Wittgenstein and the ABC's of Religious Epistemics

Guy Axtell

Radford University, Virginia

Abstract. This paper continues my development of philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary comparative research. An earlier paper, "Wittgenstein and Contemporary Belief-Credence Dualism" compared Wittgensteinian reflections on religious discourse and praxis with B-C dualism as articulated by its leading proponents. While some strong commonalities were elaborated that might help to bridge Continental and Analytic approaches in philosophy of religion, Wittgenstein was found to be a corrective to B-C dualism especially as regards the epistemology of "risky" doxastic faith ventures. This paper aims to further elaborate a basis for improved dialogue between philosophers, theologians and scholars in special sciences which study religion. I call this basis the *triangulated* model the ABC's of religious epistemics to contrast it with the B-C dualist proposal.

1. Dialogue across Disciplines

This paper continues my development of philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary comparative research. An earlier paper, "Wittgenstein and Contemporary Belief-Credence Dualism" compared Wittgensteinian reflections on religious discourse and praxis with B-C dualism as articulated by its leading proponents Lara Buchak and Liz Jackson.[1] It found some strength and promise in the B-C dualist proposal, especially in regard to the manner in which their doxastic state pluralism –the recognition that "beliefs and credences are two epistemic tools used for different purposes" invites a more cooperative approach in philosophy of religion. The B-C dualists propose to distinguish qualitative, affective B-reasoning from quantifiable C-reasoning. But it was also argued that their application of this B-C dualism to philosophy of religion results in a still unbalanced account, and thus a serious weakness. It allows religious particularists to defend their rationality by appeal to "B-reasoning" such as trust in a particular religious testimonial tradition, while routinely ignoring aetiological information and challenges which might arise from empirical evidence of aetiological symmetries in testimonial uptake across testimonial faith traditions.

So, the present paper motivates and sketches a fuller alternative to B-C dualism, within the same spirit of improving the dialogue. It is perhaps best seen as a counter-proposal to the proposal made by the B-C dualists that *doxastic state pluralism* would improve discussion of the epistemology of religious belief. Neither synchronic, probabilistic C-reasoning nor affective, valuative B-reasoning are found to take a proper concern with *aetiological symmetries* among adherents of different testimonial faith traditions.[2] I introduce A-evidence, or A-reasoning, to address this lacuna.[3] Aetiological concerns are concerns with processes and strategies of belief formation, and this is much of what psychology studies, including

psychology of religion. My counter-proposal therefore pushes doxastic state pluralism still further. I show why it invites the discussion of risk which B-C dualism introduces, while going further by insisting that doxastic risk also be understood also together with research in the human sciences which study religion, including cognitive science of religion [hereafter CSR]. This means that doxastic risk needs to be considered in relationship to what aetiological information helps us to understand about differences between safe and unsafe strategies of inquiry. It also means that existential risk, or risk for the believer, is not the only risk-related concern: Where beliefs involve others, real or potential epistemic justice/injustice is always a risk-related concern as well.

The *Triangulated* model which results from taking the truth-tracking (safe or risky) aetiology of our beliefs as another central concern for the epistemology of religious beliefs, I term the ABC's of the epistemics of religious belief [Table 1 below]. The Triangulated model gives each way of taking evidence, a permanent seat at the table. It is thus proposed as modeling a more balanced and fruitful dialogue among theologians, philosophers, and

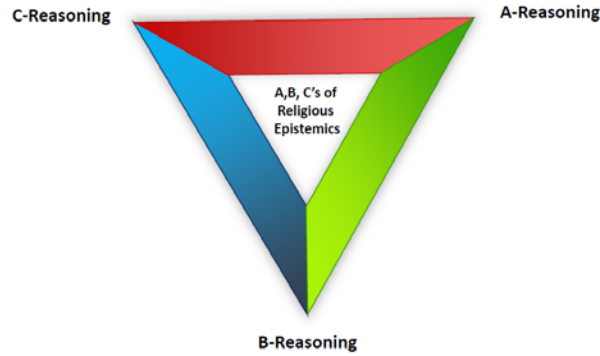researchers in human sciences which study religion.

Table 1: The Triangulated, on A,B,C's model of philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary research

I will use "epistemics of [domain x]" and "epistemology of [domain x] beliefs" synonymously, but where both terms acknowledge the constant need to balance form and content in the scholarly study of beliefs, including (and perhaps especially) religion. As Dominic Marbaniang (2010) points out, "The term 'epistemics' was coined by Alvin I. Goldman (1978) to contrast it with traditional epistemology that didn't take modern psychological studies in cognition into consideration." Epistemics concerns itself, according to Goldman, "with the interpersonal and institutional processes that affect the creation, transmission, and reception of information, misinformation, and partial information."[4] Goldman's adoption of this term was part of his prescription for social epistemology, in contrast to the methodological individualism which had been an unexamined assumption of many epistemologists. The study of religious ideas is one domain of epistemics, that is, one domain of which the study of groups and collectives is illuminating.[5] One of the immediate consequences of the ABC's of religious epistemics is that we should take religious,

philosophical, etc. *"contrariety"* as the default description of psychographic differences in domains of controversial views, not "disagreement." What counts as a disagreement is itself a contested question, and needs to meet conditions.[6]

Section 2 reviews the proposal of B-C dualists to distinguish faith-based belief as affective B-reasoning, from quantitative, probative C-reasoning and its guiding norm that one's "credences" (low or high) should always match or "fit" with an objective assessment of one's evidence. The connections which were made between the B-C dualist's proposal with Wittgenstein two ways of treating evidence, as "criterial" (grammatical), or "symptomatic" (inductive; evidenced) are also briefly reviewed.[7]

Section 3 picks up from the conclusions of that earlier paper that, while there is much to admire in the *doxastic state pluralism* of Lara Buchak and Liz Jackson, their "dualism" retains much of the problems of the eliminative or reductionist accounts. *Doxastic or epistemic risks,* which Buchak so nicely points to as central to faith-based assents, are largely acknowledge to be existential risks. More specifically, the dualist proposal allows little relevance to aetiological information bearing on how they and other persons acquire and hold their religious beliefs. B-evidence is sensitive to certain things like personal experience and testimony, but should not at the same time be as *insensitive* to what we will term A-reasoning and A-evidence. We will use "A" for "aetiological," construing this broadly enough to include information stemming from general facts about human thought processes (including bias studies), and from sciences which study religion bearing upon the proximate causes of belief, along with functional explanations and critical or supporting genealogical accounts of concepts.

