impermeable boundaries between them. Nowhere else in this paper do I refer to religion in this sense.

corresponding paradigm[358], scientific evidence is as baseless as revealed religious knowledge is to the materialist.

Even if we do not apply a comparative approach, boundaries between epistemic disciplines are shown arbitrary in the fluidity of their subject matter. Materialist science sees as real only those objects we are, at this time, able to materially interact with. Were a supernatural being to manifest tangibly in the world and make itself available for scientific study, science would not argue against the reality of this object it previously considered unreal, nor would it hesitate to study this being. What had previously been considered religious has here transitioned into a reality accepted by science, so would be studied scientifically. Reality itself did not change, the human perception and categorization of it did. Scientific understanding of the material world is constantly expanding, as is the group of objects available for scientific study. The ever-growing content of human systems shows that they themselves are not absolute.

I do not present this argument to debase science or to deny the legitimacy of its conclusions. I intend only to revoke the undue privileged position science has been afforded within our epistemology and place it alongside theology and philosophy as their equal. Prior to the Enlightenment ascension of science, theology stood atop the pedestal science now occupies, and were their present roles reversed, I would make a similar case for their equitable treatment. The epistemological pendulum swung from one extreme to the other; now I hope to bring it to rest and consider science and theology as they really are. Materialist dogma rules our epistemology, defining truth only as the empirically evident. It presumes trust in empiricism

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[358] Thomas Kuhn defines a paradigm as an exemplary and evidentially-based scientific theory or law novelly applied to solve a previously perplexing issue. A paradigm is the gold-standard of scientific scholarship, providing academic consensus in its relevant field. For more on paradigms, see: Alexander Bird, "Thomas Kuhn" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition) edited by Edward N. Zalta, URL= https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/thomas-kuhn/.

incompatible with faith in theology, an assumption, as I will demonstrate in the following section, as facetious as it is narrow-minded. I want only for science to relinquish its exclusive claim to truth so that we may together explore uncharted intellectual territory.

Secular Theology

Secular theology combines seemingly mutually exclusive terms, which may cause those unfamiliar with it to declare it incoherent. For this reason, I would like to begin our construction of a secular theology by defining what, precisely, I mean by that term. I utilize Schleiermacher's conception of theology as the study of human intuition and feeling relative to the whole of reality. Secular, I use to illustrate this theology's foundation in or adherence to no prior religious dogma. Secular theology, then, is logically sound, non-dogmatic inquiry into humanity's place within the universe.

We begin our journey with one of Hume's natural beliefs, an inalienable conviction of human nature: belief in the reality of the external world. Skeptical philosophy argues our incapacity to verify the reality of anything outside our own consciousness. All that we truly *know* to be real occurs internally. This argument may be sound enough to raise serious doubts in our mind, but, as both Philo and Cleanthes point out in *Dialogues Part XII*, one cannot indefinitely carry doubt in the veracity of external reality. When we do not consciously foreground this doubt in our mind it fades away and we carry about our daily activities as we always have. If it were to persist, it would preclude us from operating meaningfully in the external world. Certainly, belief in external reality, if nothing else, qualifies as a natural belief; it is non-rational, unempirical, yet wholly indelible from human consciousness.

Belief in external material reality is not incoherent with belief in immaterial reality. Through our own immaterial conception of external beings, we construct individual

understandings of what we consider to be material real. Human experience of material reality,

then, is contingent upon belief in immaterial concepts. Traditionally, idealism ascribes ultimacy

to immaterial or transcendent reality, while materialism ascribes it to material objects. The form

of idealism that secular theology embodies blurs the lines between material and immaterial

reality, understanding both classifications as meaningful only within human experience of

reality. Outside human cognition, there is no material and immaterial reality, just reality.

With the necessity of belief in external reality firmly established, we may now discuss

implications of this belief. If we distill any real object to its fundamental description, we realize,

simply to exist within our reality, that object must hold some fundamental quality from which its

reality is derived. This real quality is no more than the aspect of realness. To describe it in more

detail would corrupt the purity of this truly foundational quality and render it inapplicable as the

only universal constant in our conception of real individuals. Each object within our reality

shares with every other this real quality, as it is by this quality we know the object to exist.

Without a common, fundamental, real quality, the term "real" would hold no meaning, nor would

the term "unreal", for there would be could be no cohesive reality by which those terms are

defined.

