Chapter 5: Newman's Approach to the Justification of Belief in the Existence of God via an Inference to the Best Explanation

As I have interpreted it in chapter 4, there are two steps in Newman's approach to the justification of the belief in the existence of God: the first step appeals to the analogy between our perceptual experience and our experience of conscience to justify that belief; the second step appeals to an inference to the best explanation of our experience of conscience to the belief in the existence of God. I have examined the first step in chapter 4. Now, I am going to consider the second step in this chapter.

After showing that the belief in the existence of God can be justified from the experience of conscience by analogizing on the justification of the belief in the existence of the external world, Newman continues to seek further justification for the belief in the existence of God: We have by nature a conscience. The feeling of conscience has two aspects: a moral sense and a sense of duty, the latter is the primary and most authoritative aspect of conscience. Conscience does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decision. Conscience, taken as a sense of duty, is a voice or the echo of a voice which is imperative and constraining: when we obey the voice of conscience, we enjoy the sunny serenity of mind, the soothing satisfactory delight; when we transgress the voice of conscience, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, frightened. Inanimate things cannot stir these affections. These feelings in us are such as require for their exciting causes an intelligent being. There is no sensible, no earthly object to elicit them. If the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the object to which his perception is directed must be supernatural and divine. Thus, the phenomena of conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a supreme Governor, a Judge, ... (*G. A.*, pp. 80-84)

In the following section, I am going to consider various interpretations of Newman's line of argument and present my own interpretation.

Part One: Various Interpretations of Newman's Argument

There are many disputes about the nature of this argument. Some scholars take it that the argument has the form that moral obligation presupposes an obliger—God. There is moral obligation. Therefore, there is a God. I do not agree with this interpretation. Obviously, Newman's argument is not based upon the conceptual analysis of moral obligation.[182] For a conceptual analysis, according to Newman. can only lead to a notional assent to the existence of God, in which he lacks interest. He made this point explicitly:

> this sensation of conscience is the recognition of an obligation involving the notion of an external being. I say this, not from any abstract argument from the force of the term, (e. g. "A law implies a lawgiver") but from the peculiarity of the feeling to which I give the name of conscience. (Newman, 1859, p. 14)

Some scholars interpret Newman's argument as identifying the voice of conscience with the voice of God: "For him, to listen to the voice of conscience is to hear directly the voice of God." (Henry Bremond, 1907, p. 334) Newman's argument, as Sillem rightly points out, does not depend on the metaphor of conscience as 'the voice of God', but on the experience of the emotional and affective states, such as those of reverence, awe, and especially fear, which accompany the dictates of conscience. It is when we have already seen that these states imply the Presence of our all-seeing Judge, which we can speak of them as 'a voice', and not till then (Sillem, 1969, p. 126).

Some scholars take the argument as resting on a pre-existing belief in the existence of God and just showing how can we think of God. So it is a weak or circular argument.[183] J. M.

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[182]According to Sillem, it is arguable that in certain early versions of his argument Newman had reasoned deductively, and tried to conclude syllogistically that God exists as the cause of law manifest in conscience, for example, in *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. II, p. 18. But in the *Grammar of Assent*, according to Sillem, Newman is not arguing that a law implies a law-giver (Sillem, 1965, p. 393).

[183]Sillem had this view earlier. He said "Newman's argument is designed primarily to impress the person who believes in God but does not know how to think of him" (Sillem, 1965, pp. 381-382). He abandoned this view later: "the whole point of Newman's phenomenological investigation of the workings of conscience is to show

Cameron, for example, remarks:

> Newman's position must, then, be that conscience is evidence, possibly very good or the best possible evidence, for God's existence and his peculiar relation to ourselves, for the man who has already come to believe, in at least a rudimentary sense. But isn't this to beg the question, to argue in a circle? (Cameron, 1962, p. 215)

Grave, too, makes similar remarks: "Newman's argument rests on an already existing belief in God, so it is a weak argument." (Grave, 1989, p. 185)

This interpretation, as Jay Newman rightly points out, "undervalues the importance that Newman attaches to the implications of conscience. According to Newman, a believer or unbeliever, learned or unlearned persons can come to believe in the existence of God through the feeling of conscience. So the argument does not rest on an existing belief in the existence of God, therefore, it is not a circular argument." (Jay Newman, 1989, p. 79)

According to F. J. Kaiser, Newman's argument, taken in itself, is weak in so far as it implies a confusion of thought-existence and extra-mental existence and has idealistic implications. (Kaiser, 1953, p. 97) I think that only if the phenomena of conscience are taken by Newman as purely subjective, does the argument then imply a confusion of thought-existence and extra-mental existence and has idealistic implications. But, as we have seen in Chapter 2, the phenomena of conscience, for him, is objective:

> as there are objects which, when presented to the mind, cause it to feel grief, regret, joy, or desire, so there are things which excite in us approbation or

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the non-believer that he can find a rational justification for these feelings which he sometimes experiences and which are so purely natural, namely, one which they themselves partially suggest, and it is the man who does not accept what they of their very suggest who is unreasonable. One would, no doubt, be rationally justified in disregarding the threat of punishment and the promise of reward if one had definitely established that conscience is not a part of our nature, or that there is no one to punish or reward, but not otherwise." (Sillem, *ibid.* p. 397)

> blame, and which we in consequence call right or wrong; and which, experienced in ourselves, kindle in us that specific sense of pleasure or pain, which goes by the name of a good or bad conscience. (*G. A.* p, 80)

Thus, Newman's argument does not imply a confusion of thought-existence and extra-mental existence and has no idealistic implication.

According to some scholars, Newman's argument is a phenomenological one. E. D'Arcy, for example, remarks: Newman's argument is what nowadays is called phenomenological. He does not argue to a law of binding force and from thence, in the old style, to a lawgiver. (D'Arcy, 1962, p. 138) It is not a question of an abstract argument, but of a growth in our own awareness, and in that growing awareness of our own being and of our own conscience we are made of a presence, to use a favorite word of the phenomenologists, the presence of one who must be God... (D'Arcy, *ibid.* p. 37)

Sillem, too, remarks in a similar way:

> Newman's argument for the existence of God is not an argument of the traditional metaphysical kind, but a making manifest of a Presence, concealed behind a veil of 'mental phenomena', by a method of phenomenological analysis. (Sillem, 1965, pp. 377-401; 1969, pp.138-139)[184]

Newman's argument, I admit, is based on phenomenological analyses of conscience. However, I do not agree that he is merely doing the phenomenology, without concerns with epistemic justification of the belief. Although he says: "I am not proposing to set forth the

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[184] Sillem holds that Newman's treatment of the idea and knowledge we have of God in the *Grammar* is almost exclusive phenomenological. His problem was not epistemological, but phenomenological. (Sillem, 1969, p. 138) Before Sillem, Walgrave offerred a more extremely view. According to him, in the *Grammar*, Newman aims at tracing out the structures of thought from his observation of mental life in its entirety, without any attempt at evaluation. (Walgrave, 1939, p. 82. also cf. Sillem, 1969, p. 129) I do not agree with this view. Newman does concern with the normative dimension of belief. We can see this especially from his criticisms of Locke's theory of ethics of Belief.

arguments which issue in the belief of these doctrines, but to investigate what it is to believe in them, what the mind does, what it contemplates, when it makes an act of faith", he is not merely doing phenomenological investigation, without concerns with epistemic justification of the belief. For Newman, phenomenological investigation and epistemic justification are two concurring and coincident courses of thought; normative judgment about right reasoning is not something *a priori* and it depends on information about how human minds actually reason; what people actually reason is enough for a proof:

> for the certainty of knowledge, I think it enough to appeal to the common voice of mankind in proof of it. That is to be accounted a normal operation of our nature, which men in general do actually instance. (*G. A.* p, 344)

Thus, the phenomenological investigation about the process of forming a belief can provide a reason for believing it:

> The same elementary facts which create an object for an assent, also furnish matter for an inference: and in showing what we believe, I shall unavoidably be in a measure showing why we believe; ... (*G. A.* p. 76)[185]

From above we can see that Newman is not merely conducting a phenomenological investigation, but also seeking an epistemic justification for the belief in the existence of God.[186]

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[185]Here, Newman's view is very Reidian. In his *Essays on the Intellectual Power*, Reid presents the view that epistemic principles are simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive.

[186]I firmly believe that Newman has an epistemology, which is most evidently shown in his *The Grammar of Assent*, and it is the most valuable part of Newman's philosophy. I deny Sillem's treatment of it as a phenomenology of assent in the sense that the treatment simply takes Newman's phenomenological investigation of assent as a psychological description of assent and it fails to see that Newman is drawing epistemological principles from phenomenological investigation. As we can see from his *Grammar*, Newman is different from, on the one hand, the traditional analytical philosophers, who hold that there is a logical gulf between phenomenology and epistemology; on the other hand, the phenomenologists, who simply give phenomenological descriptions, suspending all beliefs beyond them. He maintains that there is no logical gulf between phenomenology and epistemology and phenomenological investigation has a normative dimension. Sillem's treatment fails to appreciate these important epistemological principles that Newman commits to.

Copleston has rightly observed that Newman is not only doing phenomenological investigation but also seeking epistemic justification for belief in God:

> Newman obviously does not intend to write simply as a psychologist who may describe various reasons why people believe in God, even if some or all these reasons appear to him unable to justify assent to God's existence. On the contrary, Newman argues that the main empirical ground on which belief rests is a sufficient ground. (Copleston, 1967, vol. 8, p. 511)

> Newman is not concerned simply with describing the way in which, in his opinion, people come to believe in God, ... he wishes to show that belief in God is reasonable, ... (Copleston, *ibid.* p. 520)

David A. Pailin has also rightly observed that the *Grammar* is concerned not only with the phenomenology of religious belief but also with epistemology: "to limit his work to phenomenological description is an inadequate appraisal." (Pailin, 1969, p. 178)

Jay Newman, too, has seen this point: Newman

> seeks to establish what traditional natural theology aims at proving, that God exists and that we can know that he does. (Jay Newman, 1989, p. 78)

> Newman's concern with what, why, and how we believe is not that of the disinterested psychologist, anthropologist, or philosopher of mind; Newman's aim is to establish that religious belief is epistemically justified ... (Jay Newman, *ibid.* p. 85)

But, according to Pailin, Newman has confused phenomenology with epistemology and committed a logical type-jump (Pailin, 1969, p. 179, pp.184-15). Jay Newman, too, thinks Newman has blurred the distinction between phenomenology and epistemology that he made before and crossed a logical gulf (Jay Newman, 1989, p. 66).[187]

I think Pailin and Jay Newman fail to see these crucial points in Newman: a) phenomenological investigation has significance for epistemic normalization because it is the only right channel to uncover the truth about reality, and thus there is no logical gulf between the two domains;[188] b) the correct approach to epistemology is to look at the normal operation of human mind, not *a priori* or ideal approach because the latter is unreal (*G. A.* p. 167). They also fail to see that Newman's appeal to the phenomenological and concrete is a corrective of the Lockean approach to epistemology. Thus, they think Newman has confused phenomenology with epistemology. I think once we recognize the above crucial points in Newman we can clearly see that he does not confuse phenomenology with epistemology.

According to Newman, epistemic normalization must emerge from phenomenological investigation because it is the only reliable way by which we can discover the truth. Thus, he rejects a *priori* or ideal approach to epistemology. He criticises Locke's theory as being ideal and arbitrary:

> Reasoning and convictions which I deem natural and legitimate, Locke apparently would call irrational, enthusiastic, perverse, and immoral; and that, as I think, because he consults his own ideal of how the mind ought to act, instead of

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[187] According to the traditional philosophy, phenomenology belongs to the domain of fact and epistemology belongs to the domain of value. There is a logical gulf between the two domains.

[188] Ferreira has rightly observed this: "Newman is basing normative judgments on empirical judgments in the sense of claiming both that non-a priori normative inquiry is the only sort possible, and that such an inquiry reveals objective norms." (Ferreira, 1980, p. 70)

> interrogating human nature, as an existing thing, as it is found in the world. Instead of going by the testimony of psychological facts, and thereby determining our constitutive faculties and our proper condition, he would form men as he thinks they ought to be formed, into something better and higher, and calls them irrational and indefensible, if they take to the water, instead of remaining under the narrow wings of his own arbitrary theory" (*G. A.* p. 124).

According to him, the correct approach to epistemology is to look at the normal operation of the human mind because the human mind is made for truth: "The human mind is made for truth, and so rests in truth, as it cannot rest in falsehood (*G. A.* p. 167). So, what we actually reason can furnish as an account for what we ought to reason. Thus, he maintains that epistemology must emerge from phenomenology, not from something *a priori:*

> … as we do not gain the knowledge of the law of progress by any *a priori* view of man, but by looking at it as the interpretation which is provided by himself on a large scale in the ordinary action of his intellectual nature, so too we must appeal to himself, as a fact, and not to any antecedent theory, in order to find what is the law of his mind as regards the two faculties in question. (*G. A.* pp. 265-266)

> Let us follow Bacon more closely than to distort its faculties according to the demands of an ideal optimism; instead of looking out for modes of thought proper to our nature, and faithfully observing them in our intellectual exercises. (*G. A.* p. 266)

From the above we can clearly see that Newman does not confuse phenomenology with epistemology: he is rejecting the Lockean approach to epistemology, vindicating a naturalistic approach to epistemology and trying to set epistemology on a proper foundation.

Newman's view that phenomenological investigation has an impact on epistemological

justification has been reflected in contemporary philosophical discussions. In his *Change In View: Principles of Reasoning,* Gilbert Harman has explicated the relation between epistemological principles and phenomenological investigation. According to him the normative principles of reasoned revision are intimately related to how people actually reason:

> Actually, normative and descriptive theories of reasoning are intimately related. For one thing, as we will see, it is hard to come up with convincing normative principles except by considering how people actually do reason, which is the province of a descriptive theory. On the other hand it seems that any descriptive theory must involve a certain amount of idealization, and idealization is always normative to some extent. (Harman, 1988, p. 7)

According to him, by considering how people actually reason, our account will have to involve a certain amount of idealization, thus, yield a normative theory (Harman, *ibid*, p. 9).

I think Harman is right to posit—so is Newman—that epistemological norms are related to phenomenological investigation. If the function of epistemological norms is to provide a warrant for true beliefs and if true beliefs are the ones that reveal the reality, then epistemological norms must have a business to do with phenomenological investigation because the latter is the only channel to uncover the reality.

In the above, I have examined various interpretations of the second step of Newman's argument. As we have seen, none of these interpretations is adequate. Thus, in the following, I am going to give it my own interpretation.

Part Two: Newman's Argument from Conscience—An Inference to the Best Explanation

The second step of Newman's approach to the justification to the belief in the existence of God, as I interpret it, is an articulation of the human experience of moral conscience manifested in moral obligation and moral emotion. It is based on the phenomenology of moral conscience and relying on an inference to the best explanation to justify the belief in the existence of God: phenomenologically, moral obligation is authoritative. It demands one to do the right and avoid the wrong. If one fails to do the right and avoid the wrong, one will feel shame, guilt or remorse. These emotions invoke the recognition of a person.[189] There is no sensible, no earthly object to elicit them; if the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine. These emotions cannot be appropriately explained unless appealing to an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing supernatural being, i.e. God.

Here, Newman is arguing from the phenomena of conscience (not simply describing them), via an inference to the best explanation, to the existence of God. To assess Newman's argument, we need to first look at what the inference to the best explanation is.

The inference to the best explanation is called, traditionally, the inference of abduction, the method of hypothesis, hypothetic inference, the method of elimination, eliminative induction, theoretical inference, etc. (Harman, 1965, pp. 88-89) Harman first uses the term "the inference to the best explanation" to denote the inference from certain evidence and a set of hypotheses, which might explain the evidence, to the conclusion that a given hypothesis can explain the evidence better than all other alternative hypotheses and,

[189]One might object that emotion is not always related to persons. For example, the emotion aroused by natural beauty is not, at least directly, related to persons. But what Newman refers 'emotion' here is moral emotion. In all normal cases moral emotions have persons as their objects.

therefore, the given hypothesis is true or approximately true. He explains:

> In making this inference one infers, from the fact that a certain hypothesis would explain the evidence, to the truth of that hypothesis. In general, there will be several hypotheses which might explain the evidence, so one must be able to reject all such alternative hypotheses before one is warranted in making the inference. Thus one infers, from the premises that a given hypothesis would provide a 'better' explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis, to the conclusion that the given hypothesis is true. (Harman, *ibid.* p. 89)

What are the defining properties that make the given hypothesis better than all other alternatives? According to Harman, these properties are simplicity, plausibility, more explanatory power, less ad hoc, etc. (Harman, *ibid.* p. 89)[190]

The inference to the best explanation can be schematized like this:

> 1. There is a phenomenon e;
> 2. There are hypotheses $H_1, H_2, \ldots H_n$, which might explain e;
> 3. H_n provides a simpler, more plausible, more adequate, more cogent, more coherent explanation of e than all other hypotheses;
> 4. Therefore, H_n is the best explanation of the phenomena e, and, thus, it is rational to believe in H_n.

Inference to the best explanation (usually abbreviated as IBE) is widely used in science, philosophy and other disciplines, especially, in defending realism. The well-known supporters of IBE are Harman, Quine, Armstrong, etc. As H. Vahid has summarized (Vahid, 2001, p.488), Harman claims all inductive inference involves IBE (Harman, 1965); Quine uses IBE to argue for mathematical Platonism (Field, 1989); Armstrong uses IBE to

[190] I think it is important to include adequacy, cogency and coherency in the defining properties that make a given hypothesis better than other alternatives because they are the primary epistemic virtues and have truth-

defend Universals (Armstrong, 1978); BonJour appeals to IBE to show that his coherent theory of justification retains its link with truth (BonJour, 1985); Lycan claims that all justified reasoning is fundamentally explanatory reasoning (Lycan, 1988).

However, there are many other philosophers, for example, van Fraassen, Fine, Cartwright, Railton, etc. who question the legitimacy of IBE (Vahid, 2001, p. 488). According to van Fraassen, firstly, it is illegitimate to suppose that possessing certain explanatory virtues, such as simplicity, parsimony, uniformity, non-ad hocness, etc. makes a theory more likely to be true, that is, there is no necessary connection between explanatory virtues and truth; secondly, it is illegitimate to assume that, in general, the true theory which explains the evidence is among the hypotheses and the theory which explain the evidence best may be the best of all bad hypotheses, unless some sort of privilege is presupposed (van Fraassen, 1980, p.143).

Some philosophers respond to van Fraassen's first objection by arguing that explanatory virtues such as simplicity, parsimony, uniformity, etc. are truth conducive because the universe exhibits simplicity and uniformity (Humean approach) or because all intuitively rational theory choice has these virtues in common, which are justification-conferring (Lycan, *ibid.*).

Elliott Sober develops the approach of defending IBE by appealing to simplicity. Sober distinguishes simplicity as involving metaphysical assumptions of the nature from simplicity as purely methodological devices to guide our judgements about the plausibility of hypotheses, without any involvement of metaphysical assumptions. Sober rejects the latter conception of simplicity as a presuppositionless concept. According to him, simplicity embodies empirical assumptions about the world and it carries substantive implications about the way the world is:

> Whenever observations are said to support one hypothesis better than another,

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conducive features.

> there must be an empirical background theory that mediates this connection. It is to see that this principle does not evaporate when a scientist cites simplicity as the ground for preferring one hypothesis over another in the light of the data. *Appealing to simplicity is a surrogate for stating an empirical background theory.* (Sober, 1988, p. 64)

Recently, Vahid argues for the legitimacy of IBE using Sober's conception of simplicity. According to Vahid, once simplicity is understood as involving empirical assumptions about the world is, the legitimacy of IBE is no longer problematic (Vahid, *ibid.* 499). Vahid gives an example to illustrate this:

> We see a person (S) entering a house, a knife in his hand and, after an hour, leaving with a suitcase and looking particularly nervous. Subsequently we find the stabbed body of the owner of the house and find out that her jewellery is missing. S's fingerprints are all over the place and a subsequent search of his home by the police recovers both the knife and the suitcase containing the jewellery. We naturally form the belief that S is the culprit. When asked why we find this the best explanation of our observation rather than, say, the hypothesis that the detectives fabricated the evidence in order to frame S, we appeal to our background empirical assumptions about the way thefts are usually committed, the reliability of circumstantial evidence, the unlikelihood of the police attempting to frame someone of no particular significance, etc. (Vahid, *ibid.*)

The belief that S is the culprit, rather than the belief that the detectives fabricated the evidence in order to frame S, is the best explanation of the murder because it fits in best with the data from the crime scene and all empirical assumptions relevant to the crime.

