

Addendum:

Plantinga's More Recent Work

The five previous chapters of this thesis were concerned with the relatively early development of Plantinga's religious epistemology, roughly through his essay, "Reason and Belief in God." Since that time, in a series of articles and more recently in two books, Alvin Plantinga has extended his "picture" of a religious epistemology into a more developed and detailed program.¹ This new work is something of a philosophical juggernaut; it is exceedingly detailed and complex, meriting careful attention; unfortunately, that cannot be done here. However, it is worthwhile to survey this new material and consider some of its many implications and its relation to his previous work.

It is the main purpose of this addendum to briefly to survey this more developed approach, noting some of his consequential concepts and notions and how they might relate to his former work on this project and, finally, to make a few suggestions about how a part of it not yet directly addressed by Plantinga might go. In the first section of this chapter, I will begin by defining some of Plantinga's key terms, followed by a brief survey of Plantinga's spin on the roots of internalism and externalism; I will also characterize Plantinga's position on this. In the second section, I will investigate Plantinga's brand of externalism and some of the reasons why he holds the variety of externalism he does. I will also discuss whether Plantinga's counterexamples accomplish

¹See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Warrant and Proper Function*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Much of his later development can also be found in other essays. See also "Justification and Theism" in *Faith and Philosophy*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1987) and "Justification in the 20th Century" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 1 Supplement, (Fall 1990).

what they intend--that of decisively defeating evidentialism (the position that you have warrant for belief only if you have evidence for it and only if the belief fits the evidence). I will explore the relationship between Plantinga's counterexamples and Gettier problems. Finally, in this section, I will also consider how Plantinga's formulation of "proper function" relates to reliabilism. The third section will be a serious attempt to extend and complete a few of Plantinga's thoughts on this subject. I

In this section, I will begin by defining some key terms and notions which play important roles in Plantinga's schema. Second, I will review Plantinga's account of the historical background of the internalism versus externalism discourse. Third, I will try to correctly characterize Plantinga's current position on this question and how it relates to his earlier work.

Key Terms

Before entering into a survey of Plantinga's understanding of the historical roots of internalism and externalism and so forth, we need to gain an understanding of what Plantinga means when he introduces certain key terms. Let me define Plantinga's use of the following terms: warrant, deontology, internalism, externalism, and proper function. It is not my aim to present some kind of neutral understanding of these terms; my intention here is merely to clarify Plantinga's use of these terms.

According to Plantinga, the term "warrant" is that "quantity or quality," whatever it is, a sufficient amount of which provides a satisfying and accurate account of knowledge. As I see it, Plantinga is using the word warrant to speak of both indefeasible and defeasible knowledge. In other words, warranted knowledge is a belief, it must be a

true belief, and it must be a belief with some kind of property like "moreness" which distinguishes it from merely true belief.

Deontology or, as Plantinga sometimes calls it--classical deontology--is the "view that epistemic responsibility and fulfillment of epistemic obligation and duty are of crucial epistemic importance;"² its consequent, thinks Plantinga, is internalism. The basic idea of internalism, according to Plantinga, is "that what determines whether a belief is warranted for a person are factors or states in some sense internal to that person; warrant conferring properties are in some way internal to the subject or cognizer."³ The important thing to see here is the issue of internal access to what makes for warrant. Externalism, according to Plantinga, "by contrast [to internalism], holds that warrant need not depend upon factors relevantly internal to the cognizer; warrant depends or supervenes upon properties to some of which the cognizer may have no special access, or even no access at all."⁴

"Proper function" as Plantinga uses it, is associated with the workings of one's cognitive faculties. Plantinga thinks that "a belief has warrant if it is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no malfunctioning) in a cognitive environment congenial for those faculties, according to a design plan successfully aimed

²Plantinga, *Warrant: the Current Debate*, preface p. v.

³Ibid., p. 5.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

at truth."⁵ Thus, lightly armed with these understandings we enter into Plantinga's considerations of the historical stories of internalism and externalism.

Roots of Internalism

Early on Plantinga wants to concede he is not presenting a detailed or formal historical treatise, but he wants to say that there are certain key figures that play decisive roles in the history of internalism.⁶ Plantinga thinks it is necessary to understand the roles of these key figures in order to understand current twentieth century trends in epistemology--namely, the "swirling diversity" that exists today. Plantinga thinks we can look to Descartes and perhaps even more importantly look to Locke (he calls them the "twin towers of Western epistemology") for the historical roots of epistemic deontology which, as we shall see, is what Plantinga thinks is the driving or motivating force for twentieth century internalism.

According to Plantinga's account, Descartes, following the lead of Augustine in *De Libero Arbitrio*, begins the tradition (at least in more modern times) in his analysis of the origin of error:

But if I abstain from giving my judgment on any thing when I do not perceive it with sufficient clearness and distinctness, it is plain that I act rightly. . . . But if I determine to deny or affirm, I no longer make use as I should of my free will, and if I affirm what is not true, it is evident that I deceive myself; even though I judge according to truth, this comes about only by chance, and I do not escape the blame of misusing my freedom; for the light of nature teaches us that the knowledge of the understanding should always

⁵Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, preface pp. viii-ix. Space will not allow for the detailing of the design plan intimately associated with proper functionalism. Important though this notion may be, I must refer the reader to Plantinga's description of it in *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 11-17.