We *know* only our own internal processes to exist, but we *intuit* external beings. The real

quality is the means by which our externally directed intuition of another object becomes internal

knowledge of that object's reality. Such a quality is a conceptual necessity, for without it we

could not know the reality of another object with the same confidence with which we know our

own. It is a natural human operation to immediately recognize the objects we intuit as real, one

we cannot permanently suspend conviction in. We see a real quality in our conscious workings,

through which we understand ourselves to be real. This same real quality we conceptually,

automatically and inescapably apply to intuited objects, seeing something of ourselves in the other and, therefore, something of the other in ourselves. Thus, we naturally conclude the realness of an external object as on-par with the realness we know of ourselves.

Ockham argued against the existence of universal qualities, believing each individual exists only by virtue of themselves. A reality composed of individuals real only by their existential individuality is no reality at all, but rather an infinite collection of parallel discrete realities each composed of naught but a single individual, with no common realm to which they all belong. This conclusion does not compromise the individuality of discrete beings, only individuality as their fundamental essence. The real quality is the one condition every real object necessarily shares by virtue of its reality, upon which the otherwise unique individual depends. Nonexistence of such a quality could not coincide with an ordered, unified universe under God, which Ockham himself affirmed, for beings must share the general trait of belonging to a reality governed by an ultimate source for them to be subject to said source. When applied to the real quality, Ockham's doctrine against real universals contradicts his belief in God as the absolute maintainer of reality, rendering it inapplicable as an argument against this universal characteristic.

"Real" is a descriptive term signifying the existence of an object. This term holds no meaning unless we have a standard by which to determine an object's existence or lack thereof. That standard is the entirety of consciously-intuited reality. "Real" connotes our understanding of an object's realness relative to our own and those of objects we already know to be real. By terming an object "real", we claim that object exists alongside other real objects in forming reality. Reality, then, represents the concept of every amalgamated real object. The real quality by which we know an intuited object's realness is present in every object informing our personal

conception of reality. In intuiting a novel external object and apprehending knowledge of its realness, we understand it within our conception of reality as a whole.

Our concept of reality is the foundation letting us determine an object to exist and is subject to constant growth as we understand newly-intuited objects within it. Individual conception of reality begins with sole knowledge of the self as real. The first object an individual intuits and ascribes the real quality to expands their conception of reality to include that external object. From this moment on, both self and other exist as equally real objects carrying the real quality within the individual conception of reality. Individual experience of reality begins with the self and grows to encompass externally intuited objects such that every object is understood through its relation to other objects and the real quality defining its membership in the conceptual whole.

Objects within reality belong to one of two classifications. Conscious agents possess the capacity to intuit the real quality of other objects, while unconscious beings hold no such ability. Humans and animals, as conscious agents, apprehend the reality of other beings through sensory organs. By our senses, we intuit the real quality's presence in external objects and thus affirm their existence. We know reality only by our intuitive experience of it; an individual object, once we intuit it, enters our individual conception of reality. Intuition is a process over which we exert no control. We cannot consciously shut out sensory transmission of reality as it occurs to us. When we open our eyes, we see what is before us. Our ears apprehend sound without active effort on our part. Sensation is reality's imposition of external objects upon our internal awareness, a relationship we are passive in. Through sensation, we receive knowledge of reality's manifestations in our immediate presence.

When our senses apprehend an external object, our consciousness intuits the presence of the real quality within it and, relating it to our own, attributes the reality it knows of itself to that external object. The real quality's manifestation in every real external object allows us to recognize that the same fundamental quality defines self and other as belonging to reality. It lets us see our place as real beings in a reality populated by other individuals whose realness matches our own. Conscious agents such as ourselves would lack the means to engage in external reality if not for the real quality and our intuitive faculty.

The worldview I have so far established stands as follows. Belief in external reality is rooted in human nature as intrinsic and enduring. For external reality to exist, all objects within it must share the common quality of realness. Universality of the conceptual relationship between each discrete real object and the whole of reality to which it belongs indicates an inherent order in thought. A conscious agent may apprehend the reality of another object by intuitively sensing that object's real quality and recognizing the same quality reflected in itself.

Our foray into secular theology is far from complete, but I feel it only right to prepare you for the imminent stylistic shift. I intentionally laid the above groundwork for secular theology using terminology more evocative of philosophy than of theology. Were I addressing a more religiously inclined audience, the words I choose would signal the same concepts but carry quite disparate connotations. If you replace each reference to the whole of reality with "god" or "the infinite" and each reference to the real quality with "the divine spirit" or "the infinite presence", the argument presented would still follow, but would take on a decidedly more religious tone. This stylistic decision serves two functions. First, I hoped to avoid quarrels over terminology to ensure the rationale justifying each conclusion would not hide obfuscated behind contentious terms. Second, I aimed to demonstrate how the same argument pertaining to the god

of secular theology matches Schleiermacher's concept of god as the infinite whole, efficacious in every participatory being. Having made this case, I will no longer refrain from using terms with religious connotations as we continue our discussion.