Vahid further remarks that all these assumptions may further be challenged, however, as being informed by empirical considerations, our canons of theory-preference evolve with the body of empirical knowledge turning IBE into a legitimate form of inference. (Vahid,

ibid. p. 500)

I think the Sober-Vahid conception of simplicity is innovative. Indeed, if simplicity is understood as involving all empirical assumptions about a relevant subject matter, then legitimacy of IBE is no longer a problem. But, the conception is far from intuitive, even counter-intuitive. Intuitively, simplicity implies minimum involvement of assumptions. While, the conception of simplicity argued for by Sober and Vahid implies maximum involvement of assumptions and, therefore. it is not adequate.

In my view, explanatory virtues, such as simplicity, parsimony, uniformity, etc. are necessary conditions for a theory's being probable. Without simplicity, for example, a theory is unlikely to be true because the probability of theory must tend to be zero as more and more assumptions are introduced. However, these virtues are not sufficient for a theory's being true. This is because these virtues *themselves* cannot guarantee a theory being true. They are only quantitative virtues, not qualitative virtues. But, if the explanatory virtues, on which IBE is based, include not only quantitative virtues such as simplicity, parsimony, etc. but also qualitative virtues such as adequacy, coherence and cogency then IBE is a legitimate form of inference.[191] This is because adequacy, coherence and cogency are truth-conducive characters. Let me borrow Vahid's example to illustrate this: we think the belief that S is the culprit, not the belief that the police tries to fabricate the evidence in order to frame S, is the best explanation of our observation of the scene and the results of

[191]Here, I use the word 'adequacy' in the sense of accuracy in conformity of a belief or a theory to truth. So, when I say that a hypothesis *H* gives an adequate explanation of data *E*, I mean *H* gives an accurate explanation of *E* and there is no gap or error involved. By 'coherence' I mean something like consistency, together with the fitness of a hypothesis *H* into available data so that not-*H* is highly improbable. So, when I say that a hypothesis *H* gives a coherent explanation of data *E*, I mean *H* gives a consistent explanation of *E* and fits into *E* so that not-*H* is highly improbable. By 'cogency' I mean the 'convincingness' of a belief or theory. So when I say that a hypothesis *H* gives a cogent explanation of *E*, I mean *H* gives a convincing explanation of *E* and the acceptance of its truth cannot be rationally resisted. The contents of these qualitative virtues are those epistemic properties which make a belief or theory to be true. I think that adequacy, coherence and cogency are three important truth-conducive characteristics and without them a theory cannot be true.

the subsequent search of S's house. This is because the belief explains, adequately, coherently and cogently, the available data. The adequacy, coherence and cogency of the belief fitting into the available data make the belief most likely true.

In the above I have considered van Fraassen's first objection to the legitimacy of IBE and some replies to it. We have seen that the objection can be replied to by interpreting explanatory virtues as including not only quantitative virtues such as simplicity and parsimony but also qualitative virtues such as adequacy, coherence and cogency. In the following I am going to consider van Fraassen's second objection.

Recently, Igor Douven has successfully replied to van Fraassen's second objection by distinguishing two versions of Inference to the Best Explanation. According to Douven, there are two versions of Inference to the Best Explanation. The first version is as follows:

IBE: Given evidence E and potential explanations $H_1, \ldots\ldots H_n$ of E, infer to the (probable/approximate) truth of the H_i that explains E best (Douven, 2002, p. 356).

IBE*: Given evidence E and potential explanations $H_1, \ldots\ldots H_n$ of E, if H_i explains E better than any of the other hypotheses, infer that H_i is closer to the truth than any of these others (Douven, *ibid.* p. 357).

According to Douven, van Fraassen's second objection can only apply to IBE, but not IBE*. IBE* licenses an inference to the unqualified truth of the absolutely best or perfect explanation (Douven, *ibid.* p. 359).

I agree with Douven that van Fraassen's second objection does not apply to IBE* because, unlike IBE, IBE* does not require that, given evidence E and potential explanations $H_1, \ldots, H_n$ of E, there must be H_i which explains E best. It only requires that, among the potential explanations $H_i, \ldots, H_n$ of E, if there is H_i which explains E better than any of the other hypotheses, then H_i is closer to the truth than any of these other hypotheses. The

requirement of H_i in IBE* is conditional, not necessary. Thus, even if the true explanation may not be included in the potential explanations, IBE* still holds. This is why Douven thinks that IBE* licenses an inference to the unqualified truth of the absolutely best or perfect explanation.

It seems to me that van Fraassen's second objection presupposes that, at given time t, the set of potential explanations of evidence E is infinite. This is why he thinks the true explanation may not be included in the available explanations $H_1, \ldots, H_n$. I think this supposition is not legitimate. At given time t, the set of potential explanations of E is finite and there must be one explanation that explains E better than any other available explanation. Even if van Fraassen might only assume that there are more potential explanations than the available explanations and the true explanation may not be included in the available explanations. The objection, I think, still does not apply to IBE* because it does not rests on the necessary requirement that there *must* be a true explanation among the available explanations, and it only rests on the conditional requirement that if there is a hypothesis H_i which explains E better than any of the other hypotheses, then H_i is closer to the truth than any of these other hypotheses.

In the above I have considered the legitimacy of the inference to the best explanation. The inference, as we have seen, is legitimate if it does not merely rely on simplicity, parsimony, but also adequacy, coherence and cogency. Although there is a need to further discuss the criteria for adequacy, coherence and cogency, it is not my purpose to give a detailed discussion about these criteria. My purpose is to assess whether Newman's argument from the phenomena of conscience to the belief in the existence of God via inference to the best explanation is successful.

As I have interpreted at the beginning of this section, the second step of Newman's approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God is based on an analysis of the phenomena of moral conscience and relying on an inference to the best explanation to justify the belief in the existence of God: phenomenologically, moral obligation is

authoritative. It demands one to do the right and avoid the wrong. If one fails to do the right and avoid the wrong, one will feel shame, guilt or remorse. These emotions invoke the recognition of a person.[192] There is no sensible, no earthly object to elicit them; if the cause of these emotions does not belong to this visible world, the object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine. These emotions cannot be appropriately explained unless appealing to an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing supernatural being, i.e. God. In the following, I am going to show that Newman's argument is successful by replying some typical objections to it.

Part Three: Objections to Newman's Best Explanation of the Phenomena of Conscience

John Mackie presents a dilemma as an objection to Newman's best explanation of the experience of conscience. Since Mackie's objection is representative among contemporary objections made to Newman, I am going to concentrate on it.

Mackie interprets Newman's argument as involving three premises: 1) conscience is legitimate or authoritative; 2) it looks beyond the agent himself to a further imperative and a higher sanction; 3) they must stem from a person, an intelligent being, if they are to arouse powerful emotions with exactly the tone of those that moral awareness involves (Mackie, 1982, p.104). If we grant all three premises, Mackie says, we must admit that the argument is cogent. But we cannot accept all three premises.

According to Mackie, the argument faces a dilemma: on the one hand, if we accept the first premise, taking conscience at its face value and accepting as really valid what it asserts, we must reject the second and the third, for the first premise that conscience is authoritative

[192]One might object that emotion is not always related to persons. For example, the emotion aroused by natural beauty is not, at least directly, related to persons. But what Newman refers 'emotion' here is moral emotion. In all normal cases moral emotions have persons as their objects.

presupposes that conscience is intrinsically prescriptive:

> there is a rational prescriptivity about certain kinds of action in their own right: that they are of this or that kind is in itself a reason for doing them as for refraining from them. There is a to-be-done-ness or a not-to-be-done-ness involved in that kind of action in itself, ...there is no need to look beyond this to any supernatural person who commands or forbids such action. (Mackie, *ibid.* p. 105)

Equally, concerning the feelings such as regret, guilt, shame, fear, etc, "what conscience tells us is that this is how one should feel about a wrong action simply in itself"(Mackie, *ibid.*); On the other hand, if we do not take conscience at its face value, but seek critically to understand how conscience has come into existence and has come to work as it does, then we do indeed find persons in the background, but human persons not a divine being, for "it is overwhelmingly plausible to see the feeling of conscience as an introjection into each individual of demands that come from other people" (Mackie, *ibid.*), there is no need to appeal to any supernatural and divine being.[193] Mackie concludes:

> Newman's argument walks, as it were, a tight-rope, allowing to conscience, as it claims, an authority and an origin independent of all human feelings and demands, and yet not endorsing its claim to complete autonomy. (Mackie, *ibid*)

Mackie's dilemma, I claim, is not a genuine one. On the one hand, there is no inconsistency between accepting that conscience is authoritative and looking beyond itself for an external imperative. On the other hand, there is no pure social explanation for the origin of the feeling of conscience. In the following, I am going to argue for my claim.

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132 Brian Davies made a similar criticism to Newmanian argument: "though we may feel guilty about our moral failings, we are not obliged to account for this theistically unless we are also obliged to suppose that our deference to what we call moral claims, demands and laws can only be explained in term of God." (See: Davies, 1989, pp. 8-14) Davies is replacing inference to the best explanation by inference to the only explanation.

The first horn of Mackie's dilemma rests on his claim that if conscience is legitimate or authoritative, then there is a rational prescriptivity about certain kinds of action in their own right. That is, if conscience is authoritative, then its authority is derived from the intrinsic prescriptivity of moral principles, i.e. from the to-be-done-ness or not-to-be-done-ness of actions themselves. In other words, if my conscience commands me to do x and not to do y, it is because x involves a certain kind of feature which constitutes the reason for x to be done and y involves a certain kind of feature which constitutes the reason for y not be done. There is no need to look beyond the intrinsic prescriptivity for any extrinsic imperative to my conscience.

In the following, I am going to appeal to the strong version of argument from queerness to argue that to-be-done-ness or not-to-be-done-ness of actions cannot be involved in actions themselves, in other words, there cannot be objectively intrinsic prescriptivity, for the notion of objectively intrinsic prescriptivity is incoherent. Let me first explain what the argument from queerness is.

The argument from queerness argues against objective moral values, basing on some odd features of moral values. There are two versions of the argument—the weak version, which argues against objective moral values themselves, and the strong version, which argues against the objective intrinsic prescriptivity of moral values.

In his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Mackie present a weak version of the argument from queerness against objective moral values:

> If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing anything else.

Therefore, according to Mackie, it is, both metaphysically and epistemologically, improbable that there are such objective moral values. (Mackie, 1977, p. 38)

It should be noted that Mackie merely takes objective values themselves, not their intrinsic prescriptivity, as queer in his version of the argument from queerness. He thinks nothing is queer about objective intrinsic prescriptivity. (Mackie, 1977, p. 42) Now, if objective intrinsic prescriptivity is not queer, objective moral values themselves, are not queer at all. They need not to be a strange kind of entities, qualities or relations (therefore, we do not need a special kind of faculty of moral perception or intuition to aware of them). They can be supervenient on natural entities or properties of natural entities.

According to Richard Garner, it is objective intrinsic prescriptivity—action-guiding or action-directing feature that is genuinely queer. So, Garner presents a strong version of argument from queerness to argue against the notion of objective intrinsic prescriptivity (Garner, 1990, pp. 137-146).

According to Garner, the genuine queerness of an objective moral value lies in its intrinsic prescriptivity. Objective intrinsically prescriptive moral values are queer not because they are unusual (there are so many unusual things in the universe) but because they make demands: they prescribe us to do something and to refrain from something else. But how could any feature of reality outside us make demands? How could actions themselves oblige us to perform them or not to perform them? Even the most virtuous action itself cannot make a demand on us. "It is hard to believe in objective prescriptivity because it is hard to make sense of a demand without a demander..." (Garner, *ibid.* 143).[194] The notion of objective intrinsic prescriptivity is, therefore, incoherent.

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[194]According to Garner, the only way to make sense of the demands of morality may be to see morality as a conventional social device, and its demands as ones we ourselves make. He rejects the theistic explanation of the prescriptivity of morality. (Garner, ibid. 143) This position is same as the one that Mackie puts into the second horn of his dilemma. I will deal with it later on with the contention that sociological explanation cannot explain the constraining power of morality.

According to Mackie, objective intrinsic prescriptivity is not incoherent.[195] For it is presented in ordinary moral thought and language along with relations to desires and feelings, reasoning about the means to desired ends, inter-personal demands, so on. (Mackie, 1977, p. 42) I think Mackie has changed the connotation of objective intrinsic prescriptivity here: if we take objective intrinsic prescriptivity as what he says, that is, there is a to-to-done-ness or not-to-be-done-ness in actions themselves, then it is incoherent as we have seen above; if we take it as involving something else such as inter-personal demands, then it is no longer objective intrinsic prescriptivity—it becomes objective extrinsic prescriptivity. In a final analysis, the notion of objective intrinsic prescriptivity is incoherent.

From the above discussion, we can draw the conclusion that there cannot be objective intrinsic prescriptivity because the notion is incoherent. The prescriptivity of conscience, therefore, cannot be objectively intrinsic.

Now, even suppose that the prescriptivity of conscience is objectively intrinsic, there is still some reason to look beyond conscience for a further imperative or higher sanction. Let me first distinguish between internalism and externalism in Moral Philosophy. Internalism is a thesis about the connection between moral convictions and motivations. It builds motivations into moral convictions. According to this thesis, an agent's belief that some action is morally right or morally wrong sufficiently motivates the agent to do it or refrain from it. Externalism is a thesis that moral convictions do not sufficiently motivate agents to act. Some additional motivating state is required.[196] Now, we can appeal to externalism to

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[195]Mackie says: "some thinkers—R. M. Hare, for example—would reject the argument that objective intrinsically prescriptive features, supervening upon natural ones, constitute so odd a cluster of qualities and relations that they are most unlikely to have arisen in the ordinary course of events, without an all-powerful god to create them, on the ground that the notion of objective intrinsically prescriptive features, supervening on natural ones is not merely puzzling but incoherent... however, I have argued elsewhere that it is not incoherent, and the oddity of these features is just what is needed to make their existence count significantly in favour of theism" (Mackie, 1982, pp. 115-116).

[196]Mackie holds an internalist position: that actions themselves are of this or that kind sufficiently motivates agents to do them or to refrain from them. In other words, intrinsic prescriptivity, for Mackie, is an intrinsic

reply to Mackie here. Intrinsic prescriptivity is different from intrinsic motivation. That some action is intrinsically prescriptive does not entail that it is intrinsically motivational. Intrinsic prescriptivity, that is, the to-be-done-ness or not to be-done-ness involved in actions themselves lacks a kind of motivational power that actually moves one to obey the dictate of conscience. Thus, even if conscience is intrinsically prescriptive, it is legitimate to look beyond conscience itself for an extrinsic motivation.

I have argued above that the authority of conscience, that is, the prescriptivity of conscience cannot be objectively intrinsic, and even if it can, there is still some reason for looking beyond conscience for a further imperative or higher sanction. In the following, I am going to argue that conscience cannot be subjectively intrinsically prescriptive.

To say that conscience is subjectively intrinsically prescriptive is to say that conscience is completely autonomous: the prescription what ought to be done and what ought not to be done depends merely upon agents themselves' wants or desires. Each rational being is, as Mackie describes, competent to determine the moral law, to prescribe moral commands to herself or himself. Moral agents, or rational beings, are the citizens of an ideal commonwealth, making universal law for themselves and one another (Mackie, 1977. pp.106-107). Self-directing, self-commanding and self-legislation are essential characteristics of complete autonomy.

Now, I argue that one's conscience cannot be completely autonomous and it must subject itself to the constraints of moral laws. This is because autonomy pushes itself in different directions and moral laws are required to guide it in the right direction. Conscience is very much like a Kantian moral agent: he has autonomy to make judgement whether a course of action is right or wrong, make choices among a set of actions and make decisions for himself based on rational considerations, and at the same time he has to follow the moral imperatives and be subject to the constraints of the moral laws. Thus, conscience cannot be

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motivation.

completely autonomous, that is, it cannot be subjectively intrinsically prescriptive.[197]

To sum up, neither can the prescriptivity of conscience be objectively intrinsic nor can it be subjectively intrinsic. The prescriptivity of conscience, therefore, must be extrinsic. Thus, there is no inconsistency between accepting that conscience is authoritative and looking beyond conscience itself for a further imperative or higher sanction. The first horn of Mackie's dilemma, is thus broken down.

The second horn of Mackie's dilemma is that if conscience has an extrinsic origin behind it, it is some human being behind it, not a supernatural divine being. According to Mackie, if we do not take conscience at its face value, but seek critically to understand how conscience has come into existence and has come to work as it does, then we find a pure social explanation:

> If we stand back from the experience of conscience and try to understand it, it is overwhelmingly plausible to see it as an introjection into each individual of demands that came from other people; in the first place, perhaps, from his parents and immediate associates, but ultimately from the traditions and institutions of the society in which he has grown up, or of some special part of that society which has the greatest influence upon him. In thus understanding conscience we do, admittedly, look beyond conscience itself and beyond the agent himself, but we look to natural, human sources, not to a god. (Mackie,

[197]I think complete autonomy has little moral value because it can override what moral laws require. One might object to my position here by appealing to what Aristotle and St Thomas said about autonomy: the more automatic a moral decision, the more virtuous. I think there are two replies: First, the moral agent Aristotle and St Thomas consider are different from ordinary moral agents like us—they are much more perfect than us. Therefore, the more autonomous their decisions are, the more virtuous. Second, Aristotle and St Thomas use the word 'automatic' in the sense of the Greek word 'automatos' (acting independently), not in the sense of the modern English word 'automatic'(acting quickly, without conscious thought). Understood in the Greek sense of the word 'automatic', Aristotle's and St Thomas' claim implies the significance of self-deliberation when making a moral decision, which is certainly morally intelligible. Only if the word 'automatic' is understood in the sense of acting quickly, without conscious thought, what Aristotle and St Thomas claim is morally unintelligible because a moral decision which is made more automatically has more chances to be a wrong decision, which, apparently, has less virtue than a moral decision made with more deliberation, which has a better chance of leading us to right decisions.

1982, p. 105)

Mackie's sociological account of the origin of conscience is predominant in contemporary thought. Hare, Nowell-Smith, Harman and many other philosophers, as well as sociologists hold this view: conscience is the internalization of cultural custom, social mores, etc. This view can be traced to Durkheim. According to Durkheim, "Everything that is found in [conscience] comes from society. The major part of our states of conscience would not have been produced among isolated beings and would have been produced quite otherwise among beings grouped in some other manner". (Durkheim, 1893, p. 350) "It is the very authority of society, transferring itself to a certain manner of thought which is the indispensable condition of all common action. The necessity with which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will." (Durkheim, *ibid.*)

Now, can the sociological account explain the authority of conscience? The answer is negative. If the authority of one's conscience came from the tradition or institution of the society in which one has grown up, or some special part of that society which has the greatest influence upon him/her, there would be no conflict between the dictates of one's conscience and the requirements by the tradition or institution or some special part of that society. But, scanning the whole human history, we have found innumerable examples where the dictates of one's conscience are in conflict with the requirements by the tradition, institution or some special part of that society which has the greatest influence upon him.

One may object that social traditions come in layers and, sometimes, one might choose between two conflicting prescriptions on the basis of which fits in best with the main body of tradition. So, the conflict between the dictates of one's conscience and the requirements by the tradition in which one has been brought up does not indicate that the authority of one's conscience has a different source, just as the conflict between the laws and the legislature does not indicate that the authority of the laws has a different source.

I think the conflict between the dictates of one's conscience and the requirements by the tradition or institutions or part of the society in which one has been brought up, unlike the conflict between the laws and what the legislature has enacted, does indicate the authority of conscience has a different source which is superior to social requirements. This is because the laws can be imposed by legislature's imposing institutions if there is any conflict between the law and what the legislature has enacted, thus, the conflict does not undermine the authority of the legislature; while, there is no any social institution which can impose authority on one's conscience if there is a genuine conflict between the dictates of conscience and requirements by the tradition or social institutions or part of the society in which one has been brought up.

