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Divine Methodology: A Lawful Deflection of Kantian and Kantian-esque Defeaters

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Abstract: Immanuel Kant argues that though Divine revelation is ontologically possible, given phenomenal level constraints on our cognitive faculties, it isn't epistemically possible for us to know or to recognize Divine revelation on the noumenal level of reality. We call this Kant's Epistemological Objection Against Divine Revelation (EOADR). Contra Kant, in this paper, we argue that the EOADR doesn't undermine the Reformed tradition's view of Divine revelation because it has resources that make knowledge of Divine revelation intelligible. The primary way of establishing our argument is by articulating and furthering Alvin Plantinga's religious epistemology. After doing this, we tackle two objections to our approach that are in the family of Kant's objection, namely Stephen Law's X-Argument Against Religious Belief and Erik Baldwin's Multiple Viable Extensions Objection. Similar to Kant's argument, these arguments attempt to show, that the Reformed epistemologist is in danger of acquiring an undercutting defeater for trusting her religious belief. We respond to each in turn.

Keywords: Plantinga, Reformed epistemology, Calvin, Barth, Diller, Stephen Law, Multiple Extension

While leaving room for the metaphysical possibility of Divine revelation, roughly, Kant argues that it is epistemically impossible to have a warranted belief¹ that a specific revelation is from God. This is due to the fact that God is infinite and it's impossible to use our finite experience to comprehend the infinite. Kant states, "The transcendental idea of a necessary all-sufficient original being is so overwhelmingly great, so sublimely high above everything empirical, which is at all times conditioned, that ... one can never even procure enough material in experience to fill such a concept."² As Nathan Jacobs states, "For Kant, no appearance can possibly be adequate to the idea of God, since this idea requires something that the senses can never supply. In short, 'It is quite impossible for a human being to apprehend the infinite by his senses'³ (7:63)."⁴ While the aim of Kant's objection is to discredit dogmatism of any kind, Jacobs thinks that the Eastern Christian tradition is immune to Kant's objection. While the Eastern Fathers agree with Kant in that due to human cognitive limitations, saying something definitive about God's essence is out of reach, the Fathers located revelation in the ontology of man. Jacobs states the following:

Kant's argument locates revelation in the realm of empirical knowledge and from this argues that it cannot be recognized as such. The Eastern fathers, by contrast, locate divine revelation in the ontology of man: Man, as a *nous*-bearing species,

1 While Kant does not actually use the word 'warrant' he does talk about knowledge. In contemporary discussion, warrant is given a technical meaning such that it is that ingredient which separates mere true belief from knowledge. Because warrant is a necessary condition for knowledge, we think that contextually, it is appropriate to describe Kant's argument in the aforementioned way.

2 A621/B649. Referenced from Jacobs, "Kant and the Problem of Divine Revelation," 113.

3 By senses, we take it that Kant has in mind those faculties that produce in us perceptual beliefs.

4 Jacobs, "Kant and the Problem of Divine Revelation", 113.

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can partake of its divine Archetype and in doing so participate in divine operations of knowing that are otherwise alien to man. This ontological maneuver is especially pertinent to Kant's argument not only because it offers a view of divine revelation that he does not consider but because Kant admits that he is unable to close the ontological window to the existence of God and the possibility that he might reveal himself. By leaving open this ontological window, Kant leaves untouched the very thing on which the Eastern patristic understanding of revelation builds, namely human and divine ontology.⁵

Here, Jacobs offers one sort of strategy that a Christian can take when responding to Kant's Epistemological Objection Against Divine Revelation (EOADR). In this paper, we will, however, focus on a different strategy, specifically one that is in line with the Reformed tradition.⁶ We will argue that Kant's objection doesn't pose a problem for the Reformed tradition's view of Divine revelation because it has the resources to make knowledge of Divine revelation intelligible. We will first establish this thesis by articulating a broadly Reformed view of revelation, faith, and knowledge. Specifically, we will use the work of the foremost Reformed theologian, John Calvin, to articulate this. Second, we will couple the aforementioned theologian to his philosophical counterpart, Alvin Plantinga. This will lead to a robust and theologically informed epistemology. We will show how a Reformed epistemology can successfully respond to Kant's initial objection. Finally, we will entertain objections that are within the family of Kant's objection which aim to discredit the epistemological theory that we will advance. We will argue that these objections do not pose an insurmountable obstacle for our project.

1 The Reformed Tradition

In the Reformed tradition, there is an important distinction made between "abstract knowledge" and "knowledge of God." Abstract knowledge is what one might call demon knowledge.⁷ That is, knowledge that even the demons possess. It is merely propositional knowledge of the existence of God, a kind of knowledge that completely lacks saving power. According to Calvin, one can have propositional knowledge by way of there being a natural instinct in the mind which is responsible for producing belief in Divinity. Calvin succinctly summarizes his view in stating the following:

That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct,⁸ some sense of Deity, we hold to be beyond dispute, since God himself, to prevent any man from pretending ignorance, has endue all men with some idea of his Godhead, the memory of which he constantly renews and occasionally enlarges, that all to a man, being aware that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, may be condemned by their own conscience when they neither worship him nor consecrate their lives to his service.⁹

Because abstract knowledge lacks any sort of redeeming quality, some within the Reformed tradition have called such knowledge, "unimportant."¹⁰

For Calvin, genuine knowledge on the other hand, "...includes not merely the knowledge that God is, but also ... a perception of his will towards us." It is an ability to sense not only God but also His loving

⁵ Ibid., 126.