The conceived existence of objects by virtue of a shared real quality allows for two understandings of the relationship between an object and the whole of reality. The materialist worldview, as I understand it, limits reality only to those objects personally observable or which scientific study convincingly demonstrates as observable. It therefore cares only about objects immediately existential via intuition and measurable relationships between those objects. However, materialism acknowledges reality exists outside the bounds of current human observation but denies any understanding of objects not universally observable the honorific "knowledge". To the materialist, knowledge comprises only those objects personally observable, shown by the scientific process to be personally intuitable and scientifically-yielded illuminations of natural systems governing interaction of the aforementioned objects.

Opposed to materialism, the idealist worldview[359] posits reality to contain every object intuitable by *any* conscious agent. It acknowledges as real both the reality affirmed by materialism and those areas of reality outside the materialist worldview. In idealism, reality consists of every consciously intuited object on a macro level; an object need not be personally intuited or scientifically proven as personally intuitable to belong to idealist reality. So long as an object has been intuited by any conscious agent, it qualifies as real. Knowledge, then, includes every object intuited as real and every experience consciously had without discriminating between the personal or impersonal subject of intuition and experience.

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[359] As the idealist worldview is understood here.

Materialism, in requiring personal intuition of an object or proof of its universal intuitability for that object to qualify as real and for an understanding of that object to qualify as knowledge, holds contradictory principles. It affirms the realness of external objects- it must, if empirical study is to in any way produce knowledge of reality. The individual materialist knows only what they may personally intuit. Basing knowledge on the potentiality for personal intuition discredits as real the first-hand intuition of other individuals. If we as individuals only *know* as real that which we intuit, then every individual holds a unique concept of reality as a whole and the objects composing it. To claim as real only those objects I intuit and phenomena I experience or, through faith in the scientific process, *believe* I may intuit or experience, I disregard countless objects and phenomena *known* by others as real. Such a worldview places my individual understanding of reality as primary in determining the contents of reality itself. I know only what I intuit and what the epistemic processes I have chosen to call valid yields; if I cannot intuit an object you, through your own intuition, know to be real and if you cannot prove it to me using my arbitrary and freely-chosen system, I deny as real the object of your intuition. In doing so, I claim my own intuition of reality and the veracity of chosen system superior to yours, situating my own consciousness as primary and relegating yours to delusional falsehood. I may claim the truth of external reality but, in demanding personal intuition of an object to call it real, I deny that the intuition of other individuals is as potent as my own. Therefore, I make myself the arbiter of reality and reject other individuals are as real as myself.

An individual with true belief in external reality must allow the intuited reality of all others the same veracity they know of their own. Idealism, by understanding every object intuited and known as real by any individual to belong to reality, surrenders personal claims to absolute knowledge of reality. Reality consists of every intuited object, every consciously

experienced phenomenon, for the individual reality known by every conscious agent is equally veracious. The infinite whole this compendium of consciousness constructs is the reality idealism acknowledges. The materialist recognizes reality exists outside the limits of what reason and technology make universally intuitable but refuses to acquiescence their privileged claim in determining what merits the term "real"; the true idealist respects the inherent reality of all conscious experience, acknowledging as real and worthy of consideration a greater sample, therefore engaging with a wider section of the reality even materialism confirms the existence of.

We have focused so far only on the theoretical construction of conceptual reality as an infinite whole comprising all that conscious individuals intuit and understand as real. Its application to life resembles that of Schleiermacher's system, as it asks that we immediately recognize the infinite presence in each finite being. By its intuitable real quality, every object stands inextricably linked to our own existence. We see not just ourselves in the other but also the other in ourselves, as both foundationally depend on a quality neither self nor other can claim absolute ownership over. In other words, idealism acknowledges the absolute dependence of every finite being on a universal quality. Our secular theology therefore merits religion under Schleiermacher's formal definition. The system delineated here, however, lacks a quality Schleiermacher emphasizes above all else in religion: feeling. Built from reason and argued for individual embodiment on account of its wide and non-contradictory concept of external reality, secular theology as pure theory does not pertain to feeling. When we apply it to individual life, we discover the sublime interaction between this united whole, coincidence of finite beings and personal feeling.