⁶Plantinga says he lacks both space and competence for a "proper historical investigation" here and that what he does present should be thought of as something of a gesture in that direction.

precede the determination of the will. It is in the misuse of the free will that the privation which constitutes the characteristic nature of error is met with.⁷

Now the thing here to see is that Plantinga reads Descartes to say some things about internalism, namely that "being justified is being within our rights, flouting no epistemic duties, doing no more than what is permitted" and that this duty or obligation is something we are taught, according Descartes, "by the lights of nature."⁸ He thinks that Locke is even more explicit in the following passage:

Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind: which if it be regulated, as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything, but upon good reason; and so cannot be opposite to it. He that believes, without having any reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies; but neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due his maker, who would have him use those discerning faculties he has given him, to keep him out of mistake and error. He that does not do this to the best of his power, however he sometimes lights on truth, is in the right but by chance; and I know not whether the luckiness of the accident will excuse the irregularity of his proceedings. This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever mistakes he runs into: whereas he that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth, by those helps and abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature, that though he should miss truth, he will not miss the reward of it. For he governs his assent right, and places it as he should, who in any case or matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves, according as reason directs him. He that does otherwise, transgresses against his own light, and misuses those faculties, which were given him.⁹

Plantinga wants us to see from this passage (at least) that duty or obligation (understood as a rational duty rather than an ethical duty) plays an integral role in Locke's scheme.

He sees that this deontological flavor is crucial to both Descartes' and Locke's accounts.

⁷ Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, p. 13, quoting Descartes, "Meditation 4" in *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, ed. Haldane and Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911; reprint, New York: Dover, 1955), vol. 1, p. 176.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid. Plantinga quoting Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.C. Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), IV, xvii, 24, pp. 413-14.

However, he particularly wants to highlight Locke's contribution to the internalist tradition; this we can see in the following passage from Plantinga:

His central thought is that being justified in holding a belief is having fulfilled one's epistemic duties in forming or continuing to hold that belief. . . (An important component of our idea of knowledge is that if a person just happens to "light on truth," if he believes what is true by chance or accident, then the belief in question may be as true as you please but does not constitute knowledge.) This thought--the thought that being justified in holding a belief is having fulfilled one's epistemic duties in forming or continuing to hold that belief--is the fons et origo of the whole internalist tradition.¹⁰

The important thing to see here is Plantinga's assertion that the thought of being justified in holding a belief is "having fulfilled one's epistemic duties. . .;" this thought, asserts Plantinga, is the fountainhead of internalism.

So in summary, Plantinga thinks the many twentieth century expressions of internalism find their historical roots in the deontological motifs embedded in the writings of Descartes and Locke.¹¹ He particularly focuses on the explicit statements of Locke which directly state the importance of fulfilling epistemic duties in forming or continuing to hold a belief; this Lockian notion, says Plantinga, is the fountainhead of the internalist epistemic perspective; this seed finds its expression in the many internalist accounts which characterize twentieth century epistemology.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹Plantinga later mentions that he thinks it is hard to find deontology before Descartes--he does not say there is no precursor. In fact, later he says there are some (but unspecified) skeptics of the later Platonic Academy who were internalists; see *Warrant: The Current Debate*, pp. 183-84. I think his point is that it is from Descartes' and Locke's work that contemporary emphasis on internalism can be seen to originate.

Roots of Externalism

If Plantinga's historical report on internalism was a gesture, then his historical account of externalism might be considered a twitch. Brief though it is, he attempts to set the record straight as to which of the two traditions was historically the mainstream version. Plantinga begins with externalism's child, "reliabilism"--thought to be the relatively new kid on the philosophical block.¹² Reliabilism, one brand of externalism, created a "flurry of appropriate interest" through three philosophers identified by Plantinga as: William Alston, Fred Dretske, and Alvin Goldman. All three have published important epistemic works, according to Plantinga, in the last twenty-five years,¹³ and their original work has inspired others to build upon it.

For the earliest contemporary expression of reliabilism, Plantinga cites "Frank Ramsey. . . in his 1926 essay "Truth and Probability."¹⁴ On the other hand, we are told that externalism goes back farther to Aquinas and, adds Plantinga, "all the way to Aristotle."¹⁵ In regard to this long view Plantinga sees externalism as the dominant tradition in Western thought, so much so that he thinks that what Alston, Dretske, and

¹²Plantinga, in *Warrant the Current Debate*, says this on reliabilism: "Reliabilists come in at least two styles. The first sees warrant in terms of origin and provenance: a belief has warrant for me if it is produced and sustained by a reliable belief-producing mechanism. The second sees warrant as a matter of probability; a person is said to know a (true) proposition A if he believes it, and if the right probability relations hold between A and its significant others." See page 192.

¹³See Plantinga's references to those works in *Warrant: The Current Debate*, p. 183, footnotes 3-5.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 183. Plantinga cites Ramsey's articles first published in *The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays*, ed. R. B. Braithwaite (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1931), pp. 195-96. See also Plantinga's note #10, p. 183 for an important observation on Ramsey's work.

¹⁵Ibid. Plantinga cites Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Posterior Analytics*, II. He also cites (roughly 1600 years later) Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 84, 85.

Goldman proposed in this century was not a startling new conception but rather a return to the historical mainstream.

In summary, Plantinga sees the origins of externalism are to be found in Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Posterior Analytics*, II, where he thinks there is some kind of anticipation of reliabilism. This tradition of externalism was continued by Aquinas and recalled again by Armstrong, Dretske, and Goldman and their "followers" in this century. Externalism has been the mainstream of Western epistemology; it is not new.

Plantinga's Position

An interesting question is what is Plantinga's position on this debate? What side does he come down on and how does it relate to his previous picture of epistemology? The first eight chapters of *Warrant: The Current Debate* contain his examination of internalism and rejection of it; Plantinga's method was to first uncover the received tradition of twentieth century epistemology, which he characterizes as internalism (along with deontology and justification) and then to consider whether that received tradition was correct. We can see his rejection of internalism in the following passage:

The views so far considered have all been examples of internalism--some very close to the deontological heart and soul (and origin) of internalist tradition, and others at some analogical distance. None of these views, as we saw, offers the resources for a proper understanding of warrant or positive epistemic status.¹⁶

So Plantinga thinks that despite the venerated status of internalism in the twentieth century, as evidenced by both the quantity and quality of those who hold and who have held that position, it is, nonetheless, not promising at all as a good theory of warrant.