Dualism as presented by its leading proponents lends itself to leaving the aetiology and proximate causes of belief out of account, and thus largely disregarding the special sciences

which study religious belief and unbelief. This insensitivity, I argue, skews both the judgment of agents, and the application of the B-C dualist proposal to the epistemology of religious belief. Whereas philosophy of religion requires maintaining a proper balance between form and content, dualism presents a hyper-focus on content and religious particularity, as the expense of formal concerns.

Section 4 sketches more detail into how the Triangulated model, as a positive proposal to improve discourse between theologians, philosophers, and others, extends but also amends the C-P dualists' proposal. The two proposals have a good deal of overlap as I try to show, but the Triangulated model builds in some 'checks and balances' which I see as missing in B-C dualist model. The main issue between these two proposals is not just about different kinds of evidence, but of how a body of evidence is *taken*: The B-taking, C-taking, and A-taking are often each possible in regard to beliefs in domains of controversial views. Each way of taking evidence provides perspective on the other two, and this means that the Triangulated model invites empirical study of religious belief and unbelief, and a more balanced discussion since the "form" as well as the "content" of belief each receive their due. Developing the three sides (B – C, C – A, and B – A), and the manner in which each type way of taking evident both tempers and complements the other two, will give us opportunity to see how Wittgenstein's reflections show concern with each.

Section 5 turns more directly to the question of which model, the Triangulate, or the dualistic, Wittgenstein's thought better supports. Wittgenstein found both "general facts" of nature and human experience, and genealogical reconstructions of concepts, to be valuable in gaining perspective on language use. Without making proper place for what Wittgenstein describes as "general facts," or what studyable generically or across populations by one or

more human science, an imbalance occurs in which we see only differences across testimonial faith traditions ('religious disagreements') and not similarities of testimonial up-take and the form and function of religious faith ventures. This is the counterpoint error to the "sin" of chauvinism in philosophy of religion, which over generalizes similarity among religions and neglects differences. This section further develops general facts as aetiological information, or A-taken evidence on the Triangulated model. I argue we find further support for the Triangulated model in Wittgenstein's thought, and that philosophers of religion (whether religious or non-religious and whether Continental or analytic in style) should prefer it for its ability to distinguish philosophy of religion from religious apologetics, and to promote philosophy of religion as genuinely interdisciplinary research. I show how it provides a comfortable home for philosophers, theologians and scientists, and improves the prospects for the epistemology of religious belief and unbelief.

2. The Significance of Aetiological Challenges

The distinction of credence-taken evidence and belief-taken evidence allows that creeds are not credences, i.e., inferences from evidence. An epistemology of religious belief which treats them as such will misunderstand religious discourse. Distinguishing B-taken evidence from C-taken evidence, the dualists aim to show, has general epistemological advantages, but especially so in respect to the epistemology of religious belief. Wittgenstein's own distinction between treating evidence criterial or symptomatic was shown to have significant overlap with the proposal of B-C dualists, such that Wittgensteinian philosophers might find that proposal amenable.

Yet I went on to criticize certain aspects of the application of B-C dualism to the epistemology of religious belief, which I found ripe for polemical apologetics and not conducive

to a balanced account. The human sciences which study religion have much to say about whether is referred to as B – reasoning by the dualists. Unchallengeable appeal to B-reasoning seems to allow indulgence in "uniqueness" claims at the cost of recognizing the seriousness evidence of patterns (aetiological symmetries) in the uptake of teachings in a testimonial faith tradition. Being hyper-focused on the uniqueness of the home religion's theology, religious particularists ignore or deny evidence of aetiological symmetries, and analogies holding between the epistemic status of their own religious beliefs and those who hold contrary views. B-reasoning cannot so easily do away with problems of religious diversity nor can it. It highlights the internal, phenomenological perspective, but cannot exclude the validity of external perspectives. Our propensities for counter-inductive thinking help to explain how aetiological symmetry gives rise to polarized and polemical religious particularism in testimonial faith traditions.

When analytic and Continental philosophers of religion engage more directly with some of these same concerns, we may find that they share more common ground with comparative philosophy of religion, and with the aims and methodologies of the human sciences which study religion. For as DiPaolo and Simpson (2016, 3079) explain, "Etiological Challenges encourage us to pay attention to notable facts about our belief-forming processes that would otherwise be ignored."[8] I tried to show that the shortcoming in the B-C dualist proposal overlaps and quite substantial ways with how Wittgenstein's account of "theology as grammar" (criterial usage) is sometimes used apologetically to ignore commonalities among believers, and to support the isolation and insulation of religious communities.[9] I developed this to show that the B-C dualist proposal and others that display a similar fault need to be supplemented in ways which make place for empirically grounded studies and the aetiological challenges which might arise from them. B-reasoning often incites making the home religion an unprincipled exception to the force

of inductive patterns and symmetries. The prevalence of B-reasoning in the uptake of religious teachings is descriptively true, but it would be suspect as a basis for polemical religious apologetics.

The argument of this paper is not any one of these three are necessarily either supportive or undermining of religious belief. Rather, the argument is that methodologically these three ways of taking evidence always need to be taken together; that all three are pertinent to philosophical assessment of particular agents and the theological methods they employ, such that neglecting any of them impoverishes philosophy of religion. Inviting empirically-grounded and comparative study of religion to the table more properly balances concern with the *form* and *content* of religious cognition. Indeed, this model is multi-faceted rather than 'dualistic' in the sense of privileging *either* the uniqueness claimed for one's religious phenomenology *or* the explanatory salience genetic/generic factors accessible to scientific study. So, the primary focus here is on constructing the Triangulated, or ABC's model as a sounder basis for dialogue among theologians, philosophers, and researchers in the sciences which study religion. But I also try to motivate a non-quietist reading of Wittgenstein and the 'battle against bewitchment by means of language' which is amenable to the basic features of the proposed model.

Triangulating the discourse thus serves to correct for potentially insulating appeal to B-reasoning, which I interpret B-C "dualism" as allowing or even encouraging. It corrects for an imbalanced focus on content and religious particularism in contrast with form, and the importance of objective aetiological symmetries. But the Triangulated model recognizes that like B-reasoning and C-reasoning, what we will here term "A-reasoning" in neither *inherently* undercutting nor supportive of religious belief. Rather, these kinds of evidence, or ways of "taking" evidence, can each be sources of arguments which bear on the philosophical assessment

of epistemic states and standings. Recognition that A-reasoning is important for religious epistemics improves the prospects for constructive dialogue across theology, the human sciences, and philosophy. I will try to further substantiate this proposal in the remaining sections of this paper by sketching the manner in which A, B, and C-reasoning each provides perspective on the other two, and by indicating new questions for shared research which emerge from studying the three "sides" of the Triangulated model of discourse over the epistemology of religious belief.