Schleiermacher describes feeling as an external, infinite operation open the individual consciousness. Feeling, then, is the experiential manifestation of our theoretically concluded

absolute dependence. And feeling truly cannot be a mere internal action. Some construe feeling

as no more than a construction of the human brain, occurring within similarly constructed

consciousness. Even within this explanation, we know by experience that external stimuli often

catalyze our experience of feeling. If we adopt this understanding of feeling to emerge

exclusively from an action of the brain, we still must acknowledge the capacity of external

objects to induce emotional states. When feeling arises from an internal thought as its only

immediate catalyst, the thought inciting it pertains to external relationships between objects. This

point implies feeling is an internally experienced but externally actuated phenomenon. That

feeling may arise immediately from interaction with external objects or mediately from

interaction with external objects through internal thoughts pertaining to those objects indicates

the human faculty responsible for feeling accepts both thought and intuition as efficacious inputs.

Although sometimes caused and always reflected upon by conscious thought, feeling must

emerge from an unconscious operation lying outside the boundaries of thought.

Intuition of an external object enters an individual's internal faculty of feeling and

produces in the individual's consciousness experiential feeling. This process, while linked to

conscious thought, does not occur within conscious thought. Externally incited feeling is the

direct result of a real other imposing an internal experience upon the real self. Feeling generated

by interaction between two finite beings requires unconscious apprehension on the feeler's part

of the infinite presence or real quality both parties possess. As such, feeling depends entirely

upon presence of the infinite in both feeler and catalyst, showing that this universal human

phenomenon generates through communal belonging to the infinite whole.

The worldview promoted in secular theology, when applied to life, lets us recognize

feeling as an internal occurrence dependent upon interaction between beings sharing the real

quality. Schleiermacher discusses the necessity of feeling to human experience and emphasizes it as the primary mode for finite interaction with the infinite but denies reason's ability to produce feeling. Secular theology does not claim to produce feeling but provides a rational argument to accept the unity of existence and open oneself to realizing feeling as the individual's intrinsic, intimate connection to the infinite. It proposes the real quality, held by every real being, as the human faculty of feeling through which external objects catalyze internal experiences. As the product of a process dependent upon the only quality inextricably wound into the fiber of our being, feeling borne from immediate intuition of external objects is a natural human method for experiencing the universal whole. In those moments feeling arises most powerfully within us, briefly consuming our entire awareness and being, we lose our sense of self and exist at one with the infinite. Experience of transcendental unity in which delineation of the ego gives way to full intuition of present feeling- this is true religious experience.

All this points to a radical redefinition of religion as lived experience. Religion is not found in a set of precepts or ritualistic practices, but in moments of pure infinite awareness. Where these rules and rituals cause intuition of the divine whole in finite reality, religion springs forth. Where they do not, they are no more religiously efficacious than any other human system or practice. Truly any system or action producing in the individual experience of transcendental unity is religious, for religion is not the catalyst of an experience but the experience itself. Any individual operation, from the most mundane task to the greatest creative self-expression, capable of inciting such experience is personally religious.

What may, in the individual, give rise to religious experience is unique to each person. For one it may be musical performance, for another, revelation of natural systems, for a third, passive meditation, and for a fourth, communal worship of the deified whole. Each, in

producing individual transcendence, is an equally religious act. These examples I provide are but four of the infinite array of human actions, any of which may be an individual's path to infinite experience. It is up to each person to follow their internal preferences and discover what among myriad human activities makes them feel at one with the infinite. This definition of religious experience requires us to, at once, acknowledge the unique spiritual journey of every individual and the common belonging of every being to a real whole. Humanity, as an infinitesimal portion of infinite reality, have only limited awareness of the other beings belonging to this great whole. The individual human has yet more limited purview. The entire human knowledge of reality consists of what individuals have experienced, intuited, and recognized to possess the real quality. We have neither the capacity nor right to claim what belongs to reality as a whole or to confidently conclude as unreal that which humanity has not yet experienced. Likewise, we have no authority to call false the intuited experience of another person. Wherever the infinite presents itself to an individual through a manifested real quality and holds the potential to act upon that individual through feeling, we find an experience of reality. Even when only one individual ascertains an object as real, what Ockham called "intuition of non-existents", the object then belongs to human experience of reality, so reality itself. Hallucinations, paranormal phenomena, supernatural occurrences; these so-called delusions, when intuited by an individual as real, possess the real quality so should not be thrown out as false. A more apt description of such objects is that they are limitedly intuitable- not fallacious, for they are experienced as real and often spur impactful feeling. Perhaps the real quality operates not on a binary but on a spectrum, with its least salient manifestations available only to a single discerning mind under certain circumstances. The exact mechanisms of the real

quality, I know not. But wherever it is apprehended and incites feeling, no matter the scale, those objects holding it should be considered real, valuable and worthy of further inquiry.