¹⁶Ibid. p. 182.

It is also apparent that Plantinga accepts some kind of externalism. I use the term "some kind" to highlight the fact that while Plantinga thinks externalism is generally the right way to go, there are some forms of it which seem to him to be incorrect. He is clear about this in the following excerpt:

Externalism, taken broadly, is right about warrant. But externalism as such is simply the denial of deontology and internalism. What is needed is a positive (and we hope, correct) account of warrant. . . I shall argue that these accounts look in the right direction; but each also overlooks an element absolutely essential to our conception of warrant.¹⁷

I think the thing to see here is that it follows from this that Plantinga's epistemology is a brand of externalism. His theory of "proper function" embraces the externalist's intuition; that is, whatever it is that makes for warrant supervenes upon properties to some of which the knower may not have special access. Nevertheless, Plantinga seems to want to hedge his bets on this a little as we can see in the following passage:

I shall argue, however, that no brief and simple, semialgorithmic account of warrant carries much by way of illumination. Our epistemic establishment of noetic faculties or powers is complex and highly articulated;. . . These faculties work with exquisite subtlety and discrimination, producing beliefs on these and other topics that vary all the way from the merest suspicion to absolute dead certainty. And once we see the enormous extent of this articulation and subtlety, we can also see that warrant has different requirements in different divisions. . . perhaps in some of these areas internalist constraints are indeed necessary for warrant.¹⁸

Therefore, we see that Plantinga's rejection of internalism may not be as complete as we might first imagine. The most plausible way to interpret this, I think, is that Plantinga thinks externalism, broadly speaking, is the way to go but that there might be cases where

¹⁷Ibid., p. 184. The accounts he is referring to are the reliabilist's versions of Alston, Dretske and Goldman.

¹⁸Ibid.

some internalist considerations (presumably in the larger context of externalism) contribute to warrant.

Just how all this relates to his earlier work on properly basic beliefs and so forth is an interesting question. It is worthy of note that the terms "properly basic beliefs" or "basic beliefs" are not mentioned in Plantinga's latest books, *Warrant: The Current Debate* and *Warrant and Proper Function*; I also cannot find any explicit statements in those books that explain the relationship of his current work to his earlier work. It is apparent that the topics are quite closely related and it is surprising that no clarifying statements are made (that I can find) by Plantinga.

I am inclined to think (in the absence of definite statements by Plantinga) that he has not abandoned his earlier position that belief in God in a basic way (that is without argument) is rational. I think there are some clues from which I can draw this inference. First, Plantinga still maintains that we are observing the collapse of classical foundationalism, which is an epistemic program among many--that has not changed. Further, Plantinga's objection to evidentialism remains the same. He rejects internalism that includes evidentialism as a part of that family of relationships. However, he does not discuss belief in God except in *Warrant and Proper Function* where he addresses his evolutionary argument against naturalism; he believes that the theists' account of knowledge is not presented with the same difficulty as that of the naturalist.¹⁹ However, this does not say a great deal about the question; so it is not time to pronounce

¹⁹Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 216-237.

definitively just what that relationship is. I am inclined to think, however, that his latest work is compatible with his earlier work.

Summarizing section I, Plantinga's more developed epistemology adopts the "proper function" of one's cognitive faculties as the most appropriate notion to characterize his explicit epistemology (this notion is intimately associated with the concept of "design plan"). Plantinga's analysis leads him to believe that internalism, the received tradition of twentieth-century epistemology, is on the wrong track when it comes to producing warrant for a belief. So then, it follows that Plantinga accepts the complement of internalism--externalism--in some form; it is worth noting that Plantinga believes that the externalist tradition has been the mainstream of Western epistemology since Aristotle. He does not explicitly explain the relationship between his own earlier work and his current work in epistemology. My view is that they are compatible since they do clearly agree in a number of areas and there seems to be no clear rejection of his early work.

Plantinga rejects some forms of externalism and offers in their place a theory of proper function; this, thinks Plantinga, is the missing ingredient lacking in the other inadequate formulations of reliabilism. Plantinga is an externalist, but not a reliabilist.

II

It is now time to take a closer look at Plantinga's brand of externalism by investigating some of the reasons why he holds the variety he does. In order to do this I will first briefly discuss what I take to be Plantinga's reasons for rejecting internalism; second, I will also discuss whether or not Plantinga's counterexamples accomplish what

they intend--that of decisively defeating evidentialism (the position that you have warrant for belief only if you have evidence for it and only if the belief fits the evidence). Along with that I will consider the relationship between some of Plantinga's counterexamples (which play a part in his rejecting internalism) and Gettier problems. Third, I will examine how Plantinga's formulation of "proper function" stands in relation to reliabilism.

Rejection of Internalism and Acceptance of Externalism

Why does Plantinga follow the externalist's intuition? Mainly, I think, because he rejects externalism's complement-- internalism; he finds serious fault with the various formulations, accounts of warrant it produces, and thinks its prospects for success are dim. It is not that internalism lacks a normative element, but rather it is that its evaluative element does not produce anything close to warranted belief. That this is Plantinga's position can be seen in the following two passages:

Knowledge does indeed contain a normative element; but the normativity is not that of deontology. Perhaps the incoherence in the received tradition is the most important thing to see here: the tension between the idea that justification is a deontological matter, a matter of fulfilling duties, being permitted or within one's rights, conforming to one's intellectual obligations, on the one hand; and, on the other, the idea that justification is necessary and sufficient (perhaps with a codicil to propitiate Gettier) for warrant.²⁰

and

There is a second incoherence in the received tradition (or perhaps a special case of the first). According to that tradition, justification in many areas requires evidence; . . . on the one hand justification is supposed to be sufficient or nearly sufficient for warrant.