⁶ By 'Reformed tradition,' we have in mind broadly, the tradition which arose from the Protestant Reformation which endorses the dictum, *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. According to Oliver Crisp, this is often taken to be a summary about Reformed churches. Roughly, the idea is that the Church is 'reformed' in doctrine and practice in accordance with Scripture, and the Church is 'always reforming.' This definition is very broad, such that very diverse theological positions are compatible with the Reformed tradition. In fact, Crisp sees legitimate practitioners of the Reformed tradition to include Zwingli, Calvin, Edwards, Hodge, Schleiermacher, and Barth. See Crisp, *Deviant Calvinism: Broadening Reformed Theology*, 13.

⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 260.

⁸ For Calvin, this natural instinct is extremely powerful. In reference to how potent it is, Calvin states, "Therefore, when he chooses to worship wood and stone rather than be thought to have no God, it is evident how very strong this impression of a Deity must be; since it is more difficult to obliterate it from the mind of man, than to break down the feelings of his nature, - these certainty being broken down, when in opposition to his natural haughtiness, he spontaneously humbles himself before the meanest object as an act of reverence to God." See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 44.

⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 260.

disposition. In order to have genuine knowledge of God, one needs to have affections toward God. Affections, for Calvin, are what grab our attention and allow us to see God as He is.¹¹ Upon receiving the gift of affections from the Spirit, we will be in the position to place saving faith in God and possess knowledge of His Divine revelation. Having made this distinction, we can now move on to coupling this broadly Reformed view with Plantinga's epistemology in an attempt to address Kant's EOADR.

2 Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology

Reformed epistemology is the thesis that S's belief that God exists can be justified or warranted apart from argumentation. Though there are different approaches to establishing this thesis,¹² Plantinga's approach focuses on a proper functionalist theory of warrant.¹³

Roughly, S's belief that p is warranted if:

1. S's cognitive faculties are functioning properly,
2. S's cognitive environment is sufficiently similar to the one for which the cognitive faculties are designed for,
3. The design plan that governs the production of such beliefs is aimed at producing true belief, and
4. The design plan is a good one such that there is a high statistical (or objective) probability that a belief produced under these conditions will be true.¹⁴

Given that this theory does not necessitate that one must have access to the properties which confer warrant, proper functionalism is an externalist theory. Thus, if proper functionalism is a plausible theory of warrant, one would have good reason to think that the belief that God exists could be justified or warranted apart from argumentation. Plantinga fleshes this out in his Aquinas/Calvin (AC) and his Extended Aquinas/Calvin model (EAC). We will now explain each in turn.

AC Model: If God exists and has designed in us a faculty which due to its proper function, successfully produces belief that God exists, belief that God exists could be warranted apart from argumentation.

Following Calvin and Plantinga, for our purposes here, let's call this special faculty the *sensus divinitatis* (SD). According to Kant, the proper function of the SD wouldn't enable one to have abstract knowledge about God's existence. But why think this? Couldn't God hardwire humanity in such a way as to graciously give immediate knowledge of His existence to all people? In this case, a subject isn't merely using her finite experience to try to abductively, inductively, or deductively, conclude something about God, but rather, from God's hardwiring, a subject has immediate impressions of the Divine. As Plantinga states, "Further, couldn't God create creatures who were capable of knowing important truths about God himself? And might we not be just such creatures? Once more, it's hard to see why not."¹⁵

A Kantian might still object that immediate knowledge of God isn't possible because truth cannot be disclosed in a purely aesthetic manner (that is, by means of sensible intuitions alone), for all valid cognitions must be mediated by concepts. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously argues that,

Intuition and concepts ... constitute the elements of all our cognitions, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition ... without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 465.

¹² For more on this, see Moon, "Recent work in reformed epistemology," 879-891, and Baker-Hytech, "Epistemic Externalism in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion."

¹³ Warrant being that ingredient that separates mere true belief from knowledge.

¹⁴ This is a paraphrase from Kim, *Reformed Epistemology and the Problem of Religious Diversity: Proper Function, Epistemic Disagreement, and Christian Exclusivism*, 19.