Although the traditions, or social institutions of a society in which one lives in, can force one to accept what contradicts to the dictates of one's conscience, it cannot, as the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Robert Adams' *Finite and Infinite Goods*,[198] illustrates, extinguish the dictates and completely stop one acts according to the dictates of his/her conscience. Even if one obeys the authority from the society or tradition, due to external forces, one still feels an inner pain caused by the genuine conflict and tries to act against the authority from the society (or a group of society) or tradition. This is because the conflict, on the surface, seems to disappear due to external forces, but it still exists at a deep level, tears one's heart and prompts one to act according to the dictates of one's conscience.

Besides the conflict between the dictates of one's conscience and the requirements by the tradition or other social requirements indicates that the authority of conscience has a different source which is superior to social requirements, the fact that there are dictates of conscience which are far beyond the requirements by the traditions, or other social

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[198]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian of the Protestant church in Germany, was a leader of resistance to Hitler. Under the coercion of the Nazism, he had to perform things in public required by the Nazi, which were contradictory to the dictates of his conscience. However, the Nazi's coercion didn't stop him acting according to the dictates of his conscience. He was secretly involved in the anti-Nazi movement and was put to death by Nazi at the end of the World War II. See: Adams, 2002, pp. 215-216.

requirements also shows that the authority of conscience has a different source which is superior to social requirements. Moreover, from the motive for fulfilling the dictates of conscience we can see that the authority of conscience has a different source which is superior to social requirements. When a person's conscience dictates that X ought to be done and Y ought not to be done s/he doesn't follow the dictate out of the motive for gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment by social institutions or part of the society in which s/he has been brought up. The fulfilment is categorical, even if at the price of losing one's life. People are even willing to face severe punishment rather than quit the dictates of their conscience. Socrates, for example, preferred dying to desisting from preaching what his conscience judged as right. This shows that the authority of conscience must come from an origin which is superior to the society.

If the authority of one's conscience came from the tradition or other social requirements one would not feel guilty about certain actions when the tradition, or institution of the society approve them.[199] But there are indeed such cases in human history where someone feels guilty about certain actions even if the tradition or other social requirements approve them. This also shows that the authority of conscience must come from an origin which is superior to the society.

From the above analyses we can see that the sociological account cannot fully explain the authority of conscience.

William H. Davis has rightly observed that the authority of conscience does not derive from parental training, society, or evolution. Davis says: if conscience is nothing else but the echo of parental or societal prohibitions, it will have no binding force for an alert and intelligent person. He may disobey it by his deliberation. Likewise, if conscience is a kind

[199] Here, I am not denying that the authority of a virtuous model one admires has an imperative impact on one's conscience. For example, if the authority one admires judges one's behaviour, say, adultery, to be immoral, one can feel guilt. This is because the judgement of the authority would be the same as the judgement of one's conscience and there is no genuine conflict between the dictate of one's conscience and the authority. Otherwise, one would not admire the authority.

of social instinct bestowed upon him by the process of evolution as conductive to the survival of the species, it will have no binding force either. One may overrule the dictate of conscience when he finds temptation strong or the rationale for disobedience persuasive. Should a man deny himself some intense pleasure for the sake of an obscure and vaguely felt social instinct? And why should a man concern himself with the evolutionary process of the species? (Davis, 1979, pp. 120-121)

But, according to Davis, the authority of conscience does not derive from God either, but from conscience itself—the feeling of obligation:

> we are not one whit more obligated to do what seems right to us if that seeming was planted in us by God, nor are we less obligated if the seeming were implanted in us by evolution, or even by society. We are equally obligated either way. Obligation derives simply and solely from the feeling of obligation. The feeling of obligation may be changed in certain particulars by the discovery of its source, yet it retains all the authority it ever had. It remains the final judge of good and evil. (Davis, *ibid*, p.122)

The feeling of obligation, in Davis, is reduced to a feeling of rightness or wrongness, in turn, a feeling of attraction or repulsion: "conscience is the sole and final judge of value. Its judgments come to us as a kind of feeling of attraction or repulsion." (Davis, *ibid*, p. 118)

I think, Davis' account of obligation cannot explain the binding force of moral obligation that we take as the authority of conscience. If obligation comes from the feeling of obligation only, there will be no binding force of that obligation. The authority of conscience, that is the binding force of conscience, must have an external explanation. Now, as we have seen above, other explanations cannot adequately account for the authority of conscience, the best explanation is, therefore, the existence of all-powerful, all-good and all-knowing God.

In the final analysis, the sociological account cannot ultimately explain the authority of conscience. Thus, the authority of conscience can be best explained, ultimately, only by the existence of all-powerful, all-good and all-knowing God.

We have seen from the above that Mackie and others have failed to refute Newman's explanation of the experience of conscience: Phenomenologically, conscience is prescriptive. On the one hand, it cannot be objectively intrinsically prescriptive for objective intrinsic prescriptivity is incoherent. The prescriptivity of conscience demands a personal being as its explanation; on the other hand, it cannot be subjectively intrinsically prescriptive for subjective intrinsic prescriptivity deprives it of its authority. Therefore, there must be a personal being beyond conscience itself that is the origin of the prescriptivity of conscience; the sociological explanation cannot be an appropriate explanation of the prescriptivity of conscience for it cannot explain the overriding force of conscience which is beyond human interest. Therefore, there must exist an all-good, all-powerful and all-knowing supernatural personal being that is the origin of the prescriptivity of conscience.

In the above, I have argued for the validity of an inference to the best explanation and the supernatural explanation of the prescriptivity of conscience. Now, I am in the position to conclude that Newman's argument from conscience, as an inference to the best explanation, is successful: phenomenologically, conscience is prescriptive. The prescriptive characteristics of conscience are so peculiar that no earthly object can best explain them. Thus, they require the existence of an all-good God as their best explanation.

So far, I have examined Newman's approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God. It is interesting to see that Newman's approach has many similarities to the reformed epistemologist approach that has arisen during the last two decades: epistemically, both of them reject the evidentialist conception of justification; theologically, both of them depart from the traditional approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God and ground the belief on concrete experience. However, there are

significant differences between the two approaches. In next chapter, I am going to review the reformed epistemologist approach and compare and contrast it with Newman's approach, to show that the latter has some advantages over the former.

Chapter 6: A Comparison and Contrast of Newman's Approach to the Justification for Belief in the Existence of God with the Reformed Epistemologists' Approach

I have examined Newman's approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God based on the phenomena of conscience in chapters 4 and 5. We have seen that Newman rejects the evidentialist conception of epistemic justification and the traditional approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God, which is based on the evidential conception of epistemic justification, and grounds the belief on the concrete experience of conscience. Newman's approach has many similarities with the reformed epistemologists' approach. In the following, I am going to first review their approach and then compare it with that of Newman.

Part One: The Rise of the Reformed Epistemology Movement

The reformed epistemologists are those Anglo-American philosophers, notably Alvin Plantinga,[200] Nicholas Wolterstorff, George Marvrodes and Kenneth Konyndyk, who reject the traditional epistemology which advocates the evidentialist account of rationality and justification and the traditional approach which seeks proofs or arguments for the belief in God, and vindicate the immediate justification for belief in God based on our experience of God. [201] According to the traditional epistemology, a proposition *P* is rational or

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[200] Alvin Plantinga is the most prominent reformed epistemologist. He has produced a series of works to explicate and defend the reformed epistemologist's v ews. His early works include "Is Belief in God Rational?'' (Plantinga, 1979); "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?'' (Plantinga, 1981); "Reasons and Belief in God'' (Plantinga, 1983a); "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology'' (Plantinga, 1983b); "Epistemic Justification" (Plantinga, 1986a); "Coherentism and the Evidential Objection to Belief in God" (Plantinga, 1986b); "Justification and Theism' (Plantinga, 1987), "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function" (Plantinga, 1988); "Justification in the 20th Century" (Plantinga, 1990). His later works include *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Plantinga, 1993a); *Warrant and Proper Function* (Plantinga, 1993b); "Respondeo" (Plantinga, 1996); *Warranted Christian Belief* (Plantinga, 2000): "Reply to Beilby's Cohorts" (Plantinga, 2002); "Probability and Defeaters" (Plantinga, 2003); "Evolution, Epiphenomenalism, Reductionism" (Plantinga, 2004).

[201] Some philosophers classify William Alston as a reformed epistemologist (for example, T. W. Tilley, 1990, p. 238; A. Koehl, 2001, p. 168). I think that, strictly speaking, Alston is not a reformed epistemologist

epistemically justified iff there is adequate evidence supporting *P*. By adequate evidence, the mainstream of traditional epistemologists means a formal, deductively or inductively valid argument. The reformed epistemologists reject this account of rationality and justification and developed a broader account of rationality and epistemic justification originated from Reid. According to them, to justify a proposition *P*, we do not need formal, deductively or inductively valid propositional evidence supporting *P*. *P* can be epistemically justified by means of a range of informal inferences derived from perceptual experience or other properly basic beliefs.[202] The corollary of this epistemological theory is that we do not need proofs or formal arguments for the belief in God and the belief in God is rational or justified because it is a properly basic belief resulting from the normal functioning of a human cognitive faculty.

The rise of the reformed epistemology movement resulted from the evidentialist objection to religious beliefs, particularly, the belief in God. Since the Enlightenment, many philosophers have raised objections to the rationality of religious beliefs. John Locke (1690, Book IV, xix), W. K. Clifford (1879, p. 345f), Bertrand Russell (1957, pp. 3-23), Brand Blanshard (1974, pp. 400-433) and Anthony Flew (1979, pp. 22-30), to name few [203], have argued that people who accept the belief in God are epistemically irresponsible and violate their intellectual duty because there is not sufficient evidence for the belief.[204] Some

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because he does not reject a) classical foundationalism, b) adequate evidence for belief in God and c) the traditional arguments for the existence of God (see Alston (1976a, 1976b; 1983, 1985a, 1985b). However, Alston has a position somewhat similar to the reformed epistemologists' —we are rationally justified in believing that our apparent direct perception of God's presence (called 'M-experiences') are reliable and thus beliefs based on these experiences are both epistemically and pragmatically justified (see: Alston, 1991b).

[202]According to Plantinga, the proper basicality of a belief is the non-inferencial property of the belief which confers justifiedness to the belief in question and a result of proper function of one's cognitive faculty. A properly basic belief is, thus, epistemically direct, that is no inferences are involved. The term *epistemically direct* comes from Robert Audi (1989, pp.139-166). According to Audi, for Plantinga, a proper basic belief is also psychologically direct, that is, no mediate mental processes are involved (Audi, *ibid.*).

[203]The reason that I group Locke with Clifford, Russell, Flew and Blanshard is due to their evidentialist epistemic responsibilism. It should be noted that there are differences between Locke and the latter philosophers: Locke links evidence with epistemic responsibility, thus, regards a person who entertains a belief beyond the support of evidence as epistemically irresponsible, not morally irresponsible, while the latter philosophers link evidence with epistemic responsibility and moral responsibility, thus, regard a person who holds a belief beyond the support of evidence as epistemically irresponsible and morally sinful.

[204] This is a normative version of evidentialism. A normative version is the thesis that unless one has adequate evidence for one's belief P it is irrational for one to hold P because it is to violate one's intellectual duty to

of them even argue that believing in God is immoral. Clifford, for example, denounces people who believe on insufficient evidence and regarded them as sinners: if a

> belief has been accepted on insufficient evidence, the pleasure is a stolen one. Not only does it deceive ourselves by giving us a sense of power which we do not really possess, but it is sinful, because it is stolen in defiance of our duty to mankind. That duty is to guard ourselves from such beliefs as from a pestilence, which may shortly master our body and spread to the rest of the town. (Clifford, *ibid.* p. 184)

> To sum up: it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence. (Clifford, *ibid.* p. 186)

The evidentialist objection, according to Plantinga, is rooted in classical foundationalism.[205] According to classical foundationalism, in one's noetic structure, (a) there are some properly basic beliefs that can be rationally held without the evidential support of other beliefs; (b) other beliefs cannot be rationally held without evidential support; (c) only beliefs that are self-evident or evident to the senses or incorrigible are properly basic. Now, from classical foundationalism the evidentialist objection is derived: belief in God is neither self-evident nor evident to the senses, therefore it is not properly basic and cannot be rationally held without evidential support (Plantinga, 1986, p. 112). Classical foundationalism, according to him, is self-refuting and it should be rejected, and, therefore, the evidentialist objection, in turn, should be rejected.[206]

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hold a belief without having adequate evidence. There is another version of evidentialism, that is, structural version of evidentialism. A structural version is the thesis that it is irrational to hold a belief P without having adequate evidence because evidential support is necessary in one's belief structure in order to render it well founded. See: Kenneth Konyndyk (1989), pp. 98-99.

[205]According to Alston, we should not suppose that evidentialism must be based upon classical foundationalism and it could be rooted in coherentism (Alston, 1985b, p. 295). Robert McKim holds the same view that the evidentialist objections need not presuppose foundationalism. See: McKim (1989), pp. 29-56. According to Alston, classical foundationalism is a plausible theory: we need adequate reasons to justify a belief. Reasons consist of beliefs or experience, not just the former. We should say there are reasons for justifying the belief in God, rather than we do not need reasons or evidence to support the belief (Alston, *ibid.*).

[206] I will discuss Plantinga's refutation of classical foundationalism in detail later.

In rejecting the evidentialist objection to belief in God, the reformed epistemologists reject natural theology. According to the reformed epistemologists, philosophically, natural theology, like the evidentialist objection, is rooted in classical foundationalism[207] and, theologically, it is unnecessary and inappropriate for religious beliefs and, therefore, should be rejected.

In the following section, I am going to look at the philosophical and theological sources of reformed epistemology.

Part Two: The Philosophical and Theological Sources of Reformed Epistemology

Philosophically, reformed epistemology originates mainly from the philosophy of Thomas Reid.

According to Reid, we have a variety of *belief dispositions*, such as inclinations, propensities, credulity, etc, which constitute our belief-forming mechanisms and cause us to hold certain beliefs. For example, upon having certain sensations in certain situations, we are disposed to have certain beliefs about the external world; upon having memory experience in certain situations, we are disposed to have certain beliefs about the past. In these cases, the beliefs are produced immediately and no mediate processes are involved. We have also a disposition to have certain beliefs basedon our other beliefs that are produced by our other belief dispositions. Reid calls this disposition *reason.*

For Reid, the belief dispositions are innate and are 'endowed by our creator', but some of them are not operative or not operative properly in children until reaching a certain degree of maturation, for example, the credulity disposition. Reid says:

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[207] According to Alston, natural theology does not necessarily root in the classical foundationalism (Alston, 1985b).

> Perhaps a child in the womb, or for some short period of its existence, is merely a sentient being: the faculties by which it perceives an external world, by which it reflects on its own thoughts and existence, and relation to other things, as well as its reasoning and moral faculties, unfold themselves by degrees; so that it is inspired with the various principles of common sense, as with the passions of love and resentment, when it has occasion for them. (Reid, 1764, V. vii)

> The principle of credulity is unlimited in children, until they meet with instances of deceit and falsehood. (Reid, *ibid.* VI, xxiv)

> The wise Author of nature hath planted in human mind a propensity to rely upon human testimony before we can give a reason for doing so. This, indeed, puts our judgment almost entirely in the power of those who are about us in the first period of life; but this is necessary both to our preservation and to our improvement. If children were so framed as to pay no regard to testimony or authority, they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge. (Reid, 1785, VI, v)

The principle of credulity is more restrained and modified with maturation:

> When our faculties ripen, we find reason to check that propensity to yield to testimony and to authority, which was so necessary and so natural in the first period of life. We learn to reason about the regard due to them, and see it to be a childish weakness to lay more stress upon them than reason justifies. (Reid, ibid. VI, v)

According to Reid, we are *prima facie* justified in accepting the deliverance of the credulity disposition until such time as we have adequate reason to believe otherwise. As Wolterstorff remarks, for Reid, "The deliverance of our credulity dispositions are innocent until proved guilty, not guilty until proved innocent." (Wolterstorff, 1983, p. 163)

Reid's views that our perceptual beliefs and memory beliefs are immediately justified and no mediate processes are involved and we are prima facie justified in accepting the deliverance of the credulity disposition until proven guilty had great influences on the reformed epistemologists.[208]

In the above, we have looked at the philosophical sources of reformed epistemology. In the following I am going to look at the theological sources of reformed epistemology. Theologically, reformed epistemology originates from John Calvin, Herman Bavinck and Karl Barth.

One of important theological sources of reformed epistemology is John Calvin's theology. According to Calvin, human beings are created with a strong natural tendency to believe in God, that is, the *sensus divinitatis:* [209]

> There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty. Ever renewing its memory, he repeatedly sheds fresh drops. Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their Maker, ...; (Calvin, 1536, I, iii, I, p. 44)

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[208]Plantinga has been greatly influenced by Reid. We can see this from, especially, his three volumes of *Warrant*. In his *Warrant and Proper Function*, he calls the version of foundationalism he tries to defend as "Reidian Foundationalism" (Plantinga, 1993b, p. 183). In his *Warranted Christian Belief*, he cites Reid at least ten times. See: Plantinga, 2000, p. 97, p. 98, p. 118, p. 130, p147, 216, pp. 218-27, p. 258, p. 386, p. 432.

[209] Plantinga defines Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* as 'many sided disposition to accept belief in God (or propositions that immediately and obviously entails the existence of God) in a variety of circumstances'. Like sense perception, a *priori* knowledge, induction, testimony and other epistemic modules, the *sensus divinitatis* produces beliefs in an appropriate cognitive environment, aims at the production of true beliefs, and generates beliefs which have a statistical probability of being true. See: Plantinga (1993b), p. 212 n 24. But, according to Derek S. Jeffreys, Plantinga depicts Calvin's *sensus divinitatis* inaccurately, fails to distinguish different kinds of knowledge of God in Calvin and ignores the complexities of Calvin's discussion of natural theology. Jeffreys even questions Plantinga's claim to be representing the Reformed Tradition. See Jeffreys (1997), p. 415.

> ... From this we conclude that it is not a doctrine that must be first learned in school, but one which each of us is master from his mother's womb and which nature itself permits no one to forget. (Calvin, *ibid*)

According to Calvin, *sensus divinitatis* is sometime obscured by sin and, however, it can be cleared by 'the whole workmanship of the universe':

> Even the common folk and the most untutored, who have been taught only by the aid of the eyes, cannot be unaware of the excellence of divine art, for it reveals itself in this innumerable and yet distinct and well-ordered variety of the heavenly host. (Calvin, *ibid* I, v, p. 50)

Since one has a natural tendency to belief in God and the whole universe reveals to her/him that God exists one does not need rational proofs for certainty that there is a God:

> The prophets and apostles do not boast either of their keenness or of anything that obtains credit for them as they speak; nor do they dwell upon rational proofs. Rather, they bring forward God's holy name, that by it the whole world may be brought into obedience to him. Now we ought to see how apparent it is not only by plausible opinion but by clear truth that they do not call upon God's name heedlessly or falsely. If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences–that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation, and that they may not also boggle at the smallest quibbles—we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit. (Calvin, *ibid* I, vii, p. 78)

Another two major theological sources of reformed epistemology are Herman Bavinck and Karl Barth.