3. Checks and Balances: The Three Corners of the Triangle

We can now fill out the Triangulated model for progress in the epistemology of religious belief [Tables 2 & 3, below]. The model allows a 'comfortable home' for philosophers, theologians, and researchers in the human sciences which study psychographic diversity (differences in belief and belief-systems), insisting, indeed, on their permanent relevance or seat at the table. Since our main thesis is that the triangle facilitates the more balanced discussion, it is appropriate to start with the corners, and with a brief statement about how each of the three forms of reasoning *tempers* the other two, and about how each *complements* the others. These 'checks' will be described in terms of implications for the epistemology of beliefs across domains of controversial views, rather than religious belief and unbelief specifically. After that will look at the three sides with examples of the kinds of questions which arise by focusing on each of them. These are suggested ways of "balancing" form and content, eventuating in questions which all parties can work on collaboratively and not just separately. The sides will be described with special regard to an interest in religious belief and unbelief.
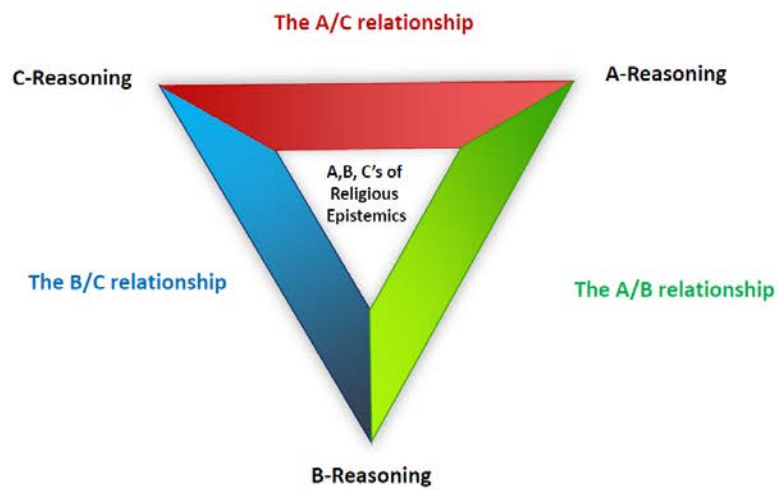
The A/C relationship

C-Reasoning   A-Reasoning

A, B, C's of
Religious
Epistemics

The B/C relationship   The A/B relationship

B-Reasoning

Table 2: Sides and Corners of the Triangulated Model of Philosophy of Religion as Multi-Disciplinary Research.

3.1 The Three Corners: Initial Descriptions

Our initial description of the ABC's of religious epistemics can perhaps best be given in a bullet-point format:

C-Reasoning is:

- Associated with probabilistic and logical reasoning; "degreed" credences (or degrees of belief). It heightens evidentialist standards, and insists as philosophy does that reasoned argumentation and acquired skills of reasoning are common ground for knowledge seekers.

- Associated with analytic philosophy, formal methods, and finer-grained, even quantitative reasoning from evidence according to formal principles. Tends not just towards epistemology but towards an epistemological internalism (or propositionally-focused ex ante approach). Therefore, also associated with methodological individualism and with appeal to one or another ideal theory. Tends to ignore or set aside human biases and psychology, along with most limitations of ecological rationality.

- *Key players:* Natural theology & disproof atheism; religious or skeptical rationalism. Credence-first reductionism ('beliefs are always/usually reducible to credences') or still more strongly, belief-eliminativism ('there are only credences').

B-Reasoning is:

- Responsiveness to experiences, life choices, and praxis/ritual & community; diachronic and holistic assessments; relationships of trust, and values of trustfulness, hope.
- Especially sensitive to special relationships of trust in cultural inheritances and identity with a testimonial tradition. Tends not just towards phenomenological or first-personal perspectives and valuative, but towards holistic assessment of worldview beliefs.
- Associated with theologies and religious studies highlighting positive role of emotions and values in worldview beliefs, or in spiritual/religious identity. Tends to ignore scientific and philosophical reasoning, and can invite not just particularism but ideological polarization spirals. Shows negative sensitivity to evidential inductive norms, contingency anxiety, and objective riskiness of a process or strategy of inquiry.
- *Key players:* Non-evidentialist Continental and Analytic theologies and apologetics; phenomenological, pragmatist, enactivist, social, standpoint, virtue epistemologies, etc. Highlighted in the B-C dualist account of faith, and in permissivist alternatives to evidentialism.

A-Reasoning is:

- Associated with aetiological information, and empirical studies of the human sciences. It heightens the relevance of similarities between people, group dynamics, and patterns

apparent across persons, and across religious testimonial traditions. It tends not just towards supporting descriptive science, but experimental social psychology and an empirically-informed, external-reliabilist (or agent/group *ex post*) approach in epistemology. Scientific studies involve explanatory aims, and social epistemologies (including critical genealogies) also draw directly from aetiological concerns.

- Emphasis on generic functions of ideas, and patterns in religious populations which hold across cultures, can tend towards over-generalization, thereby ignoring or discounting group differences. The explanatory value of the ecological nature of human thinking, and of truth-linked concern with safe and sensitive beliefs processes of belief-formation, need not be based on over-generalization about universal and genetic factors. A-evidence helps us to "take perspective" and to think hypothetically; it aids us in redressing our bias blind spot, and many other more specific personal and group biases.

- *Key players:* CSR researchers who apply empirical psychological studies and evolutionary science to study religious belief and unbelief. Individual philosophers, theologians, or others who utilize CSR studies or other sciences to frame arguments which support or undercut religious realism ('bunking and debunking').

3.2 Checks: A Temperance Movement

The 'checks and balances' built into the Triangulated model in were earlier advertised as ensuring an appropriate balance of "form" and "content" in philosophy of religion. To make good on this, we here describe the 'checks' as manners in which each basic way of taking evidence *tempers the worst tendencies of the other two*:

C-Reasoning tempers B-Reasoning by:

Establishing formal norms of argument strength and validity, and censuring fallacious inferences and rhetorical exchanges. Logos-centered discourse over ethos and pathos-centric persuasion; formal argumentation as shared common-ground even in deep disagreement. Not setting religious discourse apart without grounds for doing so.

C-Reasoning tempers A-Reasoning by:

Reminding us that reductionism and error theories, like realist theories, need to be argued for, and that people can improve their epistemic situation even in respect to culturally-conditioned or 'nurtured' beliefs, by methodical reflection upon the evidence for them.

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B-Reasoning tempers C-Reasoning by:

Showing how formal arguments and ideal theories often neglect the many forces shaping beliefs in domains of controversial views (morals, politics, philosophies, and theologies). Pragmatic encroachment is a genuine phenomenon and another normal aspect of worldview beliefs often neglected by those who associate all rationality with C-reasoning.