¹⁵ Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, 6.

without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts). Further, these two faculties or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding is not capable of intuiting anything, and the senses are not capable of thinking anything. Only from their unification can cognition arise ... one must not mix up their roles ...¹⁶

Despite what Kant says here, it's not at all clear that unmediated experience is impossible. Laurence Bonjour argues that *a priori* insights such as "redness is not greenness" necessarily involve representations of realities the intrinsic properties of which we are non-discursively aware. On his view, we are able to "see or grasp or apprehend in a seemingly direct and unmediated way ... [that] ... the natures of redness and greenness are such as to preclude their being jointly realized."¹⁷ William Alston concedes that ordinary, mature perception "almost always involves conceptualization and judgment" but maintains that this doesn't show that unmediated perception can't possibly occur. He writes,

I would suppose that in certain reduced states of visual consciousness – when just waking up, for example – and at the periphery of the visual field, one has pure perception without the intrusion of higher cognitive processes. And perhaps the sensory experience of very young infants is barren of conceptualization.¹⁸

Moreover, Alston argues that direct awareness of God is possible. He defines direct awareness as "a mode of cognition that is essentially independent of any conceptualization, belief, judgment, or any other application of general concepts to the object [of perception]." According to Alston, "sensory experience essentially involves a presentation of objects to consciousness in a way that does not *necessarily* involve the application of general concepts" to the objects of perception.¹⁹ Lastly, according to empiricists such as William James, when a newborn sees red and green objects in her playpen for the first time, she need not have concepts of redness or greenness prior to her first visual experiences of red or green things. Similarly, God could immediately reveal himself to us prior to our having any concepts that apply to his nature as it is.²⁰ Again, following Plantinga, it's difficult to see why it must be that God could not create creatures capable of knowing important truths about God himself immediately. We are not able to rule out the possibility that we humans might be just this sort of creature. Thus, we lack reason to think that it is impossible for God to endow us with cognitive faculties the function of which is to produce immediate abstract knowledge of God.

So, it seems that on the Reformed view, abstract knowledge of God can also be grounded in the ontology of man as well. Of course, for a Reformed Christian, this only grounds a primitive and unclear knowledge that God exists; this doesn't actually ground knowledge of God simpliciter. In fact, according to Calvin, sin has damaged our SD and is in need of repairment.²¹ So, for some people at least, it might be that even abstract knowledge of God is in question. We will now articulate the EAC as to extend Plantinga's epistemology to specifically, Christian revelation.

EAC: If the Spirit of God repairs (or begins to repair) S's SD and, in conjunction with this work, instigates and testifies to S about the truths of the Gospel and S found herself believing the truths of the Gospel, the truths of the Gospel could be warranted for S.

If the EAC is epistemically possible, wouldn't this both ground knowledge of God simpliciter and answer Kant's objection? The Spirit's work could cause S to have affections for God and thus develop in believers faith in God and His will. This would satisfy the Reformers, but why shouldn't it also satisfy Kant? Again, in this scenario, the Infinite One is assuring that S believes the right thing in an immediate way. It isn't as if S is using something like abduction to come to a conclusion which is solely based off of her subjective experience. But rather, an infinite Being is directly assuring that S comes to believe the right revelation by

¹⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 193-194.

¹⁷ Bonjour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, 101.

¹⁸ Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth*, 90.

¹⁹ Alston, *Perceiving God*, 37-38.

²⁰ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 446.

²¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 46-49.

way of the restoration of the SD. Our intuitions are clear. Absent of defeaters, S knows that the Christian revelation is true.

We have argued thus far that a Reformed epistemology has the resources to formulate a robust response to Kant's objection. However, while we think what we have argued for is successful thus far, we do want to entertain possible objections within the family of Kant's EOADR. We will do this by way of articulating Stephen Law's X-Argument and then by way of summarizing Erik Baldwin's Multiple Viable Extensions Objection. Although both objections are compatible with the possibility of divine revelation, both threaten to undermine a subject's ability to know divine revelation. Finally, we will engage both of these objections and argue that there are at least two successful responses. However, before we can rightfully articulate Law's objection, we first need to provide background to the field of cognitive science of religion (CSR). And it is to this that we now turn.

3 Kant's First Cousin: Law's X-Argument

There is empirical evidence from the cognitive science of religion (CSR) that seems to support the idea of there being something like the SD. In fact, the current paradigm in CSR is that belief in God is an evolutionary spandrel. One popular explanation for why this is the case comes from combining the works of Deborah Kelemen and Steward Guthrie.²²

In Kelemen's work, "Why are rocks pointy?" young children are asked a host of questions, such as "Why are rocks pointy?"²³ and the overwhelming reaction from the children was to articulate answers that were teleological in nature. For example, responses that were chosen include "so animals wouldn't sit on them" and "so that other animals can scratch themselves."²⁴ In a later study, when Kelemen and Krista Casler asked uneducated adults the same sort of questions, the uneducated adults continued to prefer teleological explanations.²⁵ The only divergent result that emerges in Kelemen's studies was when similar questions were asked to scientifically educated adults.²⁶ Scientifically educated adults did prefer naturalistic explanations. It is important to note however, that upon being asked to give a reply quickly, even the educated adults preferred teleological explanations.