According to Bavinck, belief in God is not based on proofs or arguments, for proofs or arguments are not, in general, the source of the believer's confidence in God nor the justification of the belief:

> Scripture urges us to behold heaven and earth, birds and ants, flowers and lilies, in order that we may see and recognize God in them. ... Scripture does not reason in the abstract. It does not make God the conclusion of a syllogism, leaving it to us whether we think the argument holds or not. But it speaks with authority. Both theologically and religiously it proceeds for God as the starting point. (Bavinck, 1951, p. 78)

Bavinck compares the belief in the existence of God with the belief in the existence of the self and of the world and draws the analogy that, just as our belief in the existence of the self and of the world is not based on proofs or arguments, our belief in the existence of God is not based on proofs or arguments and it is spontaneously impressed upon our consciousness by the creation:

> We receive the impression that belief in the existence of God is based entirely upon these proofs. But indeed that would be 'a wretched faith, which, before it invokes God, must first prove his existence'. The contrary, however, is the truth. There is not a single object the existence of which we hesitate to accept until definite proofs are furnished. Of the existence of self, of the world round about us, of logical and moral laws etc., we are so deeply convinced because of the indelible impressions which all these things make upon our consciousness that we need no arguments or demonstration. Spontaneously, altogether involuntarily: without any constraint and coercion, we accept that existence. Now the same is true in regard to the existence of God. The so-called proofs are by no means the final grounds of our most certain conviction that God exists. This certainty is established only by faith; that is, by the spontaneous testimony

which forces itself upon us from every side. (Bavinck, 1951, p. 79)

Like Calvin and Bavinck, Barth also holds that belief in God does not need be based on argument. Barth rejects natural theology because it confronts a dilemma: on the one hand, the natural theologian has to pretend to take up with the unbeliever a common position or on the other hand, he really wants to lead the unbeliever to 'the knowability of the real God'; in the former case, the natural theologian abandons his Christian standpoint; in the latter case, he is dishonest:

> This dilemma betrays the inner contradiction in every form of a 'Christian' natural theology. It must really represent and affirm the standpoint of faith. Its true objective to which it really wants to lead unbelief is the knowability of the real God through Himself in his revelation. But as a 'natural' theology, its initial aim is to disguise this and therefore to pretend to share in the life-endeavor of natural man. It therefore thinks that it should appear to engage in the dialectic of unbelief in the expectation that here at least a preliminary decision in regard to faith can and must be reached. Therefore, as a natural theology it speaks and acts improperly... (Barth, 1956, pp. 93-95)

From Calvin, Bavinck and Barth the reformed epistemologists have derived their cardinal principle: one is entirely within one's epistemic right in believing in God, one does not need any argument, deductive or inductive, for the rationality or justification of belief in God, and natural theology is, therefore, unnecessary:

> The Christian does not need natural theology, either as the source of his confidence or to justify his belief. Further more, the Christian *ought* not to believe on the basis of argument; if he does, his faith is likely to be 'unstable and wavering,' the subject of perpetual doubt.' ... From Calvin's point of view believing in the existence of God on the basis of rational argument is like believing in the existence of your spouse on the basis of the analogical

> argument for other minds—whimsical at best and unlikely to delight the person concerned. (Plantinga, 1983b, pp. 67-68)

The enterprise of the reformed epistemologist movement is, thus, to provide, mainly, negative apologetics.[210] As Wolterstorff remarks: "the reformed epistemologists are skeptical of the benefit of giving evidence for theistic beliefs, instead, going on the attack against objections to theistic beliefs." (Wolterstorff, 1981, p. 4) In their writings, Plantinga and Wolterstorff mainly engage in negative apologetics. However, there is another trend in the reformed epistemology movement, that is, attempting to provide positive apologetics. For example, Mavrodes mainly engages in positive apologetics in his writing. According to Mavrodes, negative apologetics needs positive apologetics (Mavrodes, 1983, p. 201). I think Mavrodes is right here. We cannot take a purely negative approach in defense of theistic beliefs. Even in Plantinga and Wolterstorff's writings, we can find some traces of positive apologetics.

In the above, I have discussed the reason for the rise of the reformed epistemology movement, traced the philosophical and theological sources of the reformed epistemology and outlined the main enterprise of the reformed epistemologists. In the following, I am going to discuss in detail the reformed epistemologist conceptions of rationality and justification.

Part Three: The Reformed Epistemologist Theories about Proper Basicality, Justification and Warrant

During the last two decades the reformed epistemologists, in particular, Plantinga, have engaged in extensive discussion of epistemic concepts, such as proper basicality, rationality, justification, warrant, knowledge, etc. and tried to provide a new theory of epistemic justification and knowledge in order to defend their religious belief.

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[210]Positive apologetics refers to the enterprise of providing reasons or arguments for theistic beliefs. Negative apologetics refers to the enterprise of refuting and rebutting arguments against theistic beliefs.

As we have already seen in Part One of this chapter, the evidentialists have raised a serious objection to religious beliefs. In order to reply the evidentialist objection, Plantinga first criticizes classical foundationalism which the evidentialist objection is rooted in and then develops his own epistemic theory.[211] In the following I am going to first look at Plantinga's criticisms of classical foundationalism and then trace the development of Plantinga's epistemic theories of justification and warrant.

As we have seen above, from John Locke to Bertrand Russell, many objections have been made to theistic beliefs that belief in God is irrational because it lacks sufficient evidences or reasons. According to Plantinga, all these objections are based on the evidentialist conception of rationality/justification, the latter is rooted in classical foundationalism. So, he sets it as his initial task to reject classical foundationalism. Let us first look at what classical foundationalism is.

Classical foundationalism is a type of epistemic theory which has dominated Western epistemological tradition.[212] According to Plantinga, there are two versions of classical foundationalism: ancient and medieval foundationalism and modern foundationalism. Ancient and medieval foundationalism holds that a proposition is properly basic for a person only if it is either self-evident or evident to the senses; Modern foundationalism holds that a proposition is basic for a person only if either self-evident or incorrigible for that person (Plantinga, 1983a, pp. 58-59).

According to Plantinga, classical foundationalism incorporates the following three theses:

(1) In every rational noetic structure there is a set of beliefs taken as basic—that is, not

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[211] In his early publications, Plantinga has formulated, via internalism, his conceptions of proper basicality and rationality in the light of particular version of foundationalism; In his later publications, Plantinga has developed, via externalism, his conception of warrant in the light of a particular version of reliablism and tried to provide a new theory of epistemic justification and knowledge.

[212] There are various characterizations of classical foundationalism. They can be found in Pollock (1979), p. 94; Wolterstorff (1983), p. 3 and Bonjour (1985), p. 26, etc.

accepted on the basis of other beliefs;

(2) In a rational noetic structure nonbasic belief is proportional to support from foundations, and

(3) In a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses.

Now, Plantinga argues that classical foundationalism has serious philosophical problems. First, it is self-referentially incoherent because it does not meet the criterion for a properly basic belief it lays down: the proposition that in a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses itself is neither self-evident nor incorrigible. Plantinga comments:

> According to the classical foundationalist (call him F) a person S is rational in accepting (33)[213] only if either (33) is properly basic (self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses) for him, or he believes (33) on the basis of propositions that are properly basic for him and support (33). Now presumably if F knows of some support for (33) from propositions that are self-evident or evident to the senses or incorrigible, he will be provide a good argument-deductive, inductive, probabilistic or whatever—whose premises are self-evident or evident to the sense or incorrigible and whose conclusion is (33). As far as I know, no foundationalist has provided such an argument. It therefore appears that the foundationalist does not know of any support for (33) from propositions that are (on his account) properly basic. But according to (33) itself, (33) is properly basic for F only if (33) is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses for him. Clearly (33) meets none of these conditions. Hence it is not properly basic for F. But then F is self-referentially inconsistent in accepting (33); he accepts

[213] That is, the proposition "A is properly basic for me only if A is self-evident or incorrigible or evident to

> (33) as basic, despite the fact that (33) does not meet the condition for proper basicality that (33) itself lays down. (Plantinga, 1983a, pp. 60- 61; 1983b, p. 375; 2000, pp. 94-97)

Second, the criterion laid down by classical foundationalism is too narrow and it rules out many ordinary beliefs, such as our memory beliefs and beliefs about the existence of other minds, being properly basic. Plantinga comments:

> But many propositions that do not meet these conditions are properly basic for me. I believe, for example, that I had lunch this noon. I do not believe this proposition on the basis of other propositions; I take it as basic; it is in the foundations of my noetic structure. Furthermore, I am entirely rational in so taking it, even though this proposition is neither self-evident nor evident to the senses nor incorrigible for me. (Plantinga, 1983a, p. 60)

Plantinga's first criticism confronts classical foundationalists with a dilemma: for a person *S*'s belief *P* to be justified on the basis of the foundations does *S* have to be able to argue that *P* is justified on the basis of the foundation? If the answer is 'yes', then classical foundationalists have to provide good arguments to show their belief in (33) is self-evident, but they haven't done so; if the answer is 'No', then an evidentialist cannot use a believer's inability to offer good arguments for theism as a reason for saying that the believer is irrational. I think the second horn of the dilemma has some force: if classical foundationalists cannot provide good arguments for their basic beliefs, why evidentialists, whose philosophical grounds are rooted in classical foundationalism, require theists to provide good arguments for their basic beliefs? In other words, it is irrational for evidentialists to require believers to meet a criterion they are not themselves able to meet, for this violates the principle of parity. However, the first horn of the dilemma is weak. Although the thesis that in a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses itself is neither self-evident nor incorrigible, it does not

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the senses for me."

follow that the thesis cannot be justified in some other way. We might use, for example, some reasoning like inference to the best explanation to arrive at an epistemology using as data various self-evident particular judgements of rationality. This can lead to meaningful discussions among epistemologists, which we may take to be somewhat inconclusive. It would then be irrational to reject a belief solely because it is excluded by some but not other theories arrived at in such an inconclusive discussion. Now, classical foundationalists might be able to use such way to support their thesis. Plantinga hasn't showed that the thesis cannot be justified in such way. As Alston has pointed out, only if we have showed that the thesis that in a rational noetic structure basic beliefs will be self-evident or incorrigible or evident to the senses can be justified in none of the ways allowed by classical foundationalism can we get the conclusion that classical foundationalism is referentially incoherent. But, no one has showed this. (Alston, 1985b, p. 298)

Plantinga's second criticism is very forceful and it hits classical foundationalism's vital point: if a belief is justified if and on if it is either self-evident or incorrigible not only will a lot of ordinary beliefs be ruled out but also a lot of scientific beliefs.[214]

After rejecting the criterion for proper basicality laid down by classical foundationalism,[215] Plantinga tries to formulate his own criterion for proper basicality. As we have seen, according to Plantinga, a properly basic belief is a belief whose justification is not based on other justified beliefs. This is not to say, however, that a basic belief is groundless. Now, what is the ground of a basic belief? The ground of a basic belief is something, typically, an experience of a certain kind under certain conditions or circumstances that plays a crucial role in the formation and the justification of the belief (Plantinga, 1983a, p.80).

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[214] As we have seen in chapter 4 Newman made the same criticism to Locke's evidentialism.

[215] It should be noted that Plantinga does not reject foundationalism as a whole. He only rejects the narrow criterion for proper basicality laid down by classical foundationalism that only those propositions which are self-evident, evident to the sense or incorrigible are properly basic. In fact, Plantinga's epistemology is of foundational type. McKim calls Plantinga's type of foundationalism as "Reformed foundationalism" (McKim, 1989, p. 32). John Zeis calls Plantinga's type of foundationalism as theological foundationalism (Zeis, 1990, p. 173). According to Hoitenga, Plantinga's thesis that belief in God is a properly basic belief is

Now, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for proper basicality of a belief? According to Plantinga, it is not the case that revealing necessary and sufficient conditions for proper basicality follow from clearly self-evident premises by clear acceptable arguments. The proper way to arrive at such a criterion is, broadly speaking, inductive, that is, the criterion for proper basicality must be reached from below rather than above; they should not be presented *ex cathedra* but argued to and tested by a relevant set of examples; it requires us to assemble examples of beliefs and conditions such that the former are obviously properly basic in the latter, and examples of beliefs and conditions such that the former are obviously not properly basic in the latter, then frame hypotheses as to necessary and sufficient conditions of proper basicality and test these hypotheses by reference to those examples.[216]

In order to develop his own theories of justification and warrant, Plantinga rejects the existing theories of epistemic justification. He remarks:

> According to an ancient and honorable tradition, knowledge is *justified true belief.* But what is this 'justification?' ... Contemporary epistemologists, sadly enough, do not thus speak with a single voice. They don't often subject the concept in question—the concept of epistemic justification—to explicit scrutiny; but when they do discuss it, they display a notable lack of unanimity. Some claim that justification is by epistemic dutifulness, others, that it is by coherence, and still others that it is by reliability... I shall argue that none of the above is the correct answer, and suggest an alternative. (Plantinga, 1986a, p. 3)[217]

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a foundationalist one, but sometimes it seems to be coherentist one (Hoitenga, 1991, p. 179).

[216] See: Plantinga (1979), pp76, 77 and (1981), pp. 49-50. We can see that Plantinga holds a particularist approach to criteria for proper basicality. There are two approaches to criteria for proper basicality--methodist approach and particularist approach. A methodist approach argues, a *priori*, from a set of criteria for proper basicality to the propriety of holding specific basic beliefs or types of basic beliefs. A particularist approach argues, a *posteriori*, from specific basic beliefs to the necessary and sufficient conditions of proper basicality. Cf: Terrence W. Tilley (1990), pp.238-239.

[217] Plantinga's criticisms of the three theories of epistemic justification can be found in Plantinga (1986a), pp. 3-18; Plantinga (1986b), pp. 109-138; Plantinga (1987), pp.403-426; Plantinga (1988), pp. 1-50; Plantinga

In the following, let us have a look at Plantinga's criticism of the existing theories of epistemic justification.

1. Plantinga's criticism of the deontological theory of epistemic justification.

The deontological theory of epistemic justification was originated by Descartes and Locke and inherited by contemporary epistemologists such as Chisholm, Firth, Lehrer, Cohen, etc. According to this theory, epistemic justification is a matter of fulfilling epistemic duty and the primary epistemic duty is to believe on the basis of evidence (Descartes, Locke, Firth) or achieve epistemic excellence, e.g. bring about truth (Chisholm).

The deontological conception of epistemic justification is an internalistic epistemic conception according to which in justifying a belief the subject in question has epistemic access to the justifier, in another words, the justifier is internally available to the subject. The deontological conception of justification has a link with the evidentialist conception of epistemic justification, according to which a belief is epistemically justified if and only if there is sufficient evidence for it.[218]

Plantinga criticizes the internalist/normative requirement of the deontological theory.[219] He targets Chisholm's version:

> Chisholm belongs to the internalist tradition going back at least to Descartes... According to Chisholm, then, justification (and positive epistemic status generally) is a matter of *aptness for fulfillment of epistemic duty*. I am justified

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(1990), pp. 55-71; Plantinga (1993a). The primary difficulty with these theories, according to him, is their failure to incorporate it as a necessary condition for epistemic justification (or epistemic warrant) the proper function of one's cognitive equipment in the production of beliefs.

[218] The deontological conception of epistemic justification does not, however, necessarily connect with the evidential conception. According to Plantinga, Conee and Feldman do not make the deontological connection with the evidential conception of epistemic justification. See: Plantinga (1990).

[219] There is a transition from internalism to externalism in Plantinga. Early Plantinga is an, obviously,

> in believing a given proposition is given circumstances to the extent that I can fulfill my epistemic duty or obligation or requirement, furthermore, is one of trying to bring about a certain state of affairs. My requirement is not to *succeed* in achieving and maintaining intellectual excellence; my requirement is only to try to do so... This is a beguiling picture of the nature of justification and positive epistemic status; I think it is to see, however, that it cannot be right. (Plantinga, 1986a, pp.4-5)

Then, he gives some examples, in which the subjects realize their epistemic duties but display cognitive malfunctions, to illustrate fulfilling epistemic duty is neither necessary nor sufficient for epistemic justification (Plantinga, 1986a, p. 7; 1990, pp. 69-70)

According to Plantinga, what is necessary for epistemic justification is the proper functioning of cognitive faculties which is missed in the deontological conception:

> The problem is that my cognitive faculties are not working properly; I display cognitive malfunction, so that no matter how magnificently I do my epistemic duty, no matter how hard I try. I won't have much by way of positive epistemic status." (Plantinga, 1986a, p. 7)

Thus, Plantinga concludes that a belief has positive epistemic status for a person only if his faculties working properly, working in the way they ought to work, working the way they were designed to work (working the way God designed them to work), in producing and sustaining the belief in question. (Plantinga, 1987, p. 407)

In the above, we have looked at Plantinga's criticisms of the deontological theory. I think these criticisms are not successful:

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internalist and later Plantinga is an externalist. Cf. Hoitenga, 1991, p. 196.

First, Plantinga has misinterpreted the deontological theory as an internalist theory about warrant. Let me first distinguish internalism (externalism) about justification from internalism (externalism) about warrant.

In terms of the theories of justification, internalism is the view that what determines a given belief's justification are the believer's internal mental states and that the believer has epistemic access to the justifier for the belief in question, in other words, the justifying process of a belief is available to the subject in question. Recently, Richard Feldman and Earl Conee have distinguished accessibilism and mentalism as varieties of internalism. According to them, accessibilism "holds that the epistemic justification of a person's belief is determined by things to which the person has some special sort of access";[220] mentalism "is the view that a person's beliefs are justified only by things that are internal to the person's mental life...A mentalist theory may assert that justification is determined entirely by occurrent mental factors or by dispositional ones as well."[221] (Feldman and Conee, 2001, p. 2) Externalism is the view that what makes a belief justified is some property or relation which is external to the mind of the subject who holds the belief in question and s/he may not have epistemic access to the property or relation;[222]

In terms of the theories of warrant, internalism is the view what makes a true belief knowledge is internal to the mind of the subject who holds that belief;[223] Externalism is the view that what makes a true belief knowledge is some external property or relation which

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[220] The versions of internalism characterized by Plantinga, BonJour and Audi are examples of accessibilism (Plantinga, 1993a, p. 6; BonJour, 1992, p. 132; Audi, 1998, pp. 233-234).

[221] The version of internalsim characterized by Chisholm is a typical example of mentalism. Chisholm is one of leading internalist of mentalism type in contemporary time. According to him, a belief's epistemic justification is a purely internal matter in that it is to be described without reference to any connection with the outside world: "The internalist assumes that, merely by reflecting upon his own conscious state, he can formulate a set of epistemic principles that will enable him to find out, with respect to any possible belief he has, whether he is justified in having that belief." (Chisholm, 1988, p. 285)

[222] D. M. Armstrong is one of the leading contemporary externalists. According to him, what makes a belief true and a true belief knowledge is some external relation (e.g. causal relation, nomological relation, or counterfactual relation) that holds between the belief state and the situation which makes the belief true (Armstrong, 1973).

[223] As Feldman remarks, internalism about warrant is plainly unacceptable, for what makes a true belief knowledge must be something external (Feldman, 1996, p. 200).

is external to the mind of the subject who holds the belief in question.[224]

Now, as Richard Feldman has persuasively argued, the deontological theory is an internalistic theory about justification, not about warrant.[225] So, Plantinga's criticism of the deontological theory as being an internalistic theory about warrant has missed its target.

Second, Plantinga argues against the normative dimension of the deontological conception of epistemic justification. I think this is not right, for any conception of epistemic justification must have normative component. In fact, Plantinga uses normative terms, such as 'ought to work', etc. in his conception of proper functioning of cognitive faculties.

Third, the proper functioning of one's cognitive faculties, I think, is presupposed in the deontological conception of epistemic justification. When a deontologist says: "It is one's epistemic duty to bring about truth", s/he refers the 'one' as an intellectually normal and mature human being. For it is absurd to require an intellectually abnormal human being to fulfill epistemic duty, just as it is absurd to require a physical defect human being (for example, a crippled person) to fulfill military duty.

I think what Plantinga could argue against Chisholm's version of the deontological theory is that it embraces a pure internalism. By a pure internalism I mean a mentalism that doesn't allow any external factors to play determining roles in epistemic justification. Apparently, epistemic justification cannot be purely internal (Chisholm posits that it is) and it must have some connection with the external world. This is because the aim of justifying a belief is to bring out the truth of the belief and what makes a belief true is something

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[224]For example, Keith Lehrer characterizes externalism in the theories of knowledge like this: "the fundamental doctrine of externalism is that what must be added to true belief to obtain knowledge is the appropriate connection between belief and truth... The central tenet of externalsim is that some relationship to the external world accounting for the truth of our belief suffices to convert true belief to knowledge without our having any idea of that relationship. It is not our conception of how we are related to a fact that yield knowledge but simply our being so related to it." (Lehrer, 1983, p. 153)

[225] Feldman cites what Chisholm and other theorists said about justification and warrant and concludes: "This establishes, conclusively I think, that the theories Plantinga discusses are not internalist about warrant. They may be internalist about something, perhaps justification, but they are not internalist about warrant (Feldman,

external to the mind of the subject in question. If the justification of a belief is purely internal and has nothing to do with the external world, the truthfulness of the belief in question cannot be confirmed because there is nothing external to warrant the truth of the belief.[226]

Recently, Feldman and Conee have given some examples to defend internalism of the mentalism type. Consider their example:

> Bob and Ray are sitting in an air-conditioned hotel lobby reading yesterday's newspaper. Each has read that it will be very warm today and, on that basis, each believes that it is very warm today. Then Bob goes outside and feels the heat. They both continue to believe that it is very warm today. But at this point Bob's belief is better justified. (Feldman & Conee, 2001, p. 3)

According to them, it is the difference of Bob's internal mental state from Ray's that makes his belief better justified: "Bob's justification for the belief was enhanced by his experience of feeling the heat, thus undergoing a mental change which, so to speak, 'internized' the actual temperature. Ray had only the forecast to reply on." (Feldman & Conee, *ibid.* p. 3) I think this example has exactly explicated the determining role of external factors in epistemic justification: it is the actual temperature that makes Bob's belief better justified, not his internalized feeling of the heat, for his internal feeling could be very different under the same weather condition. Let me modify Feldman & Conee's above example to illustrate this.