²⁰Ibid., p. 46.

But on the other, if a belief of mine is to have warrant for me by virtue of being accepted on the basis of some ground, then that ground must be appropriately related to the belief in question. And the problem for the received view is one that is by now familiar; I can be deontologically justified in believing A on the basis of B even if B is not appropriately related to A. I may be doing my level best; I may be performing works of magnificent epistemic supererogation; even so (by virtue of epistemic malfunction) I may believe A on the basis of a ground that is ludicrously inadequate. Perhaps (by virtue of demon, tumor, or Alpha Centaurian) I believe that Feike can swim on the basis of the 'ground' that nine out of ten Frisians cannot swim and Feike is a Frisian; and perhaps I am maximally dutiful in the entire situation and have been all my life. Clearly, warrant requires that the ground in question really be evidence of one sort or another; but I can be deontologically justified, and completely justified, in believing on the basis of a ground that is in fact no evidence at all.²¹

The major point to see, I think, is that one can be, in Plantinga's view, deontologically justified believing A on the basis of B, but that one could also be deontologically justified if B was not appropriately related to A. For example, I may be deontologically justified in holding the belief that the Denver Broncos professional football team is going to win the Super Bowl this year. I may have done my epistemic best in forming and sustaining such a belief. But suppose by virtue of living too close to Rocky Flats nuclear facility (roughly about 10 miles away) and as a result of taking frequent drives to picnic very near the facility, I become exposed to high levels of atomic radiation. And suppose this radiation affects my cognitive faculties such that they malfunction whenever I think about professional football (as a minimum). And suppose under the influence of that malfunction when doing my best to forecast the 1994 professional football season I conclude the Denver Broncos will be the Super Bowl winners. Now it could turn out that I have a true belief, ie., it may come about that the Denver Broncos indeed become the Super Bowl champions this year, but it could hardly be called a warranted belief since it

²¹Ibid., see footnote 16, Chapter 2.

was formed (and sustained) while my cognitive faculties were malfunctioning. In other words, the under-those-conditions belief that the Denver Broncos will be this year's Super Bowl champions has little by way of warrant for me.

Though Plantinga takes on contemporary expressions of internalism on a case by case basis, in the main, I think, his basic strategy is to present internalism *uberhaupt* with a devastating counterexample. Cognitive malfunction can undercut a necessary component of internalism's claim to warrant; one can be deontologically justified in believing A based on B even if B is not appropriately related to A. On this basis, Plantinga's rejection of internalism leads him to hold to internalism's complement, externalism.

Evidentialism versus

Plantinga's Counterexamples

We saw in the previous sub-section that Plantinga rejects internalism in favor of some kind of externalist theory of warrant. His main strategy was to use devastating counterexamples to internalist theories of warrant. This sub-section will consider whether his counterexamples accomplish what was intended--decisively defeating evidentialism, the position that you have warrant for a belief only if you have evidence for it and only if the belief fits the evidence. In order to do this I will state Plantinga's account of evidentialism and then enumerate and evaluate his counter-examples to this perspective.

Plantinga, in *Warrant: The Current Debate*, takes his reader on an impressive whirlwind survey of contemporary epistemology. In the following passage, we can see

how Plantinga both defines evidentialism and suggests its relationship to a group of notions:

According to the twentieth-century received tradition, as we saw above, (1) justification is necessary and (along with truth) nearly sufficient for knowledge, (2) there is a strong connection between justification and evidence, and (3) justification involves internalism of two kinds (epistemic and personal internalism). . . now to the second notion of the nature of justification: that it is or essentially involves having adequate evidence for the belief in question. We often say that a belief is justified when the believer has what we think of as sufficient evidence or reason for the belief, or (perhaps more exactly) that under those conditions the believer is justified in holding that belief. According to the 'evidentialism' of Conee and Feldman, you are justified in believing B just if you have sufficient evidence for it, or (as they put it) just if it fits your evidence. (Thus Conee: "Such examples make it reasonable to conclude that there is epistemic justification of a belief only where the person has cognitive access to evidence that supports the belief.")²²

Now the thing to see here is that evidentialism is closely connected with justification and that both are linked up with the internalist account of warrant. Plantinga's portrayal of evidentialism is that you are justified in believing some belief only if you have sufficient evidence for it and only if it fits your evidence.

Plantinga's counterexample to evidentialism, then, is one that is generically aimed at internalism. Plantinga asserts that such accounts do not provide warrant for beliefs because the cognizer can be suffering from massive malfunction of her cognitive faculties. That is, she can be doing her very best to gather sufficient evidence and make sure that the evidence fits the belief, but in fact, such a belief would not be warranted. This situation leads Plantinga to think that evidentialism, justification, and internalism (whether motivated by deontology or not) are deeply mistaken accounts of what makes for warrant. If one agrees, as I do, that the possibility of massive malfunctioning of one's

²²Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, pp. 25-26.

cognitive faculties should be factored into the main account of warrant, rather than as an additional codicil, then evidentialism should be considered as an attractive but ultimately defective account of warrant.