Why do we seem to prefer teleology? Guthrie has argued that our brains are hard wired to overreact and predicate teleology even when it isn't there as an organism who has a faculty that overreacts to agency and produces false positives will be better positioned to survive over those organisms that don't produce any.²⁷ This faculty is known as a better-safe-than-sorry mechanism or a Hyper Agency Detection Device (HADD). It seems plausible that given other rational capacities, that, an organism who possesses HADD will likely see agency when she experiences things that appear to have design.

And this is where Law finds an undercutting defeater for believing that the SD/HADD is reliable. The SD/HADD has led people to believe in gods, ghosts, fairies, and psychic Sally.²⁸ With our SD/HADD constantly detecting agency when it isn't there, how can we trust it when it comes to producing belief in theism? There appears to be an undercutting defeater for trusting any of the deliverances that it gives. In his "The X-claim argument against religious belief" (note that an X-claim is any claim that a person makes about an invisible agent),²⁹ Stephen Law argues that given that the SD/HADD is unreliable, the subject who is wanting to trust her SD/HADD is in an analogous situation as to that of the person in the snake

²² Kelemen, "Why Are Rocks Pointy? Children's Preference for Teleological Explanations of the Natural World," 1440-1452; Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. The summary that we give of Kelemen's and Guthrie's work is essentially a summary of Barrett's analysis in Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology From Human Minds to Divine Minds*.

²³ Kelemen, "Why Are Rocks Pointy? Children's Preference for Teleological Explanations of the Natural World," 1440-1452.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1443.

²⁵ Casler and Kelemen, "Developmental Continuity in Teleo-Functional Explanation: Reasoning about Nature among Romanian Romani Adults," 340-362.

²⁶ Kelemen and Rosset, "The Human Function Compunction: Teleological Explanation in Adults."

²⁷ Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*.

²⁸ Law, "The X-Claim Argument Against Religious Belief," 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

hallucination scenario. The scenario goes as follows: “Suppose I seem to see a snake on the ground in front of me, and so come to believe there’s a snake there. Then a reliable and trustworthy authority tells me that I have been given a drug that produces superrealistic visual snake hallucinations.” According to Law, “...many have the intuition that, given this new evidence, I can no longer be said to know there’s a snake there.”³⁰ But is Law correct? Is the SD/HADD really unreliable? And is the SD/HADD situation really analogous to the snake hallucination scenario?

4 Kant’s Second Cousin: The Multiple Viable Extensions Objection

The Multiple Viable Extensions objection starts with the assumptions that the Standard Aquinas/Calvin Model is true and that at most one of its extensions is fully correct. As such, it assumes that the basic elements of Plantinga’s religious epistemology are correct; it assumes that proper functionalism is true and that Theistic Belief can be both properly basic and warranted for the Theist. Problems arise, so the objection goes, because there are multiple viable non-Christian extensions of The Standard Model. This is relevantly similar to Kant’s objection in that it, too, threatens to undermine our ability to know that God has given us special revelation.

The Multiple Viable Extensions objection assumes that there are several plausibly viable non-Christian extensions, including Jewish, Islamic, and Monotheistic Hindu extensions.³¹ Any viable extension of the Standard Model must be epistemically possible. It must be, as Plantinga writes, “consistent with what we know, where ‘what we know’ is what all (or most) of the participants in the discussion agree on.”³² Additionally, it must not contradict obvious or virtually certain empirical or historical facts, it must not be an explicit work of fiction or be merely logically possible, and it must have some degree of empirical adequacy.

Let us assume, then, that there are or that there could be Plantingans who belong to the Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Monotheistic Hindu Religious and Philosophical traditions. All of these Plantingans affirm the following condition: (C1) *if the extension of the Standard A/C model that I affirm is true, and given that my cognitive faculties are functioning properly, etc., it follows that if my beliefs about God are both internally and externally rational, they are both properly basic and warranted.* Each accepts that C1 is true for all Plantingans, and each may grant that the creedal-specific religious beliefs are (or could be) internally rational for them all. They all know that at most only one extension of the model could possibly be fully correct, and each thinks that their own the creedal specific beliefs are true and that those held by others are false. It follows that most of the Plantingans creedal-specific religious beliefs aren’t in fact externally rational and that as such most of these beliefs are probably false and unwarranted. Awareness of these facts, so the objection goes, threatens to give Plantingans a defeater for thinking that their creedal specific beliefs are warranted. Specifically, Plantingans aware of the fact that apparently equally reasonable and well-informed Plantingans accept mutually exclusive viable extensions of the Standard model have sufficient reason to wonder whether it is reasonable to think that the extension that he or she accepts is correct. It would be unreasonable for those in this epistemic situation to be unconcerned about whether their extension is correct; reasonability requires dealing with this concern in an appropriate way. According to the proponent of this objection, it would be unreasonable simply either to assume that the extension that one affirms is correct or to merely reiterate one’s initial first-order epistemic seemings about the matter,

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ This claim is defended by Baldwin in “Could the Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model Defeat Basic Christian Belief?”, 383-99, “On the Prospects of an Islamic Externalist Account of Warrant”, 19-44, and *Fully Informed Reasonable Disagreement and Tradition Based Perspectivalism*, 28-45.

³² Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 169.

for either of those routes would beg the question.³³ Rather, apparently, reasonability requires that one have some reason or ground for thinking either that the extension that he or she affirms is true or that competing extensions are false. Having propositional evidence or arguments in favour of the truth of one's own preferred extension of the Standard model would be adequate, but these reasons or grounds won't be fully properly basic. Lacking these non-basic reasons or grounds, however, one is in danger of acquiring an undercutting internal rationality defeater for the belief that his extension is the correct one.³⁴ Thus, while it may be reasonable for the Plantingans to accept their credal specific beliefs, it's implausible to think that those beliefs will be properly basic.

The Multiple Viable Extensions objection assumes that reasonable people are governed by reason. Governed by reason, reasonable people are responsive to reasons, willing to correct their views if they are subjected to criticism, and willing to provide others with reasons when applicable.³⁵ Being reasonable in this sense is not automatic or passive; reasonable people govern *themselves* reasonably. As David Owens puts it, being reasonable involves having and exercising reflective control over one's beliefs. Being reasonable is more than simply uncovering additional first-order reasons for belief. It involves coming to acknowledge, by means of a higher-order judgment, the normative force of those reasons first-order reasons.³⁶ According to Robert Audi, reasonableness is a second-order or meta-cognitive virtue that involves patterns of feeling, thought, and action that we must nurture or maintain.³⁷ In order to manifest the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonableness, therefore, it is necessary but not sufficient that one's cognitive faculties or processes be functioning properly in a suitable cognitive environment. Additionally, a person *qua* epistemic agent must have and exercise the relevant epistemic virtues, including the love of knowledge, firmness, courage and caution, humility, autonomy, generosity, and practical wisdom.³⁸ Thus, even if reasonability doesn't *absolutely* require that the aforementioned Plantingans' religious beliefs must be held in a non-basic way in order to be reasonable (given the need that one have some reason or ground for thinking that either the extension that he or she affirms is true or that competing extensions are false), it's not true that one manifests the meta-cognitive virtue or reasonableness *just in case* one's credal specific beliefs are internally and externally rational. But Plantingans affirm that nothing more than internal and external rationality is necessary for warranted belief. It follows that those who accept Plantingan religious epistemology can't

³³ For instance, one might respond that given Phenomenal Conservatism (which states that 'if it seems to you that *p*, then, in the absence of defeaters, you thereby have at least some degree of prima facie justification for believing *p*') so long as S has no defeaters and S's credal specific beliefs about God seem true to S, then S's epistemic seemings are reasonable, or at least not unreasonable. (See Michael Huemer, "Compassionate Phenomenological Conservatism," 30-55.) But this move could be seen as deeply unsatisfying. It doesn't help to reiterate *prima facie*, object-level epistemic seemings at this juncture, for that doesn't have any obvious bearing on whether such seemings are reasonable to hold. Moreover, all manner of beliefs may seem true to S in accord with PC without S's manifesting the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonability. And Plantingans who are aware of their being multiple viable extensions of the standard AC model do have reasons to think that their respective epistemic seemings might be misleading and erroneous. Each affirms a different extension of the Standard model and each has an epistemic seeming that the model he accepts is true. They all *know* that at most one extension is true. It follows that they all know that most of their epistemic seemings are false and misleading. This suggests that it could be unreasonable for them to appeal to their object-level seemings in the way that the PC defender would have them to do and that if they are being sufficiently reasonable and reflective, then each will (eventually) come to see that relying so heavily on these object-level epistemic seemings is unreasonable. See Baldwin, *Fully Informed Reasonable Disagreement and Tradition Based Perspectivalism*, 62-64 for more on this.

³⁴ This argument assumes the following principle: (P1) If it is unreasonable for S to believe that *p*, and if S comes to realize that S unreasonably believes that *p*, then it is not internally rational for S to continue to believe that *p* and S acquires an (undercutting) internal rationality defeater for the belief that *p*. In short, the argument assumes that if the Plantingans realize that it'd be unreasonable to think that the extension of the Standard AC Model he or she affirms is correct, they thereby acquire an internal rationality defeater for the truth of the target propositions of that extension.

³⁵ See Audi, *The Architecture of Reason: The Structure and Substance of Rationality*, 149-150. Elsewhere, Audi writes, 'A reasonable person is, in a suitably stable way, governed by reason; and a reasonable belief or action is, though not necessarily reasoned, of a kind of exhibiting support by reasons.' See his *Rationality and Religious Commitment*, 39.

³⁶ Owens, *Reasons without Freedom: The Problem of Epistemic Normativity*, 19.

³⁷ Audi, *The Architecture of Reason*, 149-153.

³⁸ Roberts and Wood suggest this on page 96 of *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology*. We take it that a rough and ready, everyday understanding of these intellectual virtues is enough for our purposes. For more, see Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, Part II.

adequately deal with the multiple viable extensions objection, at least not without giving up some of their core epistemological commitments.