Suppose Ray and Bob were staying at hospital, due to suffering from serious flu. They both read the local newspaper about today's weather—it will be very warm today. Ray simply trusted the weather report and believed that it will be very warm today, while Bob didn't.

1996, p. 202).

[226]But, on the other hand, I think that epistemic justification cannot be purely external or objective (as Armstrong suggests). This is because to justify S' belief P is to confirm P with the reality; Now, P is a mental state of S about something and it is, in this sense, internal or subjective. Thus, epistemic justification cannot be purely

So, he went outside to feel the temperature—he shivered. Then he came in the room and said to Ray: "It is very cold today because I shivered when I went outside." So, based on his internal feeling, he believed that it is very cold today. Ray thought his belief is better justified, while Bob thought his belief is and they started to quarrel. A nurse came in and asked what was happened. They told her what was happened. The nurse said to them that it is very warm today and showed them the reading of temperature from her thermometer. Bob, being a committed internalist, insisted that his belief is better justified because he shivered when he went outside. The nurse explained to him that the reason why he shivered was because of his flu symptom. Bob thus gave up his initial belief and started to believe that it is very warm today.

This revised Feldman & Conee's example shows us that epistemic justification cannot be purely internalistic.

2. Plantinga's criticism of the coherent theory of epistemic justification:

Coherentism is a type of theory of epistemic justification according to which a belief is justified if it is consistent with the rest of one's belief system and epistemic justification is only a matter of logical relationship among one's noetic structure. In a coherent belief system, there is no distinction between basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs and all beliefs are in the chain, and the justification of each belief in the chain comes from by being coherent with the rest of the system. Thus, coherentism endorses circular reasoning provided that the circle is large enough. Coherentism is best represented in Harman (1973), Lehrer (1983), BonJour (1985), etc.

Plantinga rejects coherentism on the grounds that it involves circular reasoning and coherence is a purely syntactical notion which does not reflect the relation between beliefs and reality and is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant and it is.[227] He uses a number

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external or objective and there is an internal or subjective dimension in it.

[227]Plantinga distinguishes pure coherentism from impure coherentism: the pure coherentist holds that all

of examples to explain circular reasoning does not confer warrant no matter however big the circle is:

> Say that a circular chain of the sort under consideration is *unit circumference* if the set of beliefs involved is a unit set; and say sure generally that it is of circumference *n* if the set of beliefs involved remembered. Then clearly a circle of unit circumference confers no warrant upon its member. But surely the same goes for a circle of circumference 2. If at first I believe both A and B and later manage to believe each on the basis of other, I am no better off, epistemically speaking, than I was at first. ... If a circle of circumference *n* does not produce warrant, surely the same will go for the circle of circumference of *n* + 1. (Plantinga, 1986b, 136)[228]

He then gives a number of examples to explain that coherence is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant. (Plantinga, 1986b, pp. 34-35; 137-138; 1987, pp. 442-423; 1993a, p. 181)Thus, he concludes that warrant cannot magically arise just in virtue of a large evidential circle. (Plantinga, *ibid.*)

I think Plantinga is partly right in arguing that coherence is not sufficient for warrant. If belief *1*, belief *2*...belief *n* in one's noetic structure are false, then these beliefs, no matter how coherent one with another, cannot confer warrant for belief *n* + *1*. A typical case is a witch's belief system: no matter how coherent is a new belief with the existing beliefs in a witch's belief system, the coherence cannot confer any warrant for the new belief. But, if belief *1*, belief *2* ... belief *n* in one's noetic structure are warranted, then the coherence of belief *1*, belief *2*, ... belief *n* does confer warrant for belief *n* + *1*. A typical case is a

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warranted propositions in a noetic structure are properly basic in that structure; no warrant gets transmitted. The impure coherentist holds that some propositions may get their warrant by virtue of being believed on the basis of others; but the ultimate source of the warrant for both is coherence. Both accept the view that coherence is the only source of warrant; this is the central coherentist claim (Plantinga, 1986b, p, 126).

[228]Sessions, W. L. (1985), J. Zeis (1990), D. Grube (1995), etc. object Plantinga's criticism of the coherentist conception of justification and defend the coherentist roles in justification of theism. According to them, coherentist justification does not involve circular reasoning, this is because coherentist justification is a holist affair rather than linear as Plantinga describes: a given belief is justified if it is coherent with the entire network of beliefs that are relevant in a given case, not on a one-by- one basis (Grube, 1995, p. 48).

scientific theory or a mathematical system: if all propositions are true in a scientific theory and if a new proposition is coherent with the existing propositions in the theory, the coherence does confer warrant for the new proposition.

Likewise, Plantinga is partly right in arguing that coherence is not necessary for warrant. The coherence of belief *1*, belief *2*, ... belief *n* in a false belief system is not necessary for the warrant of a belief *n* + *1*, as Plantinga's example enunciates above. But, the coherence of belief *1*, belief *2*, ... belief *n* in a true belief system is necessary for the warrant of belief *n* + *1*, as the example of the scientific theory has shown above.

3. Plantinga's criticism of the reliablist conception of epistemic justification:

Reliablism is a type of theory of epistemic justification according to which justification is a matter of reliability of the cognitive processes and, thus, a belief is justified if and only if the cognitive processes that produce the belief in question are reliable. Reliabilism is best represented in Goldman (1979), Nozick (1981), and Dretske (1981).

There are different versions of reliabilism. The most popular one is Goldman's. According to the early Goldman's version of reliabilism, "The justification status of a belief is a function of the reliability of the process or processes that cause it, where (as a first approximation) reliability consists in the tendency of a process to produce beliefs that are true rather than false "(Goldman, 1979, p.10). By 'a process' Goldman means "a *functional operation* or procedure, i.e., something that generates a mapping from certain states—'inputs'—into other states—'outputs'; "The outputs in the present case are states of believing this or that proposition at a given moment. On this interpretation, a process is a *type* as opposed to a *token*. This is fully appropriate, since it is only types that have such statistical properties as a producing truth 80% of the time; and it is precisely such statistical properties that determine the reliability of a process." (Goldman, *ibid.* p. 11) Later, Goldman offers a version of reliabilism which focuses on the idea of intellectual virtue. This version of reliabilism is also called 'virtue epistemology' (Goldman, 1992).

Plantinga first criticizes Goldman's characterization of process type involved in producing a belief is too general and lack of specification.[229] According to Plantinga, a belief-producing process is very complex and often involves many different types and these process types are of different degrees of reliability for different people and hence yield different degrees of justification for different people (Plantinga, 1986a, pp. 10-11).

Plantinga then argues that reliability is not sufficient for justification. He gives an example:

> Suppose, for example, S suffers from a serious cognitive dysfunction induced by a rare type of brain tumor. Associated with this tumor are a number of specific cognitive processes, most of which cause S to believe absurdly false propositions. One of these processes, however, causes him to hold the belief that he has a tumor; the output of this process is the belief that he has a tumor. S hasn't the slightest shred of evidence for this belief; no symptoms, nothing at all. (S thinks of his other unusual beliefs as resulting from no more than an engagingly original turn of mind.) The process in question, furthermore, is extremely reliable; it occurs only in the sort of pathology S displays, and of course in those cases the belief in question is always true. S's belief that he has a tumor, therefore, meets Goldman's conditions for having a high degree of positive epistemic status; it is the instantiation of the last member of a highly reliable cognitive process. Nevertheless it would be absurd to claim that the belief in question has a high degree of positive epistemic status for him. It has no more positive epistemic status for him than do the other beliefs caused by the tumor, despite it's happening to be true... (Plantinga, *ibid.* pp.11-120)

From this example Plantinga concludes: reliabilism, then, is not sufficient for positive epistemic status and something further is involved in epistemic justification, that is, the

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[229] Goldman noted the problem of generality and added some specification on the process type: "the critical type is the narrowest type causally operative in producing the belief token in question''. See Goldman (1986).

proper functioning of one cognitive equipment in an environment appropriate for one's cognitive equipment (Plantinga, 1986a, pp. 12-13, 1993a).

Goldman replied to Plantinga's criticism of reliabilism by appealing to his virtue epistemology:

> At a minimum, the processes imagined by Plantinga fail to match any virtue on a typical evaluator's list. So the beliefs are at least non-justified. Furthermore, evaluators may have a prior representation of pathological processes as examples of cognitive vices. Plantinga's cases might be judged (relevantly) similar to these vices, so that the beliefs they produce would be declared unjustified. (Goldman, 1992, p. 159)

My response to Plantinga's criticism of reliabilism is that, first, reliabilism, like any other epistemic theory, presupposes the condition of normal function of human cognitive faculties.[230] In fact, a reliable belief-producing process or mechanism logically entails the normal function of human cognitive faculties. Otherwise, the belief-producing process cannot be reliable. Plantinga himself partially admits this when he remarks on Alston's version of reliabilism:

> William Alston thinks of knowledge (minus a bell or whistle or two) as true belief produced by a reliable belief-producing process or mechanism—i.e., a process that (in our maxi-environment) ordinarily produces true beliefs. But clearly a true belief can meet this condition and fail to have warrant, and that in two quite different ways. First, it can fail to do so by way of failure of proper function. My vision is reliable; I've passed all the tests with flying colors. But if I get drunk and see snakes in my bedroom, my belief has little or no warrant; and even if there happened to be a snake or two lurking in the corner, I certainly

[230]However, there is a difference between Plantinga and other theorists here. For other theorists, normal function of human cognitive faculties does not imply a design plan. See: Ernest Sosa (1996).

> don't know that there is. But second, it isn't implausible to suppose that Alston was implicitly presupposing a proper function condition. (Plantinga, 1996, pp. 316-317)

Second, the reliability of belief-producing process is a constituent of epistemic warrant. Without it a belief cannot have any warrant. To borrow Plantinga's above example: If I get drunk and see a snake in my bedroom, my belief that there is a snake in my room has little warrant. This is because the belief is not produced by a reliable belief-forming process: my vision is not reliable after drinking because drinking seriously affects vision, even if it was reliable before I got drunk and I passed many times vision-tests. From this example we can see that reliability is a constituent of epistemic warrant[231] and reliabilism, therefore, is a tenable epistemic theory. Plantinga's theory of warrant construed in terms of proper functioning of human noetic faculties is, in fact, a version of reliabilism.[232]

In the above, I have examined Plantinga's criticisms of the existing epistemic theories of justification. I think that Plantinga is right in positing that the epistemic duty, coherence and reliability are not sufficient for epistemic justification but he is wrong to positing that none of them is necessary for epistemic justification. Although epistemic duty, coherence and reliability, by themselves, cannot be sufficient for epistemic justification, they are, nevertheless, necessary for epistemic justification. Without epistemic duty a person, whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly and whose environment is appropriate for her/his cognitive faculties, can entertain a belief she/he favors, disregarding the truth of the belief; Without coherence one's belief system can be self-contradictory and, therefore, there is no warranty for truth in the system; Without the reliability of one's cognitive processes the beliefs produced by such processes can be accidentally true and, therefore there is no warranty for truth in one's belief system. An adequate conception of epistemic justification, I think, should involve these three components.

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[231]Plantinga intends to use the example to count against reliability as a constituent of warrant, but the example demonstrates, on the contrary, that reliability is a constituent of warrant.

[232] Thomas D. Senor calls Plantinga's version of rel abilism as "teleological reliabilism". See Senor (2002), pp. 389-396.

After rejecting the existing theories of epistemic justification, Plantinga has further developed his conceptions of basicality, rationality and justifiedness and warrant in his second volume of *Warrant: Warrant and Proper Function*.[233] He gives an externalist account of warrant relying on the proper functioning of human cognitive equipment in the appropriate environment according to a design plan (either evolutionary or divine). Now, let's have a look at Plantinga's theory of warrant in some detail.

What is warrant? According to Plantinga, "warrant is a normative, possibly complex quantity that comes in degrees, enough of which is what distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief."(Plantinga, 1993a, p. 4) That is, warrant is the condition which is sufficient for knowledge. Plantinga states the necessary condition for warrant:

> A belief has warrant for me only if (1) it has been produced in me by cognitive faculties that are working properly (functioning as they ought to, subject to no cognitive dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for my kinds of cognitive faculties, (2) the segment of the design plan governing the production of that belief is aimed at the production of true beliefs, and (3) there is a high statistical probability that a belief produced under those conditions will be true. (Plantinga, 1993b, pp. 46-47)

Later, he takes these conditions as both necessary and sufficient for warrant:

> According to the central and paradigmatic core of our notion of warrant (so I say) a belief B has warrant for you if and only if (1) the cognitive faculties

[233] Justification and warrant are two different epistemic concepts. The latter has more epistemic value than the former. It seems to me that, in his early publications, Plantinga didn't clearly distinguish between the concept of epistemic justification and the concept of epistemic warrant. This can be seen from his interchangeable uses of the two concepts and his criticisms of the existing theories of justification. Plantinga confronted each of the theories of justification with the Gettier Problem (I will discuss the Gettier Problem in details later). But the Gettier Problem is only a counter-example to a theory of knowledge as mere justified true belief, not a theory of justification. In his later publications, especially, in his trilogy on warrant,

> involved in the production of B are functioning properly (and this is to include the relevant defeater systems as well as those systems, if any, that provide prepositional inputs to the system in question); (2) your cognitive environment is sufficiently similar to the one for which your cognitive faculties are designed; (3) the triple of the design plan governing the production of the belief in question involves, as purpose or function, the production of true beliefs (and the same goes for the elements of the design plan governing the production of inputs to the system in question); and (4) the design plan is a good one: that is there is a high statistical or objective probability that a belief produced in accordance with the relevant segment of the design plan in that sort of environment is true.... This account of warrant, therefore, depends essentially upon the notion of proper function. (Plantinga, 1993b, p. 194)[234]

That is, a person S's belief P being warranted iff (1) S's cognitive faculties must be functioning properly; (2) S must be in the right cognitive environment, i.e. one sufficiently similar to that for which S was designed; (3) S's design plan involved in the production of p must be aimed at truth; (4) S's design plan must be a good one.

Now, warrant, for Plantinga, is *normative* or *evaluative* property; to say that a belief has warrant for a person S is to make an appraisal, an evaluative judgment. It is to make a *positive* appraisal; It is to say that the belief in question has *positive epistemic status* for S; it is to say that the way in which this belief is held and sustained, in S's noetic structure, measures up to the appropriate norms or standards for holding that sort of belief in S's circumstances. It is to say that S's noetic structure suffers from no defect or blemish or malfunction by way of S's holding this belief in the way he does. More particularly, it is to

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Plantinga made the distinction clearly.

[234] We can see here that Plantinga has clearly shifted from his early internalist position to an externalist position. Now, Plantinga takes an externalist perspective on justification and warrant, an account of knowledge or warrant not in terms of an individual's access to his own mental states, but in terms of truths about his cognitive functioning and the environment in which that functioning occurs. For more details about this point, see Paul Helm (1995), pp.129-143.

say there is no defect or blemish in S's noetic structure by virtue of the way this belief is related to S's other beliefs and to S's experience." (Plantinga, 1993a)

In proposing his theory of warrant, Plantinga criticizes the "Justified True Belief Theory of Warrant", according to which warrant consists of justified true beliefs. He remarks:

> The most interesting question, of course, is whether the twentieth-century received tradition is correct here; can warrant (apart, perhaps, from a fillip to mollify Gettier) be explained in terms of justification? (Plantinga, 1993a, p. 29)

Plantinga thinks the JTB theory is incorrect because it is undermined by the Gettier Problem. Now, let's look at what the Gettier Problem is.

In his "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Edmund L. Gettier argues that S's being justified in believing a true proposition P is not a sufficient condition for S's knowing that P (Gettier, 1963, pp. 121-123). Gettier uses two counter-examples to support his argument:[235] Let us suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following proposition:

(f) Jones owns a Ford.

Smith's evidence might be that Jones has at all times in the past within Smith's memory owned a car, and always a Ford. Let us imagine, now, that Smith has another friend, Brown, of whose whereabouts he is totally ignorant. Smith selects three places—names quite at random, and constructs the following three propositions:

(g) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Boston;
(h) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona;
(i) Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Brest-Litvolsk.

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[235]Here, I only cite the second case due to the reason that the second case is widely used and discussed in the contemporary literature of epistemology.

Each of these propositions is entailed by (f). Imagine that Smith realizes the entailment of each of these propositions he has constructed by (f), and proceeds to accept (g), (h), and (i) on the basis of (f). Smith has correctly inferred (g), (h), and (i) from a proposition for which he has strong evidence. Smith is therefore completely justified in believing each of these three propositions. Smith, of course, has no idea where Brown is.

But imagine now that two further conditions hold. First, Jones does *not* own a Ford, but is at present driving a rented car. And secondly, by the sheerest coincidence, and entirely unknown to Smith, the place mentioned in proposition (h) happens really to be the place where Brown is. If these two conditions hold then Smith does *not* know that (h) is true, even though (i) (h) is true, (ii) Smith does believe that (h) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified in believing that (h) is true.

This case shows that a person's being justified in believing a true proposition does not constitute a sufficient condition for that person's knowing that P. This is the so called the Gettier Problem.[236] The Gettier Problem reveals that merely having a justified true belief has not sufficient for knowledge, for it could be accidentally true, and for a justified true belief to become a piece of knowledge some additional condition is needed.[237]

According to Plantinga, Gettier cases show that (1) justified true belief does not, by itself, constitute knowledge because a justified true belief can be accidentally true; (2) No strictly internalist account of warrant can be successful; (3) JTB theories of knowledge are false (Plantinga, 1996, p. 309).

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[236] There are many variant versions of the Gettier Problem. See Plantinga (1993a), p. 31 ff, Plantinga (1993b), pp. 31-38 and also Plantinga (1996), pp. 308-309.

[237] Gettier's three-page paper lunched a 'Copernican revolution' in the field of contemporary epistemology. It overthrew the theory of justified true belief as knowledge. As Plantinga remarks: "After 1963 the justified true belief account of knowledge was seen to be defective and lost its exalted status" (Plantinga, 1993a, p. 6); "One of the really seminal development in twentieth-century epistemology (its second half, anyway) was Edmund Gettier's three-page paper presenting a couple of counter-examples to the Justified True Belief theory of

I think Plantinga has hit the vital point of the JTB theories by appealing to Gettier cases. But, we can see that Gettier cases confront not only the existing theories of warrant/knowledge but also Plantinga's own theory of warrant, with a serious epistemic problem:—in Gettier cases one's cognitive faculties are functioning properly and forming true beliefs, but these beliefs are not knowledge—they show that the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties is not sufficient for knowledge.

Now, let us look at Plantinga's solution to the Gettier problem. According to Plantinga, in Gettier cases

> the faculties involved are functioning properly, but there is still no warrant; and the reason has to do with the local cognitive environment in which the belief is formed. (Plantinga, 1993b, p. 33)

> The locus of infelicity, in these cases too, is not the cognitive faculties of the person forming the justified true belief that lacks warrant; they function just as they should. The locus is instead in the cognitive environment: it derivates, ordinarily to a small degree, from the paradigm situations for which the faculty in question has been designed.... What we have in Gettier situations is a belief's being formed in circumstances differing from the paradigm circumstances for which our faculties have been designed. (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 35)

Plantinga calls the paradigm of cognitive environment as *maxi-environment* and the cognitive environment that diverges in some small or sub way from the paradigm of cognitive environment for which our faculties are designed as *cognitive mini-environment.* (Plantinga, 1996, pp. 313-314) A cognitive mini-environment is a much more specific and detailed state of affairs which includes all the relevant epistemic circumstances obtaining when a belief is formed (Plantinga, *ibid.*).