Plantinga's Counterexamples and Gettier Problems

One of the most heralded short papers in the history of philosophy was Edmund Gettier's, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" What that essay did, among other things, is present a devastating counterexample to the "justified true belief" theory of knowledge. Now an interesting excursus would be to discuss whether the justified true belief theory was in fact a recognized dominant theory of knowledge before Gettier's paper, but length considerations put that out of reach. For this thesis, let's just say that it was. Now the justified true belief theory is a strongly deontological and internalistic theory so we can readily see that Plantinga, when he attacks internalism through counterexample, is doing something perhaps very close to what Gettier was doing. An interesting question might be what is the relationship between Gettier's and Plantinga's counterexamples? Is Plantinga merely coming up with another Gettier type counterexample (with some embellishments perhaps), or are they characteristically different such that they could be distinguished? But if they are roughly the same, could not those who hold deontological epistemological theories argue that they themselves are not on the wrong track since their account of warrant includes "epistemic dutifulness with

a suitable condition to deal with Gettier cases"?²³ Has Plantinga really shown a defect in their account such that it requires radical revision?²⁴

I do not have anything original to say about this, but I want to scrutinize Plantinga's answer a bit because whether one agrees with his account or not, it discloses some of Plantinga's motifs in characterizing his theory of proper function as he does. I want to take up the specific criticism that Feldman raised, that Plantinga's counterexamples are so similar to Gettier counterexamples that the internalist (or maybe the evidentialist) can reply that she has already conceded such counterexamples in her theory and hence there is no need to generally modify their view.

Plantinga denies his examples are Gettier problems.²⁵ First he contends that unlike Gettier examples, the beliefs in question weren't claimed to be true. Second, and more importantly, Plantinga wants to say his counterexamples show that the pictures of warrant of deontology and its consequent justificationalism are "deeply mistaken." Their view is that warrant is provided by means of a justified true belief with "only the addition of a comparatively minor if hard to state fourth condition."²⁶ However, they, argues Plantinga, are not anywhere nearly sufficient for warrant. Plantinga sees Gettier counterexamples as:

²³Richard Feldman, "Proper Functionalism," in *Nous* 27:1 (1993) pp. 34-50.

²⁴See Alvin Plantinga's response to Feldman's criticism in Plantinga's, "Why We Need Proper Function," in *Nous* 27:1 (1993) pp. 66-82.

²⁵Length considerations will not allow me to give an account of just what are Gettier problems. Gettier does not give necessary and sufficient criteria for his counterexample and it seems hazardous to try to do so. Nonetheless, I refer you to his essay for a description of his classic illustration.

²⁶Plantinga, "Why We need Proper Function," p. 70.

. . . a sort of local hitch or glitch in the epistemic environment: the deceiver is himself deceived in an unexpected way. Here we have a bit of retail lack of fit between epistemic environment and your cognitive faculties. . .²⁷

Whereas his counterexamples call attention to a different kind of feature related to warrant expressed in the following way:

. . . but in the brain in vat (sic), insanity and evil demon examples we have wholesale epistemic failure.²⁸

So the best way to understand Plantinga's position on this, I think, is that the counterexamples he offers radically clarify deontologism and consequent justificationalism as being nowhere near a correct account of warrant. The upshot of this is that Plantinga's counterexamples probably have some analogical relationship to Gettier problems, but they may plausibly be different in that they involve "massive malfunction" rather than a local hitch in the epistemic environment. This is a difference in kind, I think, that encourages Plantinga to declare that

. . . my examples. . . show that deontological justification really doesn't help us understand warrant at all. The lesson they teach is that warrant and deontological justification are radically different properties.²⁹

The thing to see is that since deontology and internalism (along with justificationalism) are so deeply flawed, it is necessary to offer a radically different notion of epistemology, namely his--proper function.

In summary, Plantinga's counterexamples have a similarity to Gettier problems even though neither Plantinga nor I want to offer necessary and sufficient conditions for

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 71.

what constitutes a Gettier problem. But there is at least one clear and important distinction--Gettier problems are related to local problems in the epistemic condition whereas Plantinga's counterexamples involve massive malfunctioning of the cognitive apparatus. It is this virtue that shows, according to Plantinga, that deontologism and justificationalism are a radically wrong picture of warrant and that a different picture of warrant needs to replace it.

Proper Function and Reliabilism

Finally, in this section I want to say some things about proper function and reliabilism--two close yet distinct ways of construing the epistemic project. I will identify what I think is the key difference between the two streams of thought and discuss briefly Plantinga's defense of his own interpretation.

The reliabilist's picture of epistemology and Plantinga's portrait are quite similar; they are both fundamentally an externalist's view of warrant. That is, they both hold that warrant, in contrast to internalism, supervenes upon properties to which the individual cognizer may or may not have special access. Hence, their epistemic theory is radically different from the internalist's theories, at least because this difference is thought to be so great. But on what exactly do these externalists disagree and what is the upshot of that difference?

It is clear that Plantinga agrees in part with the reliabilists he discusses in *Warrant: The Current Debate*; but in the following passages he highlights what he must think is an important difference:

Reliabilism has its charms; but it omits a crucial component of warrant (or so, at any rate, I shall argue): that of proper function or absence of dysfunction. The idea of our

cognitive faculties' functioning properly in the production and sustenance of belief is absolutely crucial to our conception of warrant; the idea is intimately connected with the idea of design plan, a sort of blueprint specifying how properly functioning organs, powers, and faculties work.³⁰

The requirements of reliabilism for warrant and Plantinga's notion of the requirements for warrant seem to differ only by this. Now Plantinga defends that this is a distinction, with an important difference:

Reliability isn't anywhere nearly enough to guarantee warrant, and the deficiency, so far as I can see, is made up by adding the proper function requirement. Suppose once more that vision--the whole complex power whereby one comes to have visual beliefs--is a cognitive faculty and a module of the design plan. Suppose furthermore, my vision is reliable: in this and appropriately nearby possible worlds, the beliefs it produces are for the most part true. Does it follow that all the beliefs produced by my vision have warrant? Of course not; perhaps occasionally this faculty malfunctions. Perhaps I get drunk again (above, p. 72) and see more pink rats. The belief that I see pink rats will then be produced by a reliable faculty; this belief may still be wholly without warrant, because on this occasion of its operation, my vision is malfunctioning.³¹

From this we can see, at least as far as Plantinga is concerned, that proper function is a necessary addition to reliabilism. Reliabilism, according to Plantinga, does not take into account an occasional malfunction of one's cognitive equipment--his account does so and is thus closer to a correct account of what it means to have warranted belief.