Note that the Multiple Viable Extensions objection is distinct from The Great Pumpkin (and the Son of Great Pumpkin) objection in that it assumes Plantinga's proper functionalism and the truth of the Standard model. And the problem doesn't arise simply due to religious diversity as such. Rather, we have a group of apparently reasonable Plantingans disagree about which extension of the Standard model is correct and which of their beliefs about God are internally and externally rational and warranted. This particular combination of epistemic similarity and religious diversity provides the makings for a more forceful objection to Plantingan epistemology.

5 The Classic Plantingan Response

There is a traditional response that proper functionalists have utilized when it comes to dealing with defeaters. It has to do with non-propositional evidence outweighing, at times, S's relevant propositional evidence. Take the following as an example of this:

Say I am known for stealing philosophy books, in fact, there is even a picture of me, warning the clerks that I like to steal books. If, one day, the whole philosophy section of the library went missing and there were several witnesses saying they saw me steal a lot of books, the objective probability that I stole the books would be very high. Nonetheless, if I had a very distinct and highly warranted memory of myself at my house during the time that the books disappeared, would I have a defeater for my belief that I was at my house when the book snatching occurred? It doesn't appear to be the case that I would. As I hold to this belief with a sufficient amount of firmness (which is partly responsible for my level of warrant being high), the probability that I stole the philosophy books wouldn't play any significant role in my doxastic process.³⁹

This approach isn't just limited to rebutting defeaters.⁴⁰ Proper functionalists will utilize this approach for undercutting defeaters as well. For example, Michael Bergmann thinks it is appropriate for naturalists to avoid the consequences of the Evolutionary Argument Against Naturalism,⁴¹ by way of appealing to non-propositional evidence. According to Bergmann, "Even if a naturalist believed that $P(R/N\&E)$ is low or inscrutable, this needn't give her a defeater for R. For she could have *nonpropositional* evidence for R that is sufficiently strong to make belief in R rational, reasonable, and warranted – even for someone whose total relevant *propositional* evidence, k, was such that $P(R/k)$ is low or inscrutable."⁴²

As shown in the example above, there are clearly cases where the objective probability of a belief being false is high and yet the belief can be warranted due to the level or degree of warrant the belief has for a subject. For a proper functionalist, the level of warrant depends on how firmly one holds to a proposition. Firmness in this context is determined by the subjective probability one has for the belief being true. This means that, unlike objective probability, subjective probability is directly related to the design plan's requirements for doxastic formation. Thus, even if there was a low objective probability that my SD is reliable in Law's or Baldwin's case it wouldn't follow that I would have a doxastic defeater. For example, in Law's case, it might just be that one of the subjects is designed to produce the right belief about Divinity, and, due to the subject having a high degree of warrant for her belief, even despite the diverse production of beliefs that the SD is responsible for producing in other subjects, she would be internally rational (and

³⁹ This scenario first appeared in Taber and McNabb, "Is the Problem of Divine Hiddenness a Problem for the Reformed Epistemologist?" This scenario is based on examples given by Alvin Plantinga which can be found in Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, 176-180.

⁴⁰ Explicating the difference between rebutting defeaters and undercutting defeaters, Michael Bergmann writes, "rebutting defeaters do their work of defeating a belief by giving you a reason to think that belief is false; undercutting defeaters do their work of defeating a belief by giving you a reason to lose confidence in the source of that belief ... The easiest way to see the difference between rebutting and undercutting defeaters is to realize that you can have a reason to question the source of your belief without having a reason to think the belief is false." See his *Justification without Awareness*, 159.

⁴¹ Roughly, the argument is that one has an undercutting defeater for believing that their faculties are reliable if one believes their faculties are the result of natural selection.

⁴² Bergmann, "Common Sense Naturalism," 68.

rational in accordance with proper function) in continuing to hold to her belief about Divinity. Moreover, even though the objection isn't motivated directly by the low objective probability that one's SD is reliable, that judgment does have something to do with why it would apparently be unreasonable for the Plantingans in the Multiple Viable Extension objection to be unconcerned about which extension of the Standard model is actually true. But in response to this, it might be by way of the Spirit's repairment of the *sensus divinitatis* and His testifying to a subject, that the Spirit assures that the subjective probability will be high or at least high enough for the subject to rationally continue to hold to Christian belief, even in light of there being a low objective probability that one's religious faculties are functioning properly. There is something within the substance of faith that can allow the agent to overcome her doubts. Calvin would be sympathetic to this approach as he states the following:

But if the believer's mind certainty is mingled with doubt, must we not always be carried back to the conclusion that faith consists not of a sure and clear, but only of an obscure and confused, understanding of the divine will in regard to us? By no means. Though we are agitated and carried to and fro by distrust, we are not immediately plunged into the abyss; though we are shaken, we are no therefore driven from our place. The invariable issue of the contest is, that faith in the long-run surmounts the difficulties by which it was beset and seemed to be endangered ... As soon as the minutest particle of faith is instilled into our mind, we begin to behold the face of God placid, serene, and propitious; far off, indeed, but still so distinctly as to assure us that there is no delusion in it. In proportion to the progress we afterwards make (and the progress ought to be uninterrupted), we obtain a nearer and surer view, the very continuance making it more familiar to us. Thus we see that a mind illumined with the knowledge of God is at first involved in much ignorance,--however, which is gradually removed. Still this partial ignorance or obscure discernment does not prevent that clear knowledge of the divine favor which holds the first and principal part in faith.⁴³

Contra the Classic response articulated here, Jon Matheson argues that Plantinga's approach doesn't enable a subject to be rational in light of epistemic peer disagreement. He states, "To focus simply on your seeming that p is to ignore what else seems true to you (that an equally qualified individual disagrees with you on this matter), and so simply sticking with that one seeming is not the rational course of action."⁴⁴ While this may be true on such epistemological theories like phenomenal conservatism, this wouldn't necessarily be the case on proper functionalism. Even if there are two powerful conflicting seemings that S has, if one of the seemings is significantly stronger than the other, then as long as the stronger seeming was the result of the proper functionalist conditions being in place, the stronger seeming will help create a defeater deflector.⁴⁵ The proper functionalist, after all, defines what's rational by if the belief is produced by proper function conditions. Thus, the proponent of the Classic Plantingan approach will endorse the following:

CPR: S 's belief that p can deflect defeater D if S still believes p on the reflection of D and p is the product of properly functioning faculties which are successfully aimed at truth and there is a high objective probability that the belief produced under these conditions would be true.

In this case, since the subject is literally hard wired to produce p and there is a high objective probability that p is true (given it is produced from these conditions), the belief in question still has a sufficiently tight enough connection to truth, such that the belief can be warranted even in light of a proposed defeater. All this being so, we can now ask if Law's snake hallucination case is analogous to the AC or EAC stories. Intuitively, we think that our faculties are not designed to produce the belief that there is a snake in front of us, at least, upon the reflection of taking the relevant drug. This is why the snake hallucination scenario seems counterintuitive. The same thing won't be said about the AC or EAC models from those who intuitively think that the AC or EAC models are true. Of course, if one did believe that S 's faculties were designed such that they were meant to produce the belief that there is a snake under the relevant conditions and there was indeed a high objective probability that the belief produced in under these conditions would be true,

⁴³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 486.

⁴⁴ Matheson, *The epistemic significance of peer disagreement*, 49.

⁴⁵ Paraphrasing Alvin Plantinga, a defeater deflector is proposition p such that by virtue of S 's believing p S doesn't get a defeater for another proposition q . See his *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*, 346.

then the proper functionalist would think that analogy isn't far off. However, as stated, the analogy doesn't appear analogues.

6 The Virtue-Based Reasonableness Response

In addition to the Classic Plantingan response, there is also what we call the virtue-based reasonableness response. We think that it is possible for Plantingans who are aware of The Multiple Viable Extensions objection or Law's X-Argument objection to satisfy a virtue-based meta-level requirement of reasonability. Taking the former objection first, we have a case of apparently fully informed disagreement between various Plantingans about which extension of the Standard model is true. Recall that the manifestation of the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonableness involves having and exercising various intellectual virtues, including the love of knowledge, firmness, courage and caution, humility, autonomy, generosity, and practical wisdom.⁴⁶ An adequate response to the defeater, therefore, must first show how it could be that all of the Plantingans in the case have the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonableness. Second, it must show how it could be that the Plantingans recognize the others as being reasonable to disagree as they do. Anything less would not respect the details of the case. Can this be done? We think so, and it is to this that we now turn.

Let us assume that all the Plantingans in the case know that each of them have manifested the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonability about as well as the others for a quite some time. Given their track-record, it isn't a stretch to presume that each of them in the course of their disagreement about which extension of the Standard model is true manifests the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonability with respect to their beliefs about God about as well as the others. At the very least, the likelihood of this being true is quite high. So, then, unless we have a good reason to think that any of these Plantingan's is presently being any less reasonable than the others, we ought to grant that they are equally reasonable in the course of their current disagreement, too. (The situation is rather like a case in we have two equally competent archers or sharpshooters both of which have performed roughly equally well for months on end. There is no reason to expect one of them to vastly outperform the other on the next shot. Rather, it is quite natural to expect each of them to once again perform about as well as the other.) Why should we, then, suppose that this isn't possible as it pertains to religious belief? What reason do we have to think that this is impossible?