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knowledge" (Plantinga, 1996, p. 308).

Now, why do the true beliefs in Gettier cases fail to be knowledge? It is due to, according to Plantinga, the mini-environment in which the beliefs are formed:

> An exercise of my cognitive powers, therefore, even when those powers are functioning properly (perfectly in according with my design plan) in the maxi-environment for which they are designed, can be counted on to produce a true belief with respect to some cognitive mini-environments but not with respect to others. Some mini-environments are favorable for a given exercise of cognitive powers; others are misleading, even when my faculties are functioning properly. These mini-environments, we might say, are such that my faculties are not designed to produce a true belief in or with respect to them—even though they include the maxi-environment for which my faculties have indeed been designed (by God or evolution) (Plantinga, 1996, pp. 316)

I think Plantinga's solution to the Gettier problem is not successful because he only diagnoses the problem and fails to provide a cure for the problem. We still cannot evade Getttier: what is the filler to seal the gap between a justified true belief and knowledge?

In the above, we have looked at Plantinga's theory of warrant. We have seen that a belief has warrant, according to the theory, iff it is produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties that are operating in an appropriate environment according to a good design plan that successfully aims at truth. The notion of a design plan is crucial in Plantinga's account of warrant: it involves conscious design aimed at truth and it is the ultimate source of warrant of a belief.

Many objections have been raised to Plantinga's proper functioning theory. In the following, I am going to consider some typical ones.

James Taylor raises objections to Plantinga's concept of proper function. According to

him, the concept of proper function is subject to counterexamples if the concept is analyzed in terms of an actual designing process or agent, or not a satisfactory and distinctive alternative to reliabilism if it is not analyzed in terms of an actual designing process or agent. Taylor gives an example to show that an actual designing process or agent is not necessary for proper function:

> Theodore is like other cognizers in many respects, but unlike them in another. He acquires beliefs as others do; his beliefs are generated by perception, reason, deductive and inductive reasoning, memory, introspection, testimony, etc. The operation of his cognitive faculties is just like that of a normal human to whom it is natural to attribute many and various warranted beliefs. However, in spite of the etymology of his name, Theodore has not been designed at all, either by a personal agent such as God or by an impersonal process such as evolution. Nor is he the result of a series of purely chance events. Instead, his coming to exist was an unintended side-effect of an intentional action.... Though Theodore has not been designed, given that his cognitive functioning is like that of a normal human, it seems possible that he has warranted beliefs. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 187-188)

Ernest Sosa also raises objections to Plantinga's account of warrant based on the concept of proper functioning analyzed in terms of an actual designing agent or process: "PF takes it to be impossible that there be someone with warranted belief who has no design plan imposed by an agency or process that designed him."[238] But it seems logically possible for someone, who comes to existence purely by chance, to have warranted beliefs. Sosa uses the case of the chance Swampman as a counterexample:

> Suppose lighting strikes a dead tree in a swamp; I am standing nearby. My body is reduced to its elements, while entirely by coincidence (and out of different molecules) the tree is turned into my physical replica. My replica, The

> Swampman, moves exactly as I did; according to its nature it departs the swamp, encounters and seems to recognize my friends, and appears to return their greetings in English. It moves into my house and seems to write articles on radical interpretation. No one can tell the difference. But there is a difference. (Sosa, 1996, p. 256)

Therefore, it seems logically possible for Swampman to have warranted beliefs not long after creation if not right away (Sosa, *ibid.*).

I think these objections are not very successful. Consider the Swampman case raised by Sosa: a being coming into existence purely by chance cannot have his/her beliefs warranted because nothing in his/her mental constitution can guarantee his/her beliefs being warranted. However, it could be possible that the being developed a reliable cognitive faculty later after coming into existence, and, then, his/her beliefs could have warrant if his/her cognitive faculty could function properly.

Peter Klein has also made serious objections to Plantinga's proper function theory. According to him, the proper function of cognitive faculties is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant:

> My claim is that this account does not correctly characterize either a sufficient or necessary condition of warrant. A belief produced in such a fashion, even if true, could be accidentally true from the cognitive point of view; and, given what Plantinga calls the paradigmatic use of notions like "proper function" or "design plan," a true belief need not be produced by our cognitive faculties functioning properly in order to be knowledge. (Klein, 1996, p.104)

Klein uses the Garden of Eden Case to show that proper function is not necessary for warrant:

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[238] Here Sosa abbreviates Plantinga's "Proper Functioning Theory" as "PF".

> Suppose that we, humans, are artifacts. That is, suppose some theistic hypothesis is correct. Some god created us with the intention, say, that we remain in some sort of wonderful place, some sort of garden, say. Perhaps the creator calls it "Eden." Now, this creator has given us many proper functions: We are to name the plants and animals. We are to have a bit of fun. We are to worship the creator. In addition, when we are functioning properly we gain knowledge of all sorts of things, but we are not supposed to gain knowledge of some deep secrets-the secrets of the Tree of Life. These are the things we are not supposed to know. That is not our proper function. And since we are artifacts, our proper functions are just our creator's design plan that is executed in us. Ah! But we are rebellious. Like Pinocchio, we rebel against our creator and gain the knowledge we were not intended to gain. (Klein, *ibid.* pp. 109-110)

Klein further uses a Gettier case to show that the proper function of human cognitive faculties is not sufficient for warrant:

> Jones believes that she owns a well-functioning Ford. She formed this belief in perfectly normal circumstances using her cognitive equipment that is functioning just perfectly. But as sometimes normally happens (no deception here), unbeknownst to Jones, her Ford is hit by and virtually demolished—let's say while it is parked outside of her office. But also unbeknownst to Jones, she has just won a well-functioning Ford Lottery that her company runs once a year.

Here, "Jones's belief that she owns a well functioning Ford was formed by her cognitive faculties that aim at the truth functioning properly in an appropriate environment. And the belief is true. But it isn't knowledge because it is an accident, from the cognitive point of view, that her belief is true." Thus, Jones' case shows that, Klein concludes, "warrant as characterized by the proper function theory is not sufficient to fill the gap between mere

true belief and knowledge." (Klein, *ibid.* pp. 105-108)

Plantinga replies that the case in which one's faculties are functioning properly, but still there is no warrant for the belief formed from these faculties is due to the local cognitive environment in which the belief is formed. [239]This environment would include such features as the presence and properties of light and air, the presence of visible objects, of other objects detectable by our kind of cognitive system, of some objects not so detectable, of the regularities of nature, the existence of other people, and so on.

I think that Plantinga is right in positing that the proper function of human faculties is necessary for knowledge. If a warranted belief refers to a true belief which is produced by a reliable cognitive process and is not accidentally true, the proper functioning of human cognitive faculties must be a necessary condition for warrant. Without it, a belief can be accidentally true and, therefore, lacks warrant.[240] However, proper functioning of human cognitive faculties is only necessary, not sufficient, for warrant.[241] Some of our perceptual beliefs, for example, sticks in water are bent (in fact they are straight); airplanes in the sky are small (in fact they are very large); roads in summer are wet (in fact they are dry) etc., are formed by properly functioning cognitive faculties in an appropriate cognitive environment, but they have no warrant. Plantinga is also right in claiming that warrant has something to do with cognitive mini-environment. But he fails to specify the function of a mini-environment in the belief-forming process, especially, the cognizer's emotional states in a cognitive mini-environment. In fact, one's emotional states have great influence in the belief-forming process: they motivate and impel the cognizer to form certain beliefs.[242] As

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[239] As we have seen above, Plantinga calls the local cognitive environment in which a belief is formed "mini-environment", in contrast with "maxi-environment". A maxi-environment is the cognitive environment "for which we were designed by God or evolution.

[240] However, I think that this condition is also endorsed by other epistemic theories. The epistemic theories that Planting has rejected presuppose that proper functioning of human cognitive faculty is a necessary condition for warrant. Otherwise, these theories would endorse that we can have warrant for our beliefs even if our cognitive faculty does not function properly. But, none of these theories endorses this. Later, Plantinga himself admits this: "JTP theories implicitly presuppose something like a proper function condition." (Plantinga, 1996, p. 310)

[241] Earlier, Plantinga takes the proper functioning of cognitive faculties as only necessary for warrant, but later, he takes it as both necessary and sufficient for warrant (see Plantinga, 1993b, p. 19).

[242] As we have seen before, Newman has stressed the role of emotion in cognitive processes.

Andew Koehl has recognized, the faculties which produce emotional responses (he calls them "faculties of character") play a very crucial role in the belief-forming process: when operating well, their contribution to one's cognitive circumstances will encourage the formation of true beliefs, and when they are functioning poorly their input will encourage wrong results. Thus, the proper function of faculties of character also seems necessary for warrant, especially in cases of religious and ethical belief (Koehl, 2001, p. 171).[243]

From the above discussion of Plantinga's criticisms of the existing epistemic theories and his own proper functioning theory, we can see that Plantinga, like the majority of other epistemic theorists, has overvalued the importance of one single epistemic property and ignored the importance of other epistemic properties which are also necessary for epistemic justification and warrant. Epistemic justification and warrant, in my view, consist of a set of epistemic properties, not a single epistemic property, which interact with each other and work together as a team to make a belief a piece of knowledge.[244]

In the above section, I have reviewed Plantinga's criticism of existing epistemic theories and his own theories about proper basicality, rationality, justification and warrant. We have seen that Plantinga's theories have some serious philosophical problems. However, this

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[243] According to Koehl, Plantinga intends to include the concept of faculties of character into his concept of "cognitive faculties" (Koehl, 2001, p. 171).

[244] William Alston (2001, pp. 11-12) classifies these epistemic properties into a hierarchy:

I. Verific, truth-conductive statuses:
   A. The belief's being formed in a reliable way.
   B. The belief's being based on, or the subject's being in possession of an adequate ground, where the adequacy consists of the ground's being such that given the ground, it is objectively likely that the belief is true.

II. Favorable statuses that do not entail likelihood of truth.
   A. Satisfying intellectual obligations in holding the belief or in doing things that are in the causal ancestry of the belief.
   B. Self-evidence or other forms of intuitive plausibility.
   C. The belief's being formed by the exercise of an intellectual virtue.

III. Higher-level statuses.
   A. Some relatively direct and/or certain access to the source of the epistemic status of the lower-level belief.
   B. Knowledge or well-grounded belief concerning the epistemic status of the lower-level belief.

According to Alston, properties in I and II are often attached to first-level beliefs and properties in III are attached to higher-level beliefs. Among these properties, truth-conducive properties are of prime importance in epistemic justification and warrant (Alston, *ibid*).

does not mean, directly or indirectly, that his theories have little value. In fact, Plantinga has made great contributions to contemporary epistemology: (a) he has revived the contemporary interest in epistemology;[245] (b) his discussions of epistemological issues are fascinating and full of novelty and his analyses are profound and penetrating; (c) as Hoitenga remarks, "he knows the kinship between epistemological issues as they arise in religion and as they arise everywhere else." (Hoitenga, 1991, p. ix)

Part Four: The Reformed Epistemologist Approach to the Justification of Belief in the Existence of God

The reformed epistemologists reject the traditional approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God and seek different way of justifying the belief. As we already have seen, according to Plantinga, natural theology is incorrect both philosophically and theologically: philosophically, natural theology is rooted in classical foundationism, which itself is self-referentially incoherent and the criteria of which are very narrow and rule out ordinary beliefs as not properly basic; religiously, natural theology is unnecessary and inappropriate. Belief in God, according to the reformed epistemologists, need not be based on argument or evidence from other propositions at all, for it is perfectly rational to accept belief in God without accepting it on the basis of any other beliefs or propositions at all. It is entirely within one's intellectual right to believe in God because it is a properly basic belief. To say the belief is properly basic, however, is not to say that it is groundless. There are grounds for the belief.

Plantinga appeals to Chisholm's theory of justification of perceptual belief to justify the belief in God: just like "upon having experience of a certain sort, I believe that I am perceiving a tree. In the typical case I do not hold this belief on the basis of other beliefs; it is nonetheless not groundless. My having that characteristic sort of experience—to use Professor Chisholm's language, my being appeared treely to–plays a crucial role in the

[245] I think epistemology is a very important enterprise of philosophers. If the ultimate goal of one's life is to seek truth (as Socrates posits it is), epistemology provides a crucial means to the goal.

formation and justification of that belief. We might say this experience, together, perhaps, with other circumstances, is what justifies me in holding it; this is the ground of my justification, and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself." (Plantinga, 1981, pp. 44-45) Analogically, the belief in God can be justified in the same way: one has experiences of certain sort, such as upon reading the Bible, one experienced that God is speaking to him; upon confession and repentance, one experienced God's forgiveness for what one's wrongdoing; etc., therefore, one is justified to believe that there is a God, just as one is justified to believe that one is seeing a tree based on one's visual experiences (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 46).

However, according to Plantinga, the justification of belief in God in this way, is merely a *prima facie* justification, not an *ultima facie* justification, and thus is defeasible:

> The justification-conferring conditions mentioned above must be seen as conferring *prima facie* rather than *ultima facie*, or all-things-considered, justification. This justification can be overridden; I might know, for example, that I suffer from the dreaded cendrological disorder, whose victims are appeared to treely only when there are no trees present. If I do know that, then I am not within my rights in taking as basic the proposition *I see a tree* when I am appeared to treely. The same goes for the conditions that confer justification on belief in God. Like the fourteen-year-old theist (Plantinga, ibid. p. 33),[246] perhaps I have been brought up to believe in God and am initially within my rights in so doing. But conditions can arise in which perhaps I am no longer justified in this belief. Perhaps you propose to me an argument for conclusion that it is impossible that there be such a person as God. If this argument is

[246] On page 33 (Plantinga, 1979), Plantinga gives an example of the 14-year-old theist to answer the evidential objection: "What about the 14-year-old theist, brought up to believe in God in a community where everyone believes? This14-year-old theist, we may suppose, does not believe in God on the basis of evidence. He has never heard of the cosmological, teleological, or ontological arguments; in fact no one has ever presented him with any evidence at all. And although he has often been told about God, he does not take that testimony as evidence; he does not reason thus: everyone around here says God loves us and cares for us; most of what everyone around here says is true; so probably that is true. Instead, he simply believes what he is

> convincing for me—if it starts from premises that seem self-evident to me and proceeds by argument forms that seem self-evidently valid—then perhaps I am no longer justified in accepting theistic belief. Following John Pollock, we may say that a condition that overrides my *prima facie* justification for p is defeating condition or defeater for p (for me). (Plantinga, 1983a, pp. 83-84)

We can see that, so far, Plantinga's approach to the justification of belief in God is internalistic: it is within one's own epistemic right to accept the belief in God.[247] In his "Epistemic Justification", "Justification and Theism", "Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function" and, especially, his second volume of *Warrant*, Plantinga shifts from an internalist approach to an externalist approach and paves a road to further justify belief in God in terms of supernatural epistemology : the reliability of human cognitive faculties is warranted by the designer, that is, the God.[248] Let's have look at Plantinga's argument for supernatural epistemology.

As we have seen, according to Plantinga, a belief has warrant iff it is produced by properly functioning cognitive faculties that are operating in an appropriate environment according to a good design plan that successfully aims at truth—the one for which they are designed by God or evolution or both (Plantinga, 1993a, p. 7). Plantinga then rejects the evolutionary account of the reliability of human cognitive faculties.

According to the evolutionary naturalism, there exists nothing other than spatio-temparal beings embedded within a space-time framework, whose differentiation is due to random

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taught. Is he violating an all-things-considered intellectually duty? Surely not." (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 33)

[247] In his *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga has modified his early purely internalistic approach to the justification of belief in God: "It isn't just that the believer in God is within her epistemic rights in accepting theistic belief in the basic way. That is indeed so; more than that, however, this belief can have warrant for the person in question, warrant that is often sufficient for knowledge." (Plantinga, 2000, p. 179)

[248] It should be noted that in his *Warrant: Proper Function* Plantinga's conception of design plan is non-question-begging, that is, it does not imply any designer. In his *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga uses the concept of design plan in a question-begging way, that is, it implies a designer: "On this model, our cognitive faculties have been designed and created by God; the design plan, therefore, is a design plan in the literal and paradigmatic sense. It is a blueprint or plan for our ways of functioning, and it has been developed and instituted by a conscious, intelligent agent." (Plantinga, 2000, p. 179)

mutation, natural selection and genetic drift. Therefore, there is no such being as God or anything like God, who creates and guarantees the reliability of human cognitive faculties, and human cognitive faculties and their reliability have come to existence through various evolutionary processes. Plantinga rejects this naturalistic account. According to him, evolutionary naturalism is incoherent or self-defeating in that (1) anyone who accepts it has a defeater for R; (2) a defeater for any proposition s/he believes, including N&E itself; (3) P(R/N&E) is low and inscrutable and, therefore, it is irrational to hold it. He says:

> We can express this probability as P(R/N&E) where 'R' is the claim that the cognitive faculties in question are reliable, 'N' is the claim that naturalism is true, and 'E' is the claim that these faculties came into existence by way of the mechanisms of evolution. (Plantinga, 1993a, p. 222).

Now, according to Plantinga, P(R/N&E) is low or inscrutable and a low or inscrutable probability is an undercutting defeater for the evolutionary naturalism (Plantinga, 1993b, pp. 228-229; 2000, pp. 229-231; 2003, p. 293). Here, we need to have a look at what an undercutting defeater is.

A defeater for a belief *B* is another belief *D* which undermines the rationality of *B*.[249] John Pollock first made a distinction between rebutting defeaters and undercutting defeaters: a rebutting defeater is the one that attacks a belief itself; an undercutting defeater is the one that attacks the reason for a belief (Pollock, 1986, p. 37). Plantinga further distinguishes a defeater between a defeater *simpliciter* and a *purely epistemic* defeater. According to him, a defeater *simpliciter D* is a defeater of *B* for *S* if the proper function of *S*'s cognitive faculties requires her/him giving up belief *B* when *S* acquires *D* (Plantinga, 2000, p. 362); A purely epistemic defeater for *B* is a belief *D* that would be a defeater *simpliciter* for *B* if the only processes governing the sustaining of *B* were processes aimed at truth (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 363). He also distinguishes undercutting defeaters into a proper-function defeater, a

[249] Plantinga formulates a defeater like this: a defeater for a belief b is another belief d such that a person, given her/his noetic structure, cannot rationally hold b, given that s/he believes d (Plantinga, 2000, p. 361).

purely alethic defeater and a Humean defeater. A proper-function defeater is used when someone must disregard the truth of a proposition in order to maintain normal living. A purely alethic defeater is used to undermine the rationality of an argument when considered from an objective, third-person point of view. A Humean defeater is used to undermine one's own cognitive faculties when s/he reflects upon them (Plantinga, 2002, p. 206). According to Plantinga, the epistemic function of a defeater is relative to the design plan of the subject in question. For a proposition *P* to defeat belief *B* for *S*, the truth-aimed part of *S*'s design-plan must call for *S* to cease believing *B* when *S* comes to believe that *P*. (Plantinga, 2000, p. 363)

Now, according to Plantinga, the evolutionary naturalism has an undercutting defeater of a purely alethic type for itself:

> Either the rational attitude to take towards this probability is the judgment that it is low, or the rational attitude is agnosticism with respect to it. But then the devotee of N&E has a defeater for any belief B he holds. Now the next thing to note is that B might be N&E itself; our devotee of N&E has an undercutting defeater for N&E, a reason to doubt it, a reason to be agnostic with respect to it. (Plantinga, 1993b, p. 231)

Recently, Plantinga has provided another argument against the evolutionary account of the reliability of human faculties via semantic epiphenomenalism.[250] According to semantic epiphenomenalism, belief is causally connected with behavior, but just by virtue of its neurophysiological properties and not by virtue of its content. Thus, modifying the structures that produce behavior does not necessarily modify the structures that produce belief. If this is the case, the evolutionary account is unlikely to be true, for by modifying the behavior in the direction of greater fitness, natural selection would not necessarily be modifying belief in the direction of greater reliability (greater proportion of true beliefs)

[250]By 'semantic epiphenomenalism' he means a name for the proposition that the content of belief is causally irrelevant to behaviour (Plantinga, 2004, p. 604).