Secular theology provides a rationally constructed worldview affirming the legitimacy and value of religious experience without demanding acceptance of any of the dogma and mythology traditionally associated with religious lifestyles. It may thus be incorporated into any preexisting belief system an individual holds, whether that system focuses on the material world or the divine realm. Of a materialist, it asks only that they expand their conception of reality to construe it as a unified whole, then understand the real objects and systems governing relations between them, which the materialist formerly called ultimate, to participate within an abstract entirety. The system offered here undermines neither scientific knowledge nor the virtues of reason; it simply understands those human processes to occur within and indicate a real whole. Materialist confidence in science's capacity to ascertain the workings of the natural world already implies a necessary principle of order in nature; secular theology explains that ordering principle simply as real beings' existence within reality itself. Without compromising previously-held beliefs, secular theology supplies the materialist rational means to expand their personal interactions with the real whole, opening new opportunities for real experiences.

The idealist who already holds some idea of a unified whole incorporates secular theology into their understanding as a rational defense for belief in their god, existential optimism and the intrinsic value of created beings. Secular theology requires some concession on the part of idealists within dogmatic religions, as they need recognize revealed knowledge of their system constitutes universal truth only to those who freely choose belief in it. Recognizing all human dogma as constructions for understanding the world and humanity's place within it comes at the cost of individual dogmas surrendering any claims that they alone hold absolute

knowledge of ultimate reality. Individual dogma may still promulgate the distinctive virtues of its own unique explanation of the human role in the divine whole after relinquishing exclusive claim to ultimate truth; rather than denying outright the validity of other systems, it now acknowledges the particular place it holds in explaining human experience. Without compromising any core tenets of dogmatic religion other than special claims to universal truth, secular theology provides a reasoned base upon which individuals are free to construct particular cosmologies and divinities. After all, religious experience is internal; whatever understanding aids one in understanding and communicating their experiences and place in the world is welcomed.

Secular theology reintroduces construction of theology into academia, valuing theology beyond the cultural information its historical embodiments provide. With comparative theology, Müller introduced into the secular academy an interest in historical theologies which precluded engagement in theoretic theology. Ever since that methodology took hold, secular departments of religion have all but ceased to view the construction of theology as a veritable pursuit, whether in keeping with Müller's insistence that we must complete comparative study prior to engaging in theoretic theology or with materialist dogmatics denying theology any place in academic discussions. In either circumstance, the comparative foundation of western religious studies rejects engagement in theology for the purpose of elucidating humans' place in the infinite whole- in other words, rejecting the very purpose of theology! If we divide study of religion into two realms, consideration of theology's historical implementations, cultural meaning and similarity between systems and establishing humanity's relation to the whole of reality, we find theology studied for its own purpose remains woefully unrepresented in secular academia. Secular scholarship of theology participates in, and is indeed interested in, only those

topics pertaining to theology when theology's subject is deemed unworthy of serious inquiry. Half of theological study, that half which actually participates in theology, is left out. Through the presented system, we may rekindle secular study of theology for its own sake without advocating the dogma of any entrenched religion over that of another, while holding valid the veracity of scientific inquiry and the value post-modernism attributes to every individual's experience.

The Redefined Roles of Science and Secular Theology in Modern Western Epistemology

The scientific method continues to offer the most fruitful route for study of universally-recognized real objects. Its progress in determining the material contents of reality has yet to be surpassed by any other system. Until the scientific method ceases to yield results, or a more potent system studying the same objects emerges, science should be the default epistemic system for studying the universally intuitable.

Reality, as every consciously intuited object, stretches far beyond what science currently, and may ever, be able to study. Secular theology, which inquires into objects outside the realm of science's capacity, provides an epistemic system that adapts the idealism typical of dogmatic religions to the nondogmatic world. Through secular theology, we recognize reality as an infinite whole within which and to which every individual is intimately connected. We may further our own knowledge of this transcendental reality by valuing our own religious moments of intuitive unity with the infinite and encounter more real objects than we would through science alone by studying, cataloguing and acknowledging as real the individual experiences of others that materialist epistemology dismisses.

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