At this juncture one might object that Plantingans can readily agree with this solution by maintaining that being internally rational is enough for reasonableness in this case. But this won't work because it would implicitly add something to the bare minimum proper functionalism thesis that wasn't there before, namely, the notion that robust intellectual virtues are at least sometimes necessary for warranted belief. It should be obvious, perhaps only after some careful reflection on various cases, that S's belief that *p* can be internally rational even if S fails to be appropriately conscientious and reflective regarding the formation and sustenance of the belief that *p*.⁴⁷ More to point, it might not be true that S reasonably believes that *p* just

⁴⁶ This is but a rough adumbration of what it is for someone to manifest reasonableness. On page 65 of *Fully Informed Reasonable Disagreement and Tradition Based Perspectivalism*, Erik Baldwin offers the following more fleshed-out account. "Approximately, S (fully) manifests the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonability if: S, qua epistemic agent, is functioning well epistemically by having and exercising the epistemic virtues that underlie the manifestation of reasonability, including the intellectual virtues of the love of knowledge, firmness, courage and caution, humility, autonomy, generosity, and practical wisdom; S is responsive to reasons; e.g., S is willing to correct his/her views in light of criticism, willing to provide others with reasons, has a measure of good judgment that is incompatible with perversely bad judgment, and is to some degree self-critical, at least in the sense of being disposed to think about and correct tendencies that have gotten them into trouble; S is minimally rational with respect to his/her desires and is not subject to serious affective disorders (e.g., extreme apathy or severe clinical depression) and is appropriately concerned about his/her own well-being; and S is appropriately conscientious and reflective regarding the truth of his/her beliefs, especially when those beliefs are challenged."

⁴⁷ For instance, suppose a student comes to believe something about Descartes having read an article published in the online version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on Descartes. Suppose that the student forms the belief that *p* in a strictly non-reflective way, rather like how one might check for information about which team won yesterday's game or to check the weather forecast. In contrast, the author has a very thorough understanding of *p* and can offer a robust account of why he or she believes *p* to be true (at least at the time of writing). In this case, only the author manifests the cognitive virtue reasonableness with respect to the formation and sustenance of *p* to a high degree. But it would be a mistake to think that student is being unreasonable.

in case the bare minimum constraints of proper functionalism hold. This is because in order for epistemic agents *qua* agents to function excellently they must have and exercise certain epistemic virtues, and that doesn't occur automatically or just in case one is internally and externally rational. Roberts and Woods express this point well when they write:

Someone who takes this approach [the approach of the virtue epistemologist] has given up the spirit of a faculty epistemology ... Faculty epistemologists who are willing to accord to character traits a major and essential role in the acquisition of some epistemic goods have wandered far from the original idea of a faculty epistemology, because what is doing the work in the new permutation of their view is no longer just the faculties but, in the upper-end cases at least, the epistemic agent who *uses* the faculty virtuously for his or her purposes. The epistemologist may wish to keep the virtues in the humble role of supplementing the functioning of faculties, but in reality he has reduced the faculties to appliances in the hands of a person.⁴⁸

If all this is correct, then unless the Plantingans in the case are being reasonable, and unless we supplement or augment Plantinga's religious epistemology in the requisite ways, we might not have an adequate response to the Multiple Viable Extensions defeater. Naturally, those who prefer the Classic Plantingan response don't think that we need to supplement proper functionalism. This dispute amounts to an in-house disagreement among Plantingans about the nature of the human design plan and the nature and manifestation of intellectual virtues. Those who prefer the Virtue-Based Reasonableness maintain that God created us such that we may come to believe in God in a basic way. But they also contend that because He also wanted his creatures to manifest the meta-cognitive virtue of reasonableness, He designed us such that we recognize the need to acquire and exercise intellectual virtues and to appropriately govern both the formation and sustenance of our beliefs in accord with intellectual virtue. As such, they grant the possibility that propositional evidence and arguments may sometimes be necessary in order to reasonably deal with certain defeaters and objections to beliefs about God, including the Multiple Viable Extensions defeater. But even if substantial additions to Plantinga's religious epistemology are necessary, that won't preclude the possibility of revelation that we defend here. Whether one adopts the Classic or the Virtue-Based Reasonableness approach, our defence of the possibility of Divine revelation stands. Both approaches accept that divine revelation is possible and that knowledge of God's existence can be basic.

Lastly, note that the Virtue-Based Reasonableness response can also apply to Law's objection. It might be that by being responsible and thus virtuous that, the Plantingans will seek out arguments which help support their judgments that their SD faculty is functioning reliably. In this way, their religious belief is basic until they encounter the X-Argument. Engaging this objection in a reasonable way, having and exercising the relevant intellectual virtues, the Plantingan may then acquire reasons in favor of thinking that their SD is reliable and thereby deflect the attempted defeater.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, we think what we have established here is that the Reformed tradition has the resources to make knowledge of Divine revelation intelligible. And if we grant that Jacobs' Eastern Christian approach is successful in responding to Kant, then it would follow that there at least two Christian traditions that can deflect Kantian and Kantian-esque defeaters. Though, our project was one of showing that it is epistemically possible that a committed believer *could* be rational in her religious belief, even in light of these Kantian defeaters, we didn't, however, claim that the committed believer is rational in her religious belief. This claim, though an interesting one, isn't relevant for our project. Perhaps, it merits its own paper as sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

⁴⁸ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology*, 110-111.

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