(Plantinga, 2003, p. 291; 2004, 602).

After rejecting the naturalistic account of the reliability of human cognitive faculties,[251] Plantinga, instead of directly arguing that the Christian belief is warranted, argues that there are no cogent objections or undercutting defeaters for the truth of Christian belief. Therefore, Christian belief is warranted (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 366- 373).[252]

In this section, we have looked at Plantinga's approach to the justification of belief in God. I think Plantinga's approach, though fascinating, is very weak and it has many problems. I will evaluate it in detail in the next section when I compare it with Newman's approach.

In the above sections, I have reviewed the sources and the epistemic theories of reformed epistemologists and their approach to the justification of belief in God presented in Plantinga. In the following section, I am going to compare the reformed epistemologist approach represented by Plantinga with Newman's approach. We will see that there are many striking similarities between them. However, Newman's approach, as we will see, has some significant differences from, and advantages over Plantinga's.

Part Five: The Similarities and Differences between the Reformed Epistemologists' and Newman's Approach

From above discussions we can see that there are many similarities between Newman's approach and that of the reformed epistemologists:

First, both Newman and the reformed epistemologists have philosophical affinities with

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[251] There are many objections raised to Plantinga's argument against evolutional naturalism. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss them in details here. For details about the objections and Plantinga's replies, see: N. M. L. Nathan (1997), Branden Fiteson & Elliott Sober (1998), Beilby (2001), David Silver (2003), Plantinga (2002, 2003 and 2004).

[252] In his third volume of the trilogy: *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga provides two models, that is, the Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model and the Testimonial Model, to show that the Christian belief can have warrant (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 241-323).

Reid. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Reid had substantial influences on Newman in many areas. We have also seen, in Chapter 5, that the reformed epistemology is, philosophically, descended from Reid. It is Reid's basic philosophical ideas that underlie the foundations of Newman's philosophy and of the reformed epistemologists.

Second, both reject the evidentialist conception of epistemic justification that a belief is epistemic justified if and only if it is self-evident or arrived from other justified beliefs by demonstrable reasoning, which underlies the objections to religious beliefs. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Newman criticizes Locke's evidentialist conception of rationality for excluding many ordinary beliefs from being justified and tries to develop a broader conception of rationality that allows ordinary beliefs to be justified. Like Newman, the reformed epistemologists, especially Plangtinga, criticizes Locke's evidentialist conception of rationality and tries to develop a broader conception of proper basicality that allows religious beliefs to be proper basic (Plantinga, 2000, p. 82-107). In rejecting the evidentialist conception of justification,[253] Plantinga actually appeals to Newman: according to Newman, we are certain about our ordinary beliefs and we don't need arguments of demonstrative sort to support these beliefs (*G. A.* p. 134). Plantinga appeals to Newman's view to challenge the evidential conception of justification: "But how much of this can be seen to be probable with respect to what is certain for us? How much meets the classical conditions for being properly basic? Not much, if any." (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 98)

We have seen that both Newman and the reformed epistemologists are in the same trench in fighting against evidentialist conception of rationality and their objections to religious beliefs. Newman is, in fact, one of the pioneers in the battle. Unfortunately, some reformed epistemologists fail to see this. Look at the comments made by Wolterstorff:

> Looking back from the position of these new developments in epistemology,

[253] Plantinga formulates the evidentialist conception of justification as (CP): A person S is justified in accepting a belief p if and only either (1) p is properly basic for S, that is self-evident, incorrigible, or Lockeanly evident to the senses for S, or (2) S believes p on the evidential basis of propositions that are properly basic and that evidentially support p deductively, inductively, or abductively (Plantinga, 2000, pp.

> one can see that almost all discussion on faith and reason for many centuries have taken for granted either the truth of classical foundationalism or some close relative to it, or they have departed from that position without any awareness of what they were departing from. (Wolterstorff, 1983, "Introduction", p. 4)

I am astonished by these remarks. Newman *obviously* sees the problems with classical foundationalism and some close relative to it and departs from them with awareness of what he departs from. In fact, we can clearly see from the *Grammar* that Newman was the first philosopher who made systematic criticisms of Locke's classical foundationalism and argued for a broad conception of rationality.[254]

Third, both Newman and the reformed epistemologists depart from the traditional approach to the justification of belief in God and ground the belief on concrete experience. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Newman departs from the traditional approach to the justification of belief and explores a new approach, that is, grounding the belief on the experience of conscience. Like Newman, Plantinga departs from the traditional approach and appeals to religious experience to justify the belief in the existence of God. In this respect, both Newman and Plantinga embrace a particularist approach to the epistemology of religious belief.[255]

Fourth, both Newman and Plantinga hold that the criteria for knowledge is externalistic. According to Newman, we can have knowledge of a certain sort, without having to be aware of the criteria and conscious media to it. This is the case especially

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93-94).

[254] Reid, of course, saw the problem with classical foundationalism and made radical criticisms of Descartes' classical foundationalism. But it is Newman who first made systematic criticisms of Locke's classical foundationalism.

[255] A particularist approach is the one that begins with particular cases of believing and knowing, then tries to discover, by examining these cases, general principles which govern these individual cases. Contrary to particular approach, methodist approach begins with epistemological principles, and then determines whether the cases in question are epistemically justifiable by applying these principles to particular cases (Chisholm, 1990, p. 34).

among uneducated men or genius. (*G. A.* p. 252; p. 253) Newman's discussions on natural inference and implicit reasoning have shown that he rejects the internalist view of knowledge and holds an externalist view of knowledge.[256]

Although, in his early publications, Plantinga held an internalist position, in his later publications he shifted to an externalist position and has mirrored Newman's externalist views.

Fifth, both Newman and Plantinga hold that the normal functioning of human cognitive faculties provides warrant for knowledge. According to Newman, we can have knowledge of the external world, ourselves and other mind, and the certainty of our knowledge is warranted by the normal functioning of our mind. (*G. A.* p. 261) He compares the function of our cognitive faculties with that of a clock: when a clock functions properly it will tell the exact time; likewise, when our cognitive faculties function properly we will gain knowledge. We cannot deny the certainty of knowledge because of the occasional malfunction of our cognitive faculties, just as we cannot deny that a clock can tell the exact time because of its being out of order (*G. A.* p. 176).[257]

As we have seen, according to Plantinga, what warrants a piece of knowledge is the proper function of our cognitive faculties in a cognitive environment that is propitious for that

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[256] I do not deny that there are some internalistic elements in Newman's epistemology. However, I firmly believe that his epistemology is, essentially, externalistic. As John R. T. Lamont has remarked, a large part of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* is taken up with arguments against what is in effect internalism. Newman's epistemological externalism has special value in defending the rationality of religious beliefs: Newman's sort of externalism has potential for combating the sceptical objection to religious faith that himself was unaware of. Newman's contention that we can know a proposition without being aware of the grounds for our knowledge provides support for the contention that we can know a proposition without having to know that our grounds for believing are good ones. This latter contention ... is what is needed to rebut the sceptical argument against the rationality of religious faith (Lamont, 1996, pp. 81- 82).

[257] Newman uses this analogy to explain the operation of conscience: "Our conscience too may be said to strike the hours, and will strike them wrongly, unless it be regulated for the performance of its proper function. ... as the hammer of a clock may tell untruely, so may my conscience and my sense of certitude be attached to mental acts, whether of consent or of assent, which have no claim to be thus sanctioned." As "we do not dispense with clocks, because from time to time they go wrong, and tell untruely", we do not disprove "the authority of conscience that false consciences abound, neither does it destroy the importance and the uses of certitude ..." (*G. A.* p. 177)

exercise of cognitive powers, according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at the production of true belief (Plantinga, 2000, p. xi). Plantinga's view on warrant and proper function of human cognitive faculties is very similar to Newman's theories of the normal function of the human mind (Lamont, 1996, p. 82).[258]

We have seen that there are many similarities between Newman's approach and that of the reformed epistemologists. In the following, I am going to make a contrast between the two approaches to see the former has the advantages over the latter.

Part Six: The Advantages of Newman's Approach over the Reformed Epistemologists' Approach

First, unlike Plantinga, Newman does not reject natural theology and only points out its weakness. According to Newman, natural theology fails to provide a motivational reason for belief in God due to its abstractness, however, Newman does not reject natural theology as a justifying reason for belief in God, while Plantinga rejects natural theology, not only as a motivational reason, but also as a justifying reason for belief in God.[259] Here, I think Plantinga has confused *justifying a belief* with *a belief's being justified.*

There is a crucial distinction between justifying a belief and a belief's being justified. Justifying a belief has at least two meanings: a) an activity of showing that someone's past or existing belief was or is justified, regardless whether the belief was or is in fact true; b) an activity of showing someone that he will be justified if he acquires a belief *P* by providing him a good argument for the truth of *P*. For example, when I justify a belief *P*, I may show that *P* is reliable, coherent or evidentially supported by another justified belief

[258] According to Lamont, Newman's analogy of the function of mind to the function of a clock is very similar to Plantinga's view on warrant and proper function of human cognitive faculties (Lamont, 1996, p. 82).
[259] It should be noted that in his early writings Plantinga rejected natural theology. Later, he changed his attitude towards natural theology in his *Warranted Christian Belief*, where he admitted that his early rejection of natural theology was based on an improper standard (Plantinga, 2000, p. 69) and that natural theology has certain worth in the believer's intellectual and spiritual life (Plantinga, *ibid.* p. 179, n. 16). However, he still holds that the theistic arguments provided by natural theology are very weak (Plantinga, *ibid.* pp. 175-176).

Q, regardless whether it is in fact true; or I may show to a person *S* that s/he will be justified if s/he believes *P* by providing her/him evidence for the truth of *P*. While, a belief's being justified is the state of a belief's being true. Alston has made the distinction clearly: the former is the activity of showing a belief is justified and the latter is the state of a belief's being justified (Alston, 1989).[260] Now, arguments or evidence are not needed for the state of belief in God's being justified, but they are needed for justifying the belief. The role of natural theology, as Zeis points out, is not to produce the state of the belief in God's being justified, instead, it is to show the belief is justified (Zeis, 1993, p. 72).

According to the reformed epistemologists, natural theology is unnecessary because God can be known by the direct acquaintance of the mind not only for those whose minds have been revitalized by Christian faith, but also for those who are without such faith (Hoitenga, 1991, p.219). I think the reformed epistemologists are too optimistic about direct acquaintance. If one conducts a survey, she/he will find out that more than half of the population has no direct acquaintance with God. How can these people know God? The possible ways for them are through inference and/or testimony. Natural theology, therefore, is necessary for people who lack of direct acquaintance with God to know God.

Second, although both Newman and Plantinga reject the evidentialist objection to belief in God, Newman's reply to the objection is different from Plantinga's. As we have seen, according to the evidentialist objection, (a) belief in God is rationally justified only if there is sufficient evidence for it; (b) there is no sufficient evidence for the belief; (c) therefore, belief in God is not rationally justified. Newman endorses the major premise,[261] and rejects the minor premise. According to him, there is sufficient evidence for believing that God exists and the evidence is not, however, propositional beliefs, from which belief in God is

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[260] Alston thinks that the state of being justified, rather than the activity of justifying, is what the theory of epistemic justification ought to focus on (Alston, 1989).

[261] But, for Newman, the word *evidence* does not denote only propositional beliefs but also experience, facts, circumstances, etc. We can see this from a passage in his *Oxford University Sermon* XIII, where he talks about the evidence of religion: "By the Evidence of religion I mean the systematic analysis of all grounds on which we believe Christianity to be true. I say "all", because the word Evidence is often restricted to denote only such arguments as arise out of the thing itself which is to be prove; ..." (Newman, 1843, p. 264.) We can see that

inferred by deductive valid reasoning, but the experience of conscience, from which the existence of God is perceived or from which belief in God is inferred through inductive, analogical, probable or implicit reasoning. We can see that Newman does not reject the evidentialist thesis that evidence is needed for the justification of belief in God but rejects the evidentialist conception of evidence that only justified beliefs through deductively valid reasoning can be evidence.[262] For him, evidence is not only justified beliefs but also experience.[263] While, Plantinga rejects the major premise and argues that belief in God does not require any evidence for it is rationally justified by itself due to its proper basicality. He does not reject the evidentialist conception of evidence that evidence is justified beliefs through deductively valid argument[264] but rejects the evidentialist thesis that evidence is needed for the justification of belief in God.

I think Newman is right to endorse the claim that belief in God requires sufficient evidence for it, for:

(1) The requirement of adequate evidences for the justification of a belief permeates ordinary language. Ordinarily, to say a belief *P* is justified is to say that there is adequate

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Newman holds a broad conception of evidence.

[262] We can see that Newman holds the broad evidential conception of rationality/justification and only rejects the narrow evidential conception of rationality/justification. The narrow conception of rationality/justification holds that a belief P is rational/justified iff there are sufficient evidences supporting P. By *evidence* here it is meant a proposition which is self-evident or derived from deductively valid reasoning. The broad evidential conception of rationality/justification holds that a belief p is rational/justified if there are sufficient evidences supporting P. By *evidence* here it is meant perceptual experience or a proposition which is self-evident, or derived from deductively valid reasoning or from inductive/probabilic reasoning.

[263] Newman's view can be found in contemporary epistemological discussions. John Pollock, for example, has argued that evidence for a belief needs not to be further beliefs. They can be experiences (Pollock, 1986). William Alston also argues that experience can be evidence (Alston, 1989). Patrick Lee further argues that experience can be evidence for beliefs, although it must be in one's awareness: something of which one is aware and which seems to indicate that the proposition believed is true, or likely to be true (Lee, 1993, p. 142). There is a debate over how experience justifies beliefs among philosophers. According to Millar, the justification of a belief based on experience can be seen as involving a 'quasi-inference': an experience of a certain type, and a belief that there are no undermining beliefs, play the role of premises in an argument-like structure whose conclusion is the justified belief (Millar, 1989). According to Reynolds, experience can justify beliefs, but not in an inferential way. It takes a non-inferential way (Reynolds, 1991, pp. 273-292). In ordinary language, we use evidence to refer to justified beliefs as well as experiences. In fact, we use evidence to refers to experience more often than to justified beliefs, such as in court cases.

[264] Plantinga thinks the evidentialist conception of evidence is appropriate. See Plantinga (1986b), p. 307.

evidence for *P* and to justify a belief *Q* is to provide adequate evidence for *Q*. Adequate evidence is needed for the justification of a belief that is not self-evident, in particular, when the reasonableness of the belief is questioned. Take an example, if I say it to my neighbor that I believe that I will obtain my PhD degree next year. This person never knew my ability and aspiration, and never knew I had been doing my PhD for number of years and working very hard for it. It is reasonable for this person to doubt the reasonableness of my belief because it is not self-evident. If I supply some sort of evidence to support my belief, such as, I have been doing my PhD for number of years and working very hard, I have a very good, reputable supervisor and he has indicated to me my thesis is of good quality. Obviously, my belief will be more reasonable with the evidence than without the evidence.

(2) Evidence is even more crucial in the case of belief in God—it does not only play a justifying role but also a motivational role for the belief.

(3) The belief in God, even if it is properly basic, needs arguments or evidence for its justification in another sense. Audi makes the distinction between being contemporaneously evidentially dependent and historically evidentially dependent. A contemporaneously evidentially dependent belief needs evidence at the time of one's forming the belief. A historically evidentially dependent belief needs evidence in the past for its justification. A belief that is contemporarily evidentially independent does not imply that it is also historically evidentially independent. Now, belief in God is properly basic and is thus contemporaneously evidentially independent, but this does not follow that the belief is also historically evidentially independent. Audi gives an example: *S* hears a voice of certain sort and he is immediately forming the belief that God is speaking to him. *S* has also once had evidence, for example through testimony, for a voice of a certain sort, heard in certain circumstances, being God's voice. Presumably, he had to learn to recognize the voice. Even if his current belief that God is speaking to him is not based on this evidence, the belief might not be properly basic for him if he had never had the evidence. If *S* did not have this sort of evidential background, his belief would not be rational. (Audi, 1989, p.

153)

Third, for Newman, belief in God needs evidence, thus, his approach excludes the possibility of fideism; while for Plantinga the belief does not need evidence, thus, his approach cannot be free from the charge that it suggests the possibility of fideism. Plantinga himself rejects the fideist interpretation of the reformed epistemologist:

> ...the Reformed epistemologist is not a fideist at all with respect to belief in God. He does not hold that there is any conflict between faith and reason here, and he does not even hold that we cannot attain this fundamental truth by reason; he holds, instead, that it is among the deliverances of reason. (Plantinga, 1983b, p. 90)

For Plantinga, the belief that there is such a person as God is as much among the deliverances of reason as belief in perceptual objects, other minds and the past. (Plantinga, *ibid.*) But, many philosophers have argued that there are dissimilarities between the belief in God and perceptual beliefs. In his "Direct Justification and Theistic Belief" Robert Audi [265] uses an example of perceptual belief "there is a paper before me" to shows that there are some characteristics that perceptual beliefs have while theistic beliefs do not have: (1) the belief is experientially grounded, that is, in some way based on concurrent experience. More specifically, it is perceptual, as opposed to introspective, for one believes this in virtue of seeing, or at least apparently seeing, paper before her/him; (2) This belief is of a kind such that, normally, part of what causes beliefs of that kind to arise and part of what sustains them during the relevant perceptual experience, is stimulation of the cognitive system by the sort of things the beliefs are about, e.g. a piece of paper reflects light rays to the retina and thereby stimulates the cognitive system; (3) The belief also is of a kind that is in a sense irresistible, that is, in the circumstances one normally cannot help forming such a belief; (4) the belief exhibits a kind of universality, that is, roughly, any normal

[265]Richard Grigg, Philip L. Quinn, Robert McKim, etc. have also argued that there are dissimilarities between theistic beliefs and perceptual beliefs. See Grigg (1983), pp. 123-127; Quinn (1985), pp. 469-486; McKim

person in the relevant circumstances will form the belief; (5) The belief is of a sort such that normally the only plausible explanation of why one has it requires the assumption of its truth; (6) The truth of the belief is supported by the normally quite readily realizable possibility of the same perceptual object's being perceived in another sensory mode (Audi, 1989, pp. 148-149). Plantinga's approach is vulnerable to the above criticisms.

In contrast, Newman consistently insists on the role of evidence in justifying religious beliefs, in both his early and late writings. For example, in his *University Sermons*, Newman says:

> Nothing need be detracted from the use of the Evidence on this score; much less can any sober mind run into the wild notion that actually no proof at all is implied in the maintenance, or may be exacted for the profession of Christianity. I would only maintain that proof need not be the subject of analysis, or take a methodical form, or be complete and symmetrical, in the believing mind; ... (Newman, 1843. X, pp 199-200).

We can clearly see from here what Newman rejects is merely the Lockean narrow conception of inference from evidence that is analytical, deductively-valid and in the strict logical form. For him, evidence or proof for Christian beliefs are informal or implicit. While, from what Plantinga has said in his early publications it seems to me that he has rejected the role of evidence in justifying Christian beliefs.