I will summarize this second section. I conclude Plantinga accepts some form of externalism (proper functionalism) because he rejects externalism's complement, internalism. The major reasons for this (expressed in several counterexamples) is that one can be deontologically justified believing A on the basis of B, but that one could also be deontologically justified if B was not appropriately related to A. Plantinga's

³⁰Ibid., p. vii.

³¹Plantinga, "Why We Need Proper Function," p. 73, 74.

counterexamples intended to defeat the deontological and justificational picture of epistemology are similar to Gettier type counterexamples, but Plantinga claims they differ in at least one important way. He argues that Gettier problems deal with a local epistemic condition, while his counterexamples involve massive malfunction of the cognitive faculties such that internalism's picture of warrant is radically flawed. The main difference between reliabilism and proper function is the additional requirement of proper functioning cognitive faculties. This, asserts Plantinga, is a better account of warrant than reliabilism because it takes into account reliable modules of knowing (as would reliabilism) which occasionally malfunction (as reliabilism would not).

III

In this final section of the Addendum, I wish to extend (or more accurately follow up) some of Plantinga's thoughts on proper function. The notions I wish to discuss are, I think, closely related to what Plantinga is developing when he aims at developing "a satisfying and accurate account of warrant," but their exact relationship to Plantinga's work I am not able to state just now. Maybe the best way to put this is to say that I would not think his work would be very satisfying (at least to me) if his project overlooked these concerns.³²

The main concept or notion I want to discuss (and incorporate into Plantinga's regimen) relates to the question of how our ideas and the God of Christianity's ideas relate; how do the mind of man and the mind of God relate? The problem might be

³²It is my understanding that Plantinga intends to follow up his two latest books with a third that will focus more explicitly on warranted Christian beliefs. Perhaps my comments best fit under that category.

thought of as a question as to how can a divine and transcendent being such as the Christian God be known by finite humans by means of propositions?³³ I intend to suggest a way to do this so that it could be legitimately incorporated into Plantinga's proper function view. In order to do this I will first briefly discuss the problem. Second, I will discuss several necessary conditions which must obtain in order for propositional information about God to be considered knowable by finite humans, and finally, I will outline some of the grounds for thinking those conditions can obtain. Space will not allow me to discuss the extent of the knowledge of God that can be known propositionally (including things like redemptive knowledge and so forth).

The Problem

It would be a monumental understatement to say that nineteenth and especially twentieth century theology has been deeply influenced by metaphysical and epistemic starting points whose bloodlines can be traced to the Enlightenment. One consequence of this historical fact has been that neo-orthodox theologies have tended to deny any propositional knowledge of God.³⁴ Among their concerns, I think, is the suspicion that the radical otherness of God makes it impossible for propositions to disclose information about God so that it is knowable to finite minds. The problem is: can a solution for this

³³It is important to see that the God of Christianity is both transcendent and immanent; space limitations will not allow me to address that additional characteristic of God's nature here.

³⁴For an excellent introduction and background to this subject see *Challenges to Inerrancy*, edited by Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, Illinois: Chicago, Moody Press, (1984). See especially "The Neo-orthodox Reduction" by Roger Nicole, pp. 121-144 and, "Revelation and Scripture in Existentialist Theology" by Fred H. Klooster, pp. 175-214 in *Challenges to Inerrancy*.

kind of objection be fairly formulated for the propositional knowledge of the Christian God and incorporated into a "proper function" notion of religious epistemology?

Solution and Incorporation

The solution, I think, lies in identifying the necessary conditions which must obtain in order for humans to gain a propositional knowledge about God. So the first thing would be to discover or identify those conditions; the next step would be to see if they could be incorporated into Plantinga's account.

It seems to me that an obvious necessary condition for this would be that God has designed our cognitive faculties in such a way that when properly functioning they could comprehend propositional knowledge about God. If it were either the case that God has not designed our cognitive faculties for such exercises (as He clearly seems to have not done in the case of lower animals) or there were no God to begin with and consequently no theistic design plan for humans, then it would seem very implausible to think humans could comprehend propositional knowledge about Him (especially in the latter case). Now it might be necessary to include codicils for special cases, perhaps for the rough equivalents of Gettier problems in the category of transcendence and so forth, but it is hard to see initially just how special cases like Gettier problems would occur there. But it is important to see that this particular necessary condition can be incorporated in a very straightforward way into Plantinga's theory of proper function. All that is added to Plantinga's project is the concept that God's comprehensibility as expressed in

propositions is built into human cognitive capacities by the design plan of God.³⁵ So a relevant question to pursue is whether the theist who is a Christian has any grounds to think that this is the case.

A second closely related necessary condition (and perhaps prior to the notion above) for this to obtain would be that the nature of God be such that meaningful information about Him could be expressed in propositions. Maybe the ultimate barrier to this might be certain logical considerations; for instance, if God's nature or character were such that He could both love and hate certain entities at the same time and in the same sense, then there would be problems. A second potential but maybe not ultimate difficulty might be the "squeezing down" of ideas which contain information about God to "fit" into finite human language. For example, when one asserts that God loves humans (as He is often alleged to do), is not the sense in which we understand "love" a finite and not an infinite term? Will such a finite term really do the job of expressing God's love which conceptually goes beyond what any finite term can communicate? Can the infinite concepts fit into finite propositions? This issue does not seem to comport neatly and nicely into Plantinga's epistemic scheme because such notions do not seem to have that much to do with the cognitive endowment of humans. But it also does not run counter to the intuitions of Plantinga's project--if belief in God is properly basic, then the proposition "God exists" (despite the differences of transcendence and finiteness) does