B-Reasoning tempers A-Reasoning by:

Paying attention to first-personal perspectives, and warning against ignoring cultural or theological differences by over-generalization about the origins or adaptive functions of religious or supernatural beliefs.

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A-Reasoning tempers B-Reasoning by:

Encouraging us to pay attention to human-level patterns/symmetries, to our potential for bias;

Aetiological challenges draw attention to notable facts about our belief-forming processes that
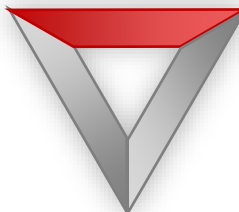
would otherwise be ignored. (DePaolo and Simpson).

A-Reasoning tempers C-Reasoning by:

Showing the importance to epistemological assessment and guidance of ecological rationality,

empirical studies of human behavior including bias studies, and non-ideal theory.

Psychographic contrariety not studied well as propositionally-based "disagreement."

3.3 Balances: Shares Issues in the Scholarly Study of Religious Belief/Unbelief

The *sides* of the Triangulated model are understood as intersections where some of the most

fruitful interdisciplinary and collaborative research across philosophy, religious studies

(scientific or scientifically informed), and theology might occur [Table 3, below]. For while

properly-tempered A, B, and C-reasoning contribute to fruitful discourse across disciplinary

divides, each of the three tends to become extremely one-sided when not tempered in this way.

A real improvement of discourse might occur when the applications of each of the three for

philosophy of religion are properly qualified. This also promotes interdisciplinary cooperation.

We will accordingly amplify *complementary* issues and *shared* concerns which arise from

elaborating A, B, and C-reasoning, issues and concerns which too often are considered only

from one point of view, or dismissed for not fitting with one's previous assumptions.

C/B Intersections	A/B Intersections	A/C Intersections
Table 3: The Three Sides as Multi-disciplinary Philosophy of Religion		

3.3.1 Theology & the B/C Relationship

The sources of diversity, especially but not exclusively found in our controversial views, are *many*. They include symbolic aspects of cultural identity, religious ambiguity, and confirmation holism. The holistic nature of evidence for worldviews and ideologies is correctly recognized as a source of diversity, as is the balance a person must choose between intellectual courage and caution, believing truly versus not believing falsehoods.

C-reasoning often appears blind to B-reasons. As ideal theory, C-Reasoning tries to wall off logic and epistemology from psychology. It takes an *ex ante* approach to epistemic assessment, where characteristics of particular agents or groups are largely set aside. It appears to reside in synchronic (time-slice) relations between a body of evidence and a target proposition, or decision; agents enter only tokens of ideal types. The main normative concern is with reasoners a meeting or maximizing norms of epistemic rationality. As with the Triad model reducing epistemic attitudes to belief, disbelief, or suspension (Feldman and Conee, 2004), degree-of-credence talk excludes recognition of all manner of trait-dependent factors which as sources of cognitive diversity. C-Reasoning posits instead a generic subject, a target proposition, and an information-set bearing on that proposition. C-reasoning often forgets that are most

closely held beliefs are often culturally inherited, and that we find ourselves in embedded in a natural and social world.

So, the recognition of B-reasoning and A-reasoning as different than C-reasoning tempers philosophy's reliance upon ideal theory, allowing for embodiment and ecological rationality. This arguably enables philosophers of religion to take the 'agential turn' as well as the 'externalist turn' in epistemology, and to say that philosophers of religion cannot be blind to these factors. B-reasoning and A-reasoning both look to actual agents (individual or collective) and to the appropriateness of their strategies of inquiry for the problems they are employing them for. The focus of philosophical assessment is agents themselves and their epistemic processes, methods or strategies, so neither B-Reasoning nor A-Reasoning is given to ideal theory. Many writers concerned with sources of contrariety in domains of controversial views, including religion, many have focused on a particular factor. Kidd (2013) for example follows James in focusing heavily on individual temperament as a key source of reasonable disagreement. This includes connections between risk-taking and identity construction. John Hick and Robert McKim focus much more on the religiously ambiguous nature of evidence regarding theistic belief and unbelief.[10] B-reasoning and 'B-evidence' as presented by the B-C dualists seems to be a hodge-podge of such factors, but this is by no means inappropriate: it fits the subject matter and domain. This is why they identify B-reasoning with holistic evaluations, lacking the algorithmic character of credences and disagreement among credences. Pragmatic reasons for belief, when they are recognized, are another source of cognitive diversity.

Religion and theology have a rocky history with C-reasoning, which is often associated with philosophy. Where they converge one finds the natural theologians, and the traditional Catholic idea of faith and reason as alternative, often complementary ways to religious truth. But

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there is arguably a fideistic minimum in religious faith, and as this grows stronger one finds more discord between C-reasoning and B-reasoning, and strategies either of rejecting C-reasoning or appropriating it in the service of preestablished belief. These are of course risky strategies, but epistemically assent is to some degree 'baked into' even a generic conception of faith. B-evidence bearing upon religious language and practice contributes to the C-evidence that an agent has or has available. But taking special experiences and testimonial transmissions as evidence greatly complicates the hope for any impartial, evidentialist or probabilistic assessment of C-evidence bearing on epistemological dimensions of religious language. Taking the moral and pragmatic fruits of a faith-commitment as evidence does so as well. These allow for a kind of 'testing,' perhaps, but one that is more characteristic of *personal* experimentation and satisfaction than of logical inference to the best explanation.

B-reasoning tends to be weighed more heavily by agents than C-evidence in domains of controversial views. The holistic evaluation of evidence makes C-evidence less compelling and personal experiences and special relationships of trust more so. While proponents of C-reasoning will say that it is able to countenance diverse forms of evidence, B-reasoning is typically more holistic, and resists formalization. C-reasoning can allow for rational reconstructions of beliefs in domains of controversial views. But rarely is C-reasoning alone the actual basis for belief in these domains.

Worldview beliefs and faith ventures typically involve dependence upon affective B-reasoning, as is evident from the fact that C-reasoning would enjoin us to take earlier and later-acquired evidence with the same weight. Instead, human psychology shows that our earliest experiences and beliefs are usually weighted much more highly by people, and C-reasoning is often an exercise in post-hoc defense of cultured beliefs. B-reasoning and what psychologists call

motivated reasoning are thus difficult to distinguish. Thus, there is great need of critical principles to assess B-reasoning. It may be naïve to think that clear critical principles are on offer. Nevertheless, theory virtues may be sought which satisfy philosophical, theological, and empirical adequacy *together*.

3.3.2 Cognitive Science and the A/B Relationship

More so than either of the other two dimensions, the A-B dimension allows us to balance form and content in the study of religion. Together, the A-B dimension helps us to recognize and gain understanding of the contributing factors, personal and cultural, to the spread of religious ideas. B-reasoning and A-reasoning both provide insights on the sources of religious multiplicity, and of the trait-dependent factors that overdetermine belief in the religious domain, and in domains of controversial views more generally.

Yet they tend to pull in opposite directions: A-evidence notes formal similarities and naturalistic proximate causes of religious cognition, while B evidence is often used to support uniqueness and truth of a special revelation or transmission of knowledge in a testimonial faith tradition. Thus, A-reasoning often takes people's B-reasoning as an object of study. If the content of faith-based assent, thought of propositionally, is logically underdetermined by agent-neutral evidence and argument, what factor of factors overdetermine an individual's assent?

Attribution theory in psychology allows access to new ways of studying the psychology of belief and unbelief. It is one of the areas in which psychologists and theologians might beneficially work together. Attribution theory is not more 'debunking' than other psychological studies, but it recognizes the attributional activities of agents as an important focus of research both in the human sciences and in theologies. Anne Taves writes, "The attribution process is

motivated by (1) a need or desire to perceive events in the world as meaningful, (2) a need or desire to predict or control events, and (3) a need or desire to protect, maintain, and enhance one's self-concept and self-esteem." Attribution theories applied to religious cognition put focus on the processes by which people of religious orientation make causal and characterological attributions. How agents attribute character-traits and markers of religious value or disvalue to others is thus a prime area for social-psychological research.

Across domains of controversial views, beliefs are logically *underdetermined by evidence*; and this suggests that to lesser or greater degree they are at the same time causally *overdetermined by social and trait – dependent factors*. The *overdetermination* of religious choices or actions by numerous evolutionary, affective, and social causes is arguably just the flip side of the problem of the *underdetermination* of faith-based belief by evidence. Under and overdetermination are *paired* theses. The trait-dependence of the doxastic attitude which an agent holds towards a proposition is not necessarily indicative of strong bias. This needs to be shown, and argued for in a particular case.

These and other studies bearing on human biases and heuristics are quite directly concerned with the aetiology of belief. A-reasoning may lead us to see biases as or present in some domains of controversial views and less in others. A-type reasons are available to rebut claims on behalf of B-type reasons when aetiological challenges are mountable on their basis.[11] Well-founded aetiological challenges to ill-founded beliefs are one's based upon objective markers, including one's reliance upon counter-inductive reasoning (violation of inductive norms), and the "mirroring" of known personal or group biases.[12]

Still, the Triangulated model supports what Justin Barrett terms "a stance of explanatory non-exclusivity" on the part of CSR researchers and others studying religion (2007, 769).[13] This

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is primarily a methodological stance and does not preclude the study of particular hypotheses, nor the development of broader theories which may weigh in on matters of religious and naturalistic metaphysics and epistemology. It establishes formal conditions for well-motivated aetiological challenges, but such challenges when properly qualified target particular agents or groups, and their bearing on religious and theological belief more generally is quite indirect. On the other hand, A-reasoning militates against the equally over-generalized claim that naturalistic explanations (NERBS) can never raise serious new challenges to supernaturally or theologically-cast explanations. Explanation and evidence seem to be mutually-implying concepts: an unevidenced explanation is hardly an explanation at all. So, putting A-reasoning and B-reasoning into conversation promises to lead to better understanding of the explanatory ambitions of theologies.

3.3.3 Philosophy and the A/C Relationship

Philosophy is closely associated with C-reasoning, since the tools-or-trade in philosophy and in philosophical theology are arguments. A-reasoning by contrast starts from empirically informed study of the origins and aetiology of belief. It concerns especially what inductive evidence there is for etiological symmetries and asymmetries across human populations. A-reasoning's focus is firstly descriptive, and also allows for seeking well-supported explanations, taking that term broadly. Human sciences which study religion study its proximate causes and many functions in human lives. CSR studies the aetiology of belief more explicitly than the other special sciences, and much of this research program is at the level of evolutionary selection and transmission of religious ideas. Methodological agnosticism calls for many CSR researchers as it does for other sciences which study religion. The evolutionary selection of religious ideas is clearly intertwined

with the evolution of group cooperation, and the data of CSR which researchers collect retains a neutrality: neither directly bunks nor debunks religious ideas. Arguments for supernaturalism or naturalism, realism or fictionalism, etc., might be based upon performed psychological studies, but these are interpretations (explanatory *arguments him*) which need to be argued for.

The hypotheses which researchers in CSR investigate often provoke reflection and challenge assumptions about religious ideas held by the most skeptical and most credulous. CSR is not all about distant evolutionary perspectives; many factors benefitting the growth of religious ideas are social-cognitive. A-reasoning as the study of the aetiology of belief includes the uptake of belief in testimonial faith traditions, and difference in religious orientation, fundamentalist orientation, which psychologists attempt to make comparatively valid. It studies religious education, and whether and how religious contrariety in testimonial faith traditions is likely to arise on the basis of aetiologically symmetrical processes (modes or strategies of belief-uptake).

A-reasoning is driven by the force of patterns, and inductive norms. Methodologically, neither theologians nor philosophers nor scientists should exempt the domain of religion from influenced by general personal and social biases. Methodologically, this would be to discount any substantial force to A-evidence from the outset. Morally, epistemologically, and metaphysically this is an expression of a kind of absolutism, and by such an assumption people dis-enable themselves from recognizing social dynamics including belief polarization, and related issues of doxastic responsibility including hermeneutic and testimonial injustice.

Part of what doxastic state pluralists would need to consider if they allow for aetiological challenges based upon scientific findings at the broadly human level, is when it may stop making philosophical sense to attribute *belief* to an agent, in contrast to some other pro-attitude. For

example, Neil van Leeuwen's article "Do Religious 'Beliefs' Respond to Evidence?" (2017) and "Religious Credence is not Factual Belief" (2014) argue that "psychology and epistemology should posit distinct cognitive attitudes of religious credence and factual belief, which have different etiologies and different cognitive and behavioral effects": "[F]actual beliefs (i) are practical setting independent, (ii) cognitively govern other attitudes, and (iii) are evidentially vulnerable. By way of contrast, religious credences (a) have perceived normative orientation, (b) are susceptible to free elaboration, and (c) are vulnerable to special authority."[14] As Leeuwen points out, illusory self-attributions of belief, which are certainly possible, are harder to investigate when philosophy and cognitive science both tend to assume that belief "is a single cognitive attitude type and that variation in behavioral effects of different beliefs is due to variation in contents" (706).