Fourth, as we have seen, Newman's approach is based on the experience of conscience: the belief in God is grounded in the experience of conscience, not presupposed in the experience. There is no epistemic circularity in his approach; while there is an epistemic circularity in Plantinga's approach: in his early publications, Plantinga appeals to religious experiences to justify the belief in God, such as "God is speaking to me when I read the Bible"; "God is disapproving of me when I have done something wrong", etc. These sorts

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(1989), pp. 29-56.

of experience, we can clearly see, presuppose the belief in God, for people who have such experience have already held the belief in God and without the belief in God they would have no such experience. In his late publications, Plantinga appeals to proper functioning of our cognitive faculties according to a design plan to vindicate the belief in God. We can clearly see there is an epistemic circularity here: according to Plantinga, belief in God is rational because it is a properly basic belief; the belief is a properly basic belief because it is a result of proper functioning of our cognitive faculties in the right environment; the belief is a result of proper functioning of our cognitive faculties in the right environment because it is produced according to the design plan that designed by God.[266]

Fifth, since the experience of conscience, on which Newman's approach is based, is universal, it can be, therefore, legitimately analogized to sensory experience. The experience of conscience, as I have showed in chapter 2, is a universal phenomenon. Just as sensory experience, such as the experience of seeing a tree, is universal, the experience of conscience is universal, that is, any normal person in the relevant circumstances will have the experience. Thus, we can legitimately take experiences of conscience as adequate evidence for the belief in God, just as we take sensory experiences of certain sort as adequate evidence for a particular perceptual belief. It is a neutral starting point for arguing for the belief in the existence of God.[267] While, the experience of God Plantinga talks about is not so universal. So it can be objected that the experience of God cannot be analogically taken as adequate evidences for one's belief in the existence of God. Plantinga may reply that the criteria of epistemic justification is not something universal but community-relevant. In fact, Plantinga says:

> criteria for proper basicality must be reached from below rather than above; they should not be presented as *ex Cathedra*, but argued to and tested by a relevant set of examples. But there is no reason to assume, in advance, that

[266]It should be noted that epistemic circularity is a problem of justification, not a problem of warrant. So, Plantinga's approach is circular merely in terms of justification, not of warrant.

[267] Alston has emphasized the importance of arguing from neutral starting point for Christian beliefs: "the attempt to argue from neutral starting points for the truth of Christian beliefs deserves much more serious consideration

> everyone will agree on the examples. The Christian will of course suppose that belief in God is entirely proper and rational; if he doesn't accept this belief on the basis of other propositions, he will conclude that it is basic for him and quite properly so. Followers of Bertrand Russell and Madelyn Murray O'Hare may disagree, but how is that relevant? Must my criteria, or those of the Christian community, conform to their example? Surely not. The Christian community is responsible to its set of examples, not to theirs. (Plantinga, 1981, p. 51)[268]

Here, Plantinga commits himself to epistemological relativism about justification and conventionalism. Let me first explain what epistemological relativism and conventionalism are. There are two types of epistemological relativism: a) relativism about truth; b) relativism about justification. The former holds that whether a belief is true or not is relative because there is no absolute criterion for truth; the latter holds that whether a belief is justified or not is relative because there is no absolute criterion for justification. These two types of relativism are not separate from each other and they are linked together. Epistemological conventionalism holds that a proposition is true so far it is accepted as such by one's society or group within society.[269]

Now, I admit that Plantinga does not commit himself to epistemological relativism about truth, for when he says that different groups of people will disagree whether such-and-such beliefs are cases of properly basicality, it does not commit him to the view that such disagreement is rationally irresolvable. But, Plantinga commits himself to epistemological relativism about justification. When Plantinga says that different groups of people will disagree about whether such-and-such beliefs are cases of properly basicality, he thinks that the disagreement is irrelevant to justification, and, therefore, there is no need to looking for

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than is commonly accorded it today in philosophical and (liberal) theological circles" (Alston, 1991, p. 270).

[268] Plantinga admits later his way to arrive at criteria of proper basicality needs supplementation and revision. See Plantinga (1996), p. 313.

[269] Hugo Meynell made distinction between the strong version of conventionalism and the weaker version of conventionalism. A strong version of conventionalism might imply that all that was meant by the 'truth' of a statement was acceptance by one's society or group. A weaker version of conventionalism implies that it was always the case as a matter of fact that statements accepted by one's society or group were true. See Hugo Meynell (1993), p. 94.

rational solution to the disagreement. According to him, different communities can have their own criteria for justification and each of them can only be responsible for its own. I think this is a form of relativism about justification. Disagreement about epistemic criteria among communities is certainly relevant to justification and one cannot only be responsible to its own and ignore the disagreement because it provides an undercutting defeater to one's own justification.

Many philosophers have made criticisms of Plantinga's epistemological relativism about justification and conventionalism. Alston, for example, criticizes Plantinga:

> In the absence of a shared criterion, how can the conversation proceed? Plantinga seems to suggest that each person or each group must simply proceed on the basis of what seems clear to it, and learn to live with the fact that many will disagree ... This is strikes me as a bit hard-nosed. Certainly a philosopher must accustom himself to the persistence of fundamental disagreements. Certainly one should not renounce what seems clearly so, just because many others reject it. But perhaps we should try harder than Plantinga does to find some basis on which the conversation can continue. (Alston, 1985b, 300-301)

Meynell calls Plantinga to account:

> If belief in God is properly basic *for* the theist, why should not belief in the Great Pumpkin be equally basic *for* the devotees of that putative entity? No doubt belief in Great Pumpkin is absurd *for* Christian theists and atheistic rationalists alike; but why should not belief in God or in the Oscillating Universe (or what ever it is that an atheistic rationalist may believe in) be just as absurd *for* the Great Pumpkin's votaries?" (Meynell, 1993, p. 99)[270] "An individual or a community may be committed to the belief that the interior of

[270] Linda Zagzebski has also persuasively argued against the reformed epistemologists' relativism and conventionalism. See Linda Zagzebski (1993), p. 7.

> the earth consists of jam; or that the whole human race will perish in agony if elderly spinsters who own black cats are not burned alive. If such beliefs prove indefensible by reference to the other beliefs of those who hold them, why should they not, on Plantinga's account, be advanced as properly basic by those so disposed? (Meynell, *ibid.* p.100)

In my opinion, epistemic justification should involve a universal criterion which can be applied to any community. If the criterion of justification of a belief is conventional, a lot of true beliefs may not be accepted by certain society or group and a lot of absurd beliefs, such as the belief in the Great Pumpkin, can claim to be true.[271]

Plantinga replies that belief in God is rational but belief in the Great Pumpkin is irrational because there is no natural tendency to accept the belief, while there is a natural tendency to accept the belief in God. But, the believers of the Great Pumpkin could claim that they have a natural tendency to accept the belief and therefore their belief is rational. I borrow Audi's example to explain this:

> Imagine a cult, say of the Great Oz. who is so conceived that he cannot be God under another name. Suppose its votaries made similar claims about the existence of a natural tendency to form basic Ozistic beliefs and they argued that Hebraic-Christian influences have prevented widespread realization of this tendency. They might also maintain that they have Ozian experiences in which they are directly aware of Oz. How might Plantinga undermine the rationality of their religious beliefs? (Audi, 1989, p. 164)

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[271] I am not arguing that if belief in God is properly basic for theists, belief in the Great Pumpkin is properly basic for the believers and the latter has the same epistemic status as the former. What I am arguing here is that Plantinga's relativism about justification opens a door for all other irrational beliefs: if a criterion for justification is community-based and disagreement about criteria among communities is irrelevant, then belief in the Great Pumpkin (all other irrational beliefs) can have a claim to truth. The devotees of these beliefs can say that they have their own criteria and a set of examples to confirm these criteria and they are not responsible to others.

Recently, Plantinga argues that he is not committed himself to accept that any belief is properly basic, if belief in God is properly basic. For to accept some beliefs as properly basic doesn't commit one to accept all other beliefs as properly basic. So, the Great Pumpkin Objection is invalid:

> ...according to the Great Pumpkin Objection, if belief in God can be properly basic, then so can any other belief, no matter how bizarre: if belief in God can be properly basic, then all bets are off, and anything goes. You might as well claim that belief in the Great Pumpkin (who returns every Halloween to the most sincere pumpkin patch) is properly basic with respect to warrant. You might as well make the same claim for atheism, voodoo, astrology, witchcraft, and anything else you can think of. ... This objection, of course, is plainly false. To recognize that *some* kinds of belief are properly basic with respect to warrant doesn't for a moment commit one to thinking all *other* kinds are; even if the extended A/C model is correct, it doesn't follow that these other beliefs are properly basic with respect to warrant. Descartes and Locke thought some beliefs were properly basic with respect to warrant; should we object they were therefore committed to thinking just any belief is properly basic?" (Plantinga, 2000, p. 344)

I think Plantinga is right to claim that to accept that some beliefs are properly basic does not commit one to accept that any belief is properly basic. But, the Great Pumpkin objectors are not really arguing for the proper basicality of other beliefs, but arguing against, via a *reductio,* Plantinga's grounds for proper basicality of belief with respect to communities, in other words, arguing against Plantinga's epistemological relativism about justification. As Michael Martin remarks:

> Although reformed epistemologists would not have to accept voodoo beliefs as rational, voodoo followers would be able to claim that insofar as they are basic

> in the voodoo community they are rational and, moreover, that reformed thought was irrational in this community. Indeed, Plantinga's proposal would generate many different communities that could legitimately claim that their basic beliefs are rational. ... Among the communities generated might be devil worshipers, flat earthers, and believers in fairies, just so long as belief in the devil, the flatness of the earth, and fairies was basic in the respective communities. (Martin, 1990, p. 979)[272]

Plantinga's epistemological relativism about justification and conventionalism has a skeptical implication. If there are no universal criteria for the justification of propositions *P* and *Q*, then the truths of *P* and Q cannot be tested. As Grube says:

> All that Plantinga has to offer at this point is the consolation that the Christians' criteria for proper basicality do not have to match those of the athesists since 'the Christian community is responsible to its set of examples, not to theirs'. But, obviously, the same rationale applies to the atheist community. It is responsible only to its own criteria, not to the Christian ones. But if every community is responsible only to its own set of criteria we have manoeuvred ourselves into a skeptical impasse. Community A holds particular examples to be relevant and use them to 'argue to and test' a set of properly basic beliefs, x. Community B holds different, probably contradictory, examples to be relevant and use them to 'argue to and test' a set of contradictory beliefs, y, to be properly basic. Given Plantinga's account, in particular, his 'inductive' methodology, we lack in principle the means to adjudicate on x and y. (Grube, 1995, p. 43)[273]

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[272]According to Plantinga, Martin's objection (he calls it "the Son of Great Pumpkin") fails because its first premise is false (Plantinga, 2000, pp. 345-351). Since his reply to the objection is very lengthy I am not going to discuss it in detail. By way of conclusion, I think Plantinga hasn't solved his problem of epistemological relativism in his *Warranted Christian Belief*, for his entire argument for the warrant of Christian belief is based on the extended A/C model. Other epistemic communities (such as Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist communities, etc.) could argue for the warrant of their religious belief based on their own models.

[273]But, according to Grube, the skeptical implication in Plantinga results from his robust foundationalist

From the above discussion we have seen that Plantinga has committed himself to epistemological relativism about justification and conventionalism because he holds that epistemic justification is community-relevant and denies the need for a common criterion for justification among different communities.

Critics of Newman often accuse him of being denying a common measure for justification, therefore, committing himself to epistemic relativism about justification. In the following, I am going to look at the problem of common measure in Newman to see if he really denies a common measure for justification.

According to Newman, there is an intellectual difference of informed judgement among people due to their disagreement about certain first principles and this creates the problem of a common measure. However, I do not think that Newman thus maintains that there is no common measure for intellectual judgement. In fact, Newman is searching for one: "Every one who reasons, is his own centre, and no expedient for attaining a common measure of minds can reverse this truth; but then the question follows, is there any criterion of the accuracy of an act of inference, such as may be our warrant that certitude is rightly elicited in favour of the proposition inferred...?" (*G. A.* p. 262)

Newman's solution to the problem of a common measure is to appeal to the Illative Sense. (*G. A.* p. 262) Although there are personal elements involved in the Illative Sense, which makes it difficult to achieve a common standard of justification, intellectual duty requires us to achieve that goal. There is an ethical dimension here: duty is intimately bound up with the right use of inference and assent; it is our duty to rightly use them (*G. A.* p. 265). The key point is, as W. J. Wainwright remarks about Newman's Illative Sense, that our Illative Sense can be well or badly employed. If we use them rightly, most disagreements

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framework: "my point is that the resulting skepticism is a corollary of utilizing the concept of proper basicality. If we abandon this concept, we get rid of the skeptical conclusions that follow from its use as well as from related problems." (Grube, 1995, p. 44) I think the skeptical implication in Plantiga comes from the lack of universal criteria for proper basicality instead of the concept of proper basicality itself.

can be resolved (Wainwright, 1995, p. 65).

Critics often cite the following passage about the range of the Illative Sense in the *Grammar* to support the claim that Newman denies that there is a common measure for justification: "it supplies no common measure between mind and mind, as being nothing else than a personal gift or acquisition." (*G. A.* p. 275) Thus, they criticise him as being arbitrary or even fanatic. Jay Newman, for example, calls Newman to account that if the illative sense is so personal and diverse that it has nothing to do with any common measure, standard, or rules, how can Newman legitimately claim his position is epistemically superior to those, such as Muslims', Buddhists', ... ? (Jay Newman, 1989, p. 84) Thomas K. Carr remarks that where Newman goes wrong "is in maintaining that the illative sense is nothing other than a personal gift or acquisition, and that it therefore supplies 'no common measure between mind and mind.'" He then criticises Newman for divorcing human wholeness and authenticity from the wholeness of human civilisation and places it instead only in the Roman Catholic Church, and barring his epistemology from participation in the broader conversation governed by those more general forms of human collective. Carr concludes that Newman's position appears to be close to fanaticism (Carr, 1996, pp. 148-149).

I think these critics failed to recognise that Newman does not deny that there is a certain common measure involved in the Illative Sense, and he only denies that there is a common measure of *the logical sort* in the Illative Sense when we come to deal with concrete matters. We can see this from the context of the chapter on the Illative Sense: Newman is vindicating the certainty of knowledge there. He rejects the sceptical claim that certainty is a mistake on the one hand; and the a *priori* approach to the certainty of knowledge on the other hand, and maintains that for certain knowledge we need to appeal to the normal operation of the mind (*G. A.* pp. 261, 262). Now, when we observe and investigate the normal operation of the mind we see the process of attaining knowledge and truth in concrete matters is so intricate that logic itself cannot provide a common measure (*G. A.*

272, 274). According to him, the final measure on the validity of an inference in concrete matters is the Illative Sense (262, 268), which is the perfection or virtue of our ratiocinative faculty reached through experience, training, moral quality or gift. However, unlike logic, which supplies a set of rules for verbal reasoning, the Illative sense does not supply a common measure of *the logical sort* in concrete matters, due to that the processes of reasoning in concrete matters is too subtle, minute, delicate and intricate to be put into logical rules or forms (*G. A.* pp. 275, 277, 282).

Although Newman recognises that the personal elements of the Illative Sense, the disagreement from the acceptance of certain first principles and the presumptive nature of certain first principles complicates the goal of achieving a common standard of justification, he does not deny that there is a common measure for justification. The Illative Sense, for him, must involve certain common measures in order to be the final judgement on the validity of an inference in concrete matters. If it is purely personal and does not involve any common measure whatever, how can it be the sole and final judgement on the validity of an inference in concrete matters? Newman uses the Illative Sense in parallel to 'good sense', 'common sense' and 'a sense of beauty' (*G. A.* p. 263). This suggests that he does not take the judgement made by the Illative Sense as pure personal choice, but contains certain criterion, just as good sense, common sense, and a sense of beauty involve personal elements, such as experience, taste, education, etc, and at the same time they contain certain criteria in order to judge something is good, reasonable or beautiful.

Newman sees the difficulty in searching for a common criterion for justification due to individual differences among people towards a certain subject-matter. This is especially in the case of religion: "In religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself, and for himself he has a right to speak. His own experiences are enough for himself, but he cannot speak for others: he cannot lay down the law; he can only bring his own experiences to the common stock of psychological facts." (*G. A.* p. 292) However, he doesn't thus make a pessimistic conclusion that there is no common criterion for justification. Instead, he firmly believes that there is one: "... if it satisfies him, it is likely to satisfy others; if, as he

believes and is sure, it will approve itself to others also, for there is but one truth. And doubtless he does find in fact, that, allowing for the difference of minds and of modes of speech, what convinces him, does convince others also." (*G. A.* p. 293) Newman has seen the dynamics in the process of searching for a common criterion for justification, not denying that there is a common criterion for justification.

From the above discussion we have clearly seen that Newman does not deny a common criterion for justification. Therefore, he cannot be accused of being committed to epistemological relativism about justification.

Sixth, Newman's approach does not depend on a supernaturalist metaphysics, while Plantinga's does. I do not mean Newman's approach is purely naturalistic. As we have seen in chapter 1, theism only plays an explanatory role, not a justifying role, in his epistemology. Newman, like Reid, takes epistemic principles as simultaneously descriptive and prescriptive and holds that there is no need of a supernaturalist metaphysics to introduce epistemic normativity, while Plantinga's approach depends on a supernaturalist metaphysics. Although in his *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga's account of proper functioning is thoroughly naturalistic, in his *Warranted Christian Beliefs*, his account is supernaturalist (Rysiew, 2002, p. 441). Plantinga's epistemic supernaturalism renders his approach involving a circularity: the belief in God is a product of normal function of our noetic faculties; the reliability of our noetic faculties is based on the design plan of God.

Finally, Newman's approach provides a highly resilient justification for belief in God because it is phenomenologically adequate and epistemically justifiable, while Plantinga's approach, as his example of the 14-years-old theist shows, provides merely a *prima facie* justification. A highly resilient justification is an epistemic justification which provides a strong, endurable epistemic support to a belief so that the truth of the belief is beyond reasonable doubt, while, a *prima facie* justification is the one which provides a weak,

tentative epistemic support to a belief and the truth of the belief can be in doubt.[274] A *prima facie* justified belief, as Pollock points out (Pollock, 1979, p. 94), is defeasible. A defeasible belief needs, when it is caught in question, argument or evidence to provide mediate justification.[275] But, Plantinga rejects arguments or evidence for belief in God. Therefore, that belief in God is properly basic in Plantinga is merely a weak claim, without arguments or evidence to support it.

In the above, I have compared the reformed epistemologist approach to the justification of the belief in God with Newman's. We have seen that Newman's approach has some advantages over that of the reformed epistemologists. Although the reformed epistemologists, as we have seen, have stimulated the research into the nature and criteria for rationality, justification and knowledge and made a great contribution to contemporary epistemology, their approach to the justification of religious belief has no advantages over Newman's.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have traced the philosophical sources of Newman and reassessed his approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God from the phenomena of conscience as presented in his *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent,* and compared his approach with that of the reformed epistemologists. We have seen that:

(1) There is a close philosophical affinity between Reid and Newman, which can be evidently seen from their views about perception, the foundation of knowledge, the role of probable reasoning, and from their anti-sceptical approaches and naturalized epistemology.

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[274]A highly resilient justification has much more ep stemic weight than merely a *prima facie* justification. Cf. Davidson, B. and Pargetter, R. (1987), p. 184.

[275]Mediate justification is contrasted with immediate justification. The former involves arguments and the

(2) Newman's approach to the justification of belief in God from conscience consists of two parts: the first is based on the analogy between conscience and perception and the second is based on an inference to the best explanation. Even if the former is not very promising the latter is successful. On the whole, Newman's discussions are both epistemically justifiable and phenomenologically adequate, though his vocabulary is peculiar and sometimes causes confusion. However, so long as we interpret his terms in his own sense, we can see the reasonableness of Newman's discussions. Compared with the traditional approach and that of the reformed epistemologists, Newman's approach to the justification of belief in the existence of God has a special value: one the one hand, it employs concrete human experience, not abstract concepts or abstract reasoning, to justify belief in God and thus makes theology more relevant to religion; on the other hand, it employs common human experience, not religious experience, and thus lays the belief in God on an irrefutable foundation.

(3) There are many similarities between Newman's epistemology of religious belief and the reformed epistemology of religious belief. In fact, the former had substantial influence on the latter.

Finally, Newman made a great contribution to epistemology through his criticisms of Lockean classical foundationalism, his discussion of informal/implicit reasoning and the epistemic value of personal elements, and his development of a broad conception of rationality and justification.[276] He pioneered the epistemological enterprise that the reformed epistemologists are engaging in, which breaks away from the mainstream of the traditional epistemology and develops broader epistemic conceptions and norms.

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latter does not. The term mediate justification comes from John Zeis (1993), p. 49.

[276] When evaluating Newman's contribution Aquino says: 'the contribution of Newman, then, lies in expanding options for understanding the complexity of the process in which Christians form and sustain beliefs. I think this evaluation has understated Newman's contribution. Newman's contribution is not only to Christian religious epistemology, but also to epistemology in general. Although Newman's goal is to reject the evidentialist objection and justify the Christian beliefs, he has in fact explored a broad spectrum of epistemic issues and provided a broader conception of rationality.