³⁵Typically these kinds of issues fall under the general rubric of the doctrine of *imago Dei*--creatures being made in the image of God. For a good background discussion of alternative interpretations and debate on this in the church and an important philosophical and theological explanation of its implications see Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest's *Integrative Theology II* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1990). pp. 123-80.

express something true about God--namely that He is there. One way of expressing this condition would be to say that Christians could have a true but incomplete knowledge of God via propositions.³⁶

A third necessary condition (very closely related to the second) would be to have an adequate theory of language such that it would not, in principle, rule out the possibility that propositional information about God be expressible.³⁷ What sense would it make for God (here again I speak of the Christian God) to create humans whose mode of communication (whose capacities He created) would rule out the possibility of knowing propositions about Him? It would seem to be remarkable for a theist who is a Christian to believe that the Bible (allegedly inspired by Him), filled as it is with alleged propositional knowledge of God, be thought of as completely devoid of any propositional knowledge of God! However, as I said above, certain metaphysical and methodological commitments changed during the Enlightenment period and this has deeply influenced scholarship (as I see it) in every discipline including theology. Notwithstanding that state of affairs, theists who are Christians do not have to make those kinds of commitments. I suggest they do theology as a methodological theist (as opposed to a methodological naturalist) and, more relevantly, conceptualize their theories of language consistent with those commitments.

³⁶It is fitting that since Plantinga is explicitly identifying his belief in God to be that of the God of the Bible to indicate the consistency of these points with the primary source of Christian theism. See I Corinthians 13:12.

³⁷Perhaps this third condition is better understood as a necessary condition for knowing that we know God via propositions.

Supposing I am correct about this, my view could comport in a straightforward way with Plantinga's notion of proper function and a design plan. It needs only to be stipulated in the design plan that as a part of the human cognitive endowment, we have faculties sufficient for a sophisticated enough to which could be described by a theory of language such that propositional information about God can be meaningfully transmitted.³⁸ This theory would need to include stipulations about the necessary similarities between the Mind of God and the mind of man.

By way of summary, I offered three necessary conditions that must obtain in order for propositional knowledge of God to be affirmed. (1) God must have designed our cognitive faculties in such a way that when properly functioning, we could comprehend propositional knowledge about God. (2) He also must have designed human cognitive faculties such that the theory of language humans use could transmit this propositional knowledge. (3) God's nature must be such that it could be "squeezed down" into meaningful propositional expressions knowable to finite human minds. If these conditions are satisfied, then it is plausible to reject the neo-orthodox assumptions about the knowability of God through propositions. Information about God could be known through propositions.

³⁸See Ron Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man*, Phillipsburg: New Jersey, P & R Publishing, (1982). See especially pp. 113-120 where he discusses this issue of an adequate theory of language.

Grounds for Believing These Conditions Obtain

The theist who is a Christian could argue that there is no good reason to think that logic does not apply to the Mind of God. In fact, to argue that God's "logic" is different from human logic is self-referentially incoherent; such an exercise would involve making a logical statement about the Mind of God, something the critic wants to deny. But if logic applies to both the human mind and the Mind of God as it must, then there is reason to think we can know at least some propositions which are descriptive of the mind of God. Reason applies to the Mind of God as well as the mind of man.

Secondly, the aseity and especially the sovereignty of God provide some grounds for thinking that any supposed obstacle for communicating propositional truth from His transcendent Mind to our finite minds can in principle be overcome by Him (through his design plan for human cognitive faculties). Of course, His ways are above our ways and His thoughts above ours, but there is no reason to conclude that God could not imbue propositions with some meaningful information about Himself that could be understood by humans even if such propositions were univocally understood by finite man but analogically applied to Him.

Third, if belief in God is a properly basic belief, as Plantinga argues, then it follows finite minds can know (in a basic way) that God exists. However, if God's existence can be known in this basic way, then the proposition "God exists" also applies to God. It is important to see that I am not arguing that the proposition entails evidence for God's existence (as Chisolm-like questions are alleged to do), rather I am arguing to

know God exists in a basic way implies the proposition "God exists" is true. Therefore, again, we can conclude the human mind can at least know some true propositions about God.

Fourth, the Logos teaching of the New Testament implies a similarity between the Divine Mind and human mind.³⁹ John 1:18 says

No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.⁴⁰

Now the thing to see here is that at least one aspect of Jesus' ministry was to explain God. Evangelicals do not affirm that all revelation of God is propositional; certainly, Jesus Himself was not a proposition and yet He revealed God. However, it does not follow that Jesus' explanatory ministry is limited to non-propositional revelation, for certainly He taught certain propositions were true of God.⁴¹ Nevertheless, a ministry of explaining

³⁹Ibid., See especially pp. 59-71. Nash discusses the background of this doctrine that asserts a kinship between the Divine Mind and the mind of man. Both Nash and Gordon Lewis see Augustine's Christianized Platonic rationalism as a sound way of thinking about the modal link between our thoughts and other reality. In short, God has designed our cognitive faculties such that they equipped with certain categories of thought that are not learned via experience, pre-existence, or teaching. Our knowledge of the Forms is an epistemic endowment from God or as Augustine put it, "divine illumination." See Gordon Lewis' *Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, 1959. See pages 25-54.

⁴⁰*New American Standard Bible*, The Lockman Foundation, Illinois: Chicago, Moody Press. (1960). John 1:18.