So Leeuwen's A-reasoning approach in defense of doxastic state pluralism is both similar to and yet widely divergent from Buchak and Jackson's.[15] While Leeuwen and the B-C dualists agree we need to reject reductionism and eliminative views to embrace a sort of doxastic state pluralism,[16] their differences invite discussion: A-reasoners and B-reasoners can learn from one another while studying much the same subject matter.[17] Philosophers of religion need to carefully study such differences, and the Triangle would invite them to, rather than assuming the one of the other holds the only plausible approach to these doxastic states or attitudes.[18]

A-reasoning is naturally connected with the study of human cognition. We describe it not as an attitude-type, but as a mode of acquiring and processing evidence or certain sorts. This process of A-reasoning is quintessentially inductive: study of the aetiology of belief, of safety, etc., can go only so far with philosophical or imaginative thought experiments. To ground in it must be evidenced through inductive patterns apparent or discoverable in pertinent evidence.

Since inductive reasoning is broken down in textbooks into cause-effect reasoning, generalization, and analogical reasoning, it may behoove us to consider what A-reasoning indicates with respect to each of these three.

Of course, A-reasoning inherits some of the same faults and limitations of inductive inferences.[19] But without A-reasoning we could not have Anthropology and related "human" sciences. Psychologists who study human ideas and ideologies, and phenomena like belief polarization are concerned not just with aetiological *symmetries and asymmetries* across human populations, but also with people's (folk) attributions: with how they employ generalizations and analogies/disanalogies, when attributing character traits (virtues/vices, bias) and moral and epistemic goods (religious value, truth, knowledge, rationality) to themselves in contrast to group outsiders.

A-reasoning is not necessarily indicative of the evolutionary debunking of religious or supernatural beliefs, though that is one connection. But theists make arguments from evolution, CSR, and genealogy to support rather than undercut their beliefs. So, there is no need to take A-reasons as wholly skeptical by nature, any more than to take B-reasons as always and only supporting belief. But one natural connection for A-reasons, if they are allowed their natural function of sometimes serious etiological challenges, is to what Sean Larson (2020) and other contributors to a recent symposium on the current state of theology, term *reckoning:* "Theological reckoning highlights and sometimes accounts for what has gone wrong in theological traditions. It can be a critical moment in a larger process of refinement or application, or it can be done on its own, as a way of calling theological discourses to account for harmful assumptions or effects."[20]

In summary, as shown in our final Table [Table 4 below], these foregoing elaborations of the sides of the Triangulated model were aimed to show how theologians, philosophers, and researchers across the human sciences are each provided an independent but respected base in philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary research. Each has a kind of, if not teaching 'magisteria,' then a "safe base" in a game-like structure. Not only the reasons why each should respect the other's reserved seat as the (not-so-round) table, but their disciplinary intersections may raise research questions that invite and even necessitate interdisciplinary research to inquire into, or to satisfactorily answer. This is how a multi-disciplinary discourse would be not only be most fairly structured, but also promotive of interdisciplinary research and collegial interactions. By highlighting the vibrancy of the three sides qua interdisciplinary intersections, the extreme or reductive forms of A, B, and C-reasoning can be better be recognized as the roadblocks to inquiry which they are.
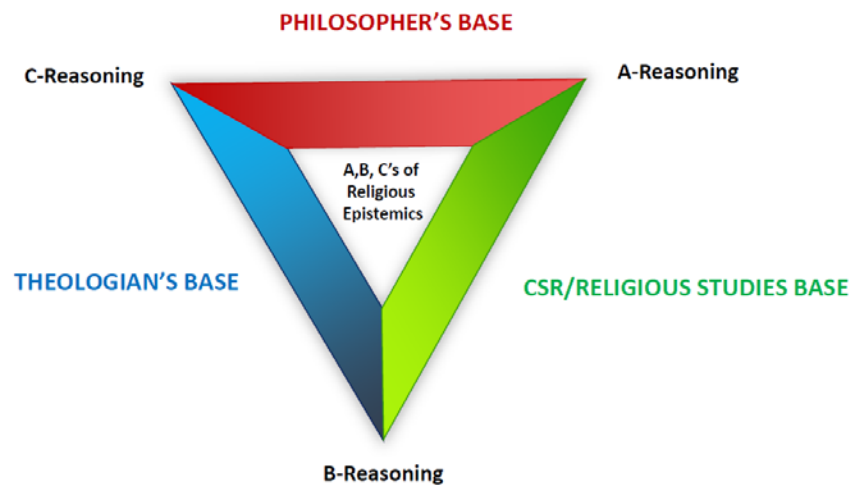

Table 4: The three sides of the Triangulated Model of philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary research, providing for mutual inclusion and balance of form and content .

4. Wittgenstein and Philosophical Investigations of Religious Belief

We have now given enough substance to the Triangulated model that readers can see whether they agree that it promotes balanced approaches in philosophy of religion. But what reasons are there for thinking that Wittgenstein's philosophical methods would support the triangulated model, and lead him to prefer it over the B-C dualist proposal? Part of the question here is just whether Wittgenstein would be amenable to much of the work in contemporary cognitive science of religion, and I will argue that he would. But I will also give further attention on connections between risky beliefs and the suspension or violation of inductive norms.

Wittgenstein would have been familiar with David Hume's and William James' ideas for a science of religion, but his reflections on faith and empirical reason remain focused on language, language communities, and the word/world relationships they exhibit. They remain focused not just on use within the community, but on tensions between language – using communities, and between grammatical and symptomatic (inductive norm-employing) language. Wittgenstein was quite familiar with Soren Kierkegaard as well, and many of his reflections on faith focus not just on tensions but even instances of apparent paradox. But only some of these reflections bear upon his Christian understanding of faith specifically. Wittgenstein's account of faith apparently left him critical of the value of natural theology and of atheistical argumentation as well. It is not just O'Hara's evidentialism about Biblical teachings which he was critical of, but likely systematic theology.

These tendencies in his thought might initially be thought to lead him to prefer B-C dualism over the Triangulated model, since our model gives greater place to interdisciplinary debate and dialogue, whereas Wittgenstein is often characterized by the idea of minimizing conflict by making a "different place" for those beliefs, whether general like monotheism, or

religion-specific. But the conflation is as apparent on the literal-historical side as on the skeptical side. The Triangulated model I contend it better able to resist the reduction of complex religious contrariety to contradictory propositions.[21] So we started by saying it is odd that there are potentially important similarities between analytic Christian philosophy and Continental thought influenced by Wittgenstein, which the analytic/Continental divide in styles might lead us to miss. But now I want to say that there are further reasons for philosophers of religion --hyphenated or not -- to understand these commonalities in a way which invites the checks and balances of the Triangulated model.

Even if they may find fault in both the Triangulated model and B-C dualism, Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion I want to argue should be more inclined to the former, and then suggest amendments from there. The application of B-C dualism to the epistemology of religious belief still strikes me as an apologetic strategy utilizing analytic philosophical methods. I suggest that if Wittgenstein thought of O'Hara's evidentialist apologetics as doing more harm than good to Christian faith, he might think the same about many contemporary apologetic strategies, internalist and externalist, which aim to defend religion-specific knowledge. This is of course speculation, but it was at any rate during my reading of Wittgenstein's reflections on religious language that a Triangulated model came to mind. So, while I may struggle to explain why I think he would prefer it over B-C dualism, and the question at least invites discussion. A good deal of CSR research involves religious ideas and language use, and I suspect that Wittgenstein would find research in this field fascinating and relevant to his own thinking, so long as this research is not one-sidedly partisan to either religious or skeptical rationalism.

Reflection on our language practices involves its aetiology and its functions, and this is A-taken evidence in a fairly direct sense. When we consider Wittgenstein's key distinction

between treating evidence as symptomatic or as criterial, we should see it not merely as a logical partition. We should see it as opening up A-reasoning as pertinent to understanding religious ideas, and as fitting its object of study (even while he took C-reasoning as an ill-fitting way to treat religious ideas).

Moreover, the Triangulated model opens up a range of concerns about evidentially grounded or ungrounded belief, truth, and meaning, rather than shutting down comparison by suggesting isolated language games, or 'quietist' philosophy of religion. Some of his contemporaries held Wittgenstein's account to be quietist, and Russell's harsh statements about his later philosophy respond almost in kind to the "infinite harm" comment attributed to Wittgenstein. But Thomas Carroll, Cora Diamond, and Gorazd Andrejč are among those who provide reasons to hold that Wittgenstein should not be read as assuming or defending either the idea of science and religion as hermeneutically sealed-off.

Carroll (2014, 148) argues that "while 'language-game' [*Sprachspiel*] and 'form of life' [*Lebensform*] are certainly important expressions in Wittgenstein's philosophy, they have taken on a life of their own beyond Wittgenstein's corpus." Philosophers of religion should not read Wittgenstein as isolating religious language from public reason. Instead, "Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion could question temptations to protect religious phenomena from criticism." If linguistic practices were self-contained in a sense making them immune from criticism or revision, then rules once admitted would never admit revisitation. For in that case there could be no *recognition of means* (symptoms) to discover it, and expectations alone would determine what is allowed to be examined.

Wittgenstein held there to be enough objectivity to the study of language-use to sometimes show errors, idiosyncrasies, self-contradictions, unacknowledged paradoxes, and self-

deceptions. Inductive normativity, while foreign to Wittgensteinian fideism, was never something he simply banished from religious thinking or from philosophical study of the grammar of assent. Instead it is part of a dialectic, where insider and outsider may each gain perspective on religious reasons or grounds. So, Wittgenstein in his *Lectures on Religious Belief* toggles back and forth from inductive norm-violating assent, to how things look to one who is not committed to the faith-based commitments of the other.

There are also passages where, far from being quietist, Wittgenstein suggests a project of comprehensive or at least wider understanding, and a 'battle against bewitchment' that spans some of the differences between scientific and religious thinking. In a seminal note (OC §438), Wittgenstein writes that, "Nothing is commoner than for the meaning of an expression to oscillate, for a phenomenon to be regarded sometimes as a symptom, sometimes as a criterion, of a state of affairs. And mostly in such a case the shift of meaning is not noted." Philosophy plays a definite role in noticing, drawing attention to, and extending our understanding of such tensions and shifts.

These two "antithetical terms" ("criterial" and "symptom") (*Zettel,* p. 25) must be allowed to function mutual comparison and contrast: The complete dominance of one would just be blindness to the other. Not to recognize tensions and shifts is to be involved in self-deception, meaning that one's epistemic circumstance and resources could be improved. Again, in *PI* §142*, in a passage Lycan (1971) takes as especially important, Wittgenstein writes that "if rule became exception and exception rule; or if both became ... phenomena of roughly equal frequency, this would make our normal language-games lose their point." (Philosophical Investigations). They will miss the "impropriety" of their speech. Thus, A-B and A-C relations on the Triangulated model fits well with some of the characteristics which Lycan points out in Wittgenstein's

contrast: "The difference is between 'what we have (experimentally) found to be evidence for Y' (symptom) and 'what we have (in ostensive definition) learned to call evidence for Y' (criterion)."[22]

A radical kind of meaning holism is suggested by the claim that we accept or learn not just atomistic facts or propositions, but Wittgenstein's use of "language game" immediately suggests a that it is a "whole system" (OC §141) or "nest of propositions" (§225) one comes to accept, even though it be acquired bit-by-bit (§144). But such an interpretation of Wittgenstein as radical meaning holist or as language games as isolated and beyond criticism would be unsound. His position has strong elements of coherentism in contrast to empiricist and rationalist foundationalism, but he often seems to be suggesting something much more like the core-belt-auxiliary structure that Lakatos would later develop. For he often uses a different, and I think more apt metaphor than "hinge, "grammar," or "game": "The river-bed of thoughts may shift.... [W]hat men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they found unreasonable. And vice versa ... (*OC* §97, §324). A riverbed is far more stable and unyielding than movement of waters on that bed. Yet this Wittgenstein metaphor of river waters and riverbed, while it does take bedrock assumptions to be held fast only in the criteria way, allows and points out that a riverbed does tend to shift over time.[23]

For Wittgenstein, the study of language and conceptual "idealizations" is illuminating because notions of meaning and truth can surround the workings of language "with a haze which makes clear vision impossible" (*PI I,* §5-6). Genealogical methods along with other methods for studying language and its application are needed to disperse the fog.[24] Queloz (2021) argues explicitly that in the context of domains of controversial views, "genealogy is one form that Wittgensteinian *übersichtliche Darstellung* may take. This allows the method to offer us

explanation without reduction and to help us understand what led our ideas to shed the traces of their practical origins."[25] Translated variously as clear vision or surveyable representation, *übersichtliche Darstellung* is associated with a kind of map-making which allows us to see and represent linguistic and conceptual "connections."

Far from being normatively inert, what Queloz terms "pragmatic genealogy" can affect the space of reasons, guiding attempts to improve our conceptual repertoire by helping us determine whether and when our ideas are worth having."[26] They yield "a holistic understanding of concepts as pragmatically situated by relating them to contingent facts about concept-users and their circumstances. It thereby exploits the Wittgensteinian insight that careful scrutiny of a concept alone is not going to tell us everything worth knowing about it, and that we must look beyond the concept to the contingent facts that explain its formation and give it its point. As Wittgenstein puts it, 'a natural foundation for the way [a] concept is formed is the complex nature and the variety of human contingencies" (*Zettel*, §439; Queloz, 29).

Wittgenstein found philosophical activity to engage "the correspondence between concepts and very general facts of nature. (Such facts as mostly do not strike us because of their generality.) But our interest is not thereby thrown back on to these possible causes of concept formation; we are not doing natural science; nor yet natural history—since we can also invent fictitious natural history for our purposes. (*PI* II, §365).[27] These "very general facts of nature" or "of daily experience" are clearly of importance to Wittgenstein's approach. "What we have to mention in order to explain the significance, I mean the importance, of a concept, are often extremely general facts of nature: such facts as are hardly ever mentioned because of their great generality" (*PI* II, §142). Wittgenstein's repeated emphasis on the value of the general as a balance to particularity or difference, and as a means of gaining perspective on language and

language use, I conclude, clearly makes his approach more amenable to the Triangulated model than to any approach which still tends to dismiss such general facts. This I have argued is a key flaw both of the B-C dualist's proposal, and of many other research programs which aim to address the epistemology of religious belief and unbelief.

5. Conclusion: Affirming Philosophy of Religion as Multi-Disciplinary Research

Our main issue has not just been to describe the different characteristics of A, B and C reasoning, but also to argue for the advantages of philosophy of religion as multi-disciplinary research. The ABC's model of epistemics is a model which holds across domains of controversial views. But it has especial import, we have argued, to philosophy of religion. Each of the three types of reasoning has enough legitimate connection with philosophy of religion that its 'champions' ought to be granted a reserved seat at the table. The ABC's of religious epistemics creates a safe base for religious phenomenological and theological studies, while also making it easier to distinguish religious apologetics from religious and secular philosophy of religion.

On the Triangle, for example, we are better able to discuss what weight should be accorded to arguments from experience, or from testimonial trust. Similarly, the weight to be accorded to explanations of religious cognition stemming from human science such as biological, psychological and sociological, is best-debated only *after* recognition of It can come only *after* acknowledging the need to balance these, in order to avoid the 'sins' of one-sided philosophies and theologies, and "sins committed through the misuse of metaphorical expression" in one domain or another, from math to metaphysics.[28]

When aetiological similarities or "patterns" are either overgeneralized *or* ignored, they lead to 'sins' such as cultural chauvinism in the study of religion. But when based on strong evidence,

symmetry-of-generation and genealogical reconstructions of concept and their use aid us in redressing various 'sins' of which comparative philosophy is often accused. Indeed, A-reasoning's relevance is a methodological norm, an assumption in place unless we have a philosophically satisfactory account for why one group, one language game, way of life, domain etc. is exempt from its reach.

The Triangulated model preserves what is correct in the B-C dualist's rejection of a narrow religious or skeptical evidentialism, but goes beyond it in order to improve the prospects for constructive dialogue across theology, the human sciences, and philosophy. It does so by sustaining a view of philosophy of religion as comparative and inter-disciplinary inquiry, which allows it to be adequately differentiated from religious apologetics. It does so by allowing that trait-dependent B-reasoning, including risky counter-inductive strategies of problem-solving, may sometimes be a direct object of psychological study in respect to religious ideas, just as it can be in other domains of controversial views.[29] It does so by allowing that while this aetiological information gives us insights on our belief forming habits, and on our reliability which we may not otherwise give serious consideration, this information basically remains neutral to the theological, a theological, or other arguments which it may be appealed to as support. So, the force of such studies cannot be forgot by theologians any more than the validity of phenomenological studies and ethnographies can be forgot by experimental social psychologists, or human psychological needs can be forgot on the ideal theories of evidentialist philosophers.

That C-reasoning may be said to 'take account' of B and A reasoning does not mean they are *reducible* to C-reasoning. 'You can always just add another premise,' one might say. All reasons may be said to funnel into C-evidence, even if they source in people's personal or communal

experiences, or in their recognition of "peer disagreement" (Feldman). This is because higher order evidence is still evidence, as the internalist likes to say. But the point of the Triangle is that there are proponents of A-reasoning and B-reasoning who take theirs are encompassing all. The relationship to the 'space of reasons' is different than it is for C-reasoning. It is philosophically troubling if we cannot balance these ways of "taking" evidence or offering an explanatory understanding, but rather once again reduce the other two to one's preferred way. The Triangle thus suggest that give each its space – give it a default independence from the other two.

The main goal in the paper has thus been methodological: B-reasoning's significance to normative philosophical projects (including both epistemic assessment and the ethics of belief) should be recognized, as B-C dualists insist; but that recognition should come in a manner which is able at the same time to correct for the pronounced tendency of the religious to treat their own B-reasoning as uniquely truth and knowledge-conveying, while at the same time neglecting perspective that can be gained on these self or group exceptions from comparative philosophical methods, pan-human bias studies, psychology of religion, and CSR research.

Wittgenstein's prescriptive definition of philosophy as a "battle against bewitchment of intelligence by means of language" (*PI* §109) is ill-fought if religious language is not critically investigated by religious philosophers due to their own testimonial tradition's authority being treated as absolutely unique in its epistemizing qualities. A-evidence and comparative philosophy of religious language, being firmly rooted in inductive normativity, remain epistemically significant by establishing a higher bar for progress in the struggle against bewitchment of intelligence by means of language.[30]

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    Blackwell Publishers. http://www.nlx.com/collections/121

    https://www.informationphilosopher.com/tractatus/Collected_Works.pdf

Notes

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[1] See Axtell 2021a and papers by Buchak (2014; 2017a; 2017b) and Jackson (2019; 2020).
CSR researchers have employed the hypothesis that "minimally counter-intuitive ideas" are
psychologically appealing and often successfully transmitted, and in the concluding chapter of
Problems of Religious Luck (2019; PRL) I developed a proposal for an empirical research
program at the intersections of the appeal of counter-intuitive ideas, and the human penchant
for inductively risky (counter-inductive) thinking in regard especially to inherited beliefs and
worldview beliefs.

[2] Aetiological symmetries are proximate and naturalistically salient factors in belief formation or in strategies of inquiry, such as early childhood education, identity formation, and uptake of testimony or other sources of belief. Here again, the concept of A-reasoning like that of B and C-reasoning, is domain general, hold across everyday beliefs, but also across domains of controversial views. So, the