⁴¹Of course, there is the debate as to what alleged sayings of Jesus are attributed to the historical Jesus and what to attribute to the redactors and the various posited communities in the first century church. Space will not allow me to discuss that important issue but I do want to say that I am inclined to think that scholarship on both sides of the issue is affected by pre-theoretical commitments. Therefore, it will be difficult at best to discuss these kinds of issues without identifying and defending those commitments. That issue aside, here are some selected passages where Jesus is both speaking and using propositions to disclose knowledge about God: Matthew 6:30, 32; 11:25-27; 16:7; Mark: 10:6-9; 12:26,27; Luke: 9:62; 10:16; 11:2-13; 11:49-51; 14:16-21; 19:12-27; 22:42; John: 3:16-21; 4:34; 4:17; 5:19-23,26,30,37,38,44; 6:39,40,65; 7:16; 8:19;42; 10:30; 14:23,24,26; 15:1-10; 17:24-26.

God both nonpropositionally and propositionally implies that the Logos of God believed that humans were capable of understanding some propositional information about God.⁴²

An objector to this position might argue that it is begging the question to affirm that the Bible contains propositional truth about God. However, the argument does not start with that premise; the argument starts with a hypothesis (or claim) about Jesus' ministry (which needs defending), namely that part (indeed a substantial part) of His ministry was to reveal God to humans. The question is whether there are valid reasons for believing Jesus is who he claimed He is. If there are, then it is reasonable to believe Jesus is who He claimed to be; but then His actions (teaching propositional information about God) imply humans can know some propositional statements about God. There is no question-begging here.

Summarizing this, it is self-referentially incoherent to affirm the proposition, "Propositional statements containing information about God cannot be understood by humans." God's sovereignty also serves as grounds for thinking that the obstacle of transmitting information about a transcendent Being to a finite being can be overcome. If belief in God is a properly basic belief or a warranted belief, then it follows that at least one proposition containing information about God--that "God exists"--can be communicated to finite minds. The Logos doctrine and the divine illumination theory of St. Augustine provide support for thinking there is a relevant resemblance between the Divine Mind and the human mind. Finally, it was argued Jesus' ministry of revelation

⁴²For a fuller development of how Jesus' teaching ministry relates to propositional and non-propositional revelation (which includes his teaching about his own doctrine), see Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest's, *Integrative Theology I*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan, 1988). pp. 110-12.

cannot be limited to the communication of nonpropositional information about God to humans. Jesus certainly did reveal God nonpropositionally, but He also used propositions that contain information about God when He was communicating with His disciples and others. Thus, the actions of the Teacher Himself imply that humans could receive and understand such information. Therefore I conclude that the Christian theist has valid grounds for thinking God can communicate information from His infinite Mind to our finite minds. This scenario in some places can be smoothly incorporated into Plantinga's epistemic project in a straightforward way; in other places it does not run against the general direction of Plantinga's project.

Conclusion

This chapter was aimed at briefly surveying Plantinga's relatively new work in epistemology. Once we got clear on a few of the terms he uses, I summarized his spin on the historical roots of internalism and externalism. Plantinga thinks internalism's roots spring from the "twin towers of Western epistemology," Rene Descartes and John Locke. He thinks the twentieth century's striking diversity of internalist accounts can be directly traced to them (especially Locke). Externalism, thought to be the philosophical new kid on the block, according to Plantinga, really can be traced back as far as Aristotle. In this long view Plantinga sees externalism as the mainstream perspective in Western epistemology. It is difficult to assess the exact relationship of Plantinga's earlier work in explicit epistemology to this current work because he does not clearly address that question. My conclusion is that they are compatible in many respects. For instance he has retained many of the themes discussed earlier such as his disenchantment with

classical foundationalism and his skepticism with regard to the plausibility of evidentialism's claim for warrant.

Plantinga's proper function approach is a brand of externalism that holds that warrant depends or supervenes upon properties to some of which the cognizer may have no special access or no access at all. I concluded that Plantinga accepts externalism because he evaluates and rejects its complement, internalism. Plantinga's method was to present internalism *uberhaupt* (though he does this case by case) with a devastating counterexample--namely the possibility of being deontologically justified in believing A on the basis of B, but that one could also be deontologically justified if B was not appropriately related to A. This is also the reason he rejects evidentialism, the consequent of deontologically motivated internalism. I also concluded that Plantinga's counterexamples, as compared with Gettier counterexamples, were plausibly a distinction with a difference. Gettier problems, as Plantinga asserts, are a sort of local hitch in the epistemic environment, while his counterexamples are examples of massive malfunctioning of one's cognitive faculties.

Finally, I aimed at extending Plantinga's epistemic account by exploring the question of how our human ideas and the ideas of the God of Christianity relate. In particular, I sought to suggest a way that information about God could be communicated and received by humans by means of propositions. I listed three necessary conditions for this: that God has designed our cognitive faculties in such a way that when properly functioning, they could comprehend propositional knowledge about God; second, that the nature of God be such that meaningful information about Him could be expressed in

propositions; and third, that humans would have an adequate theory of language such that it would not, in principle, preclude propositional knowledge of God.

I further provided a sketch of how the theist who is a Christian could argue that these conditions could obtain. These are the arguments: there is good reason to think that God's logic and human logic cannot be different. Reason applies to the Mind of God as well as the mind of man. Second, God's sovereignty gives grounds to think that if knowledge of God does not violate logical considerations, then he could overcome any other obstacle. Third, if belief in God is properly basic, as Plantinga argues, then it follows that finite minds can know that God exists and this implies the proposition "God exists" is true information about God. Fourth, the New Testament Logos doctrine implies a similarity between the Divine Mind and the human mind. Fifth, Jesus' ministry involved both non-propositional information about God and propositional information about God. If Jesus is who He said He is, then His teachings provide grounds for believing that propositional information about God can obtain. It would make no sense for the Son of God to teach propositional information about God if it could not be done.

The scenario I described with respect to the three necessary conditions and the grounds to support that they could obtain can be incorporated, in some places, into Plantinga's epistemic project in a straightforward way; in other places it at least does not run against the intuitions of Plantinga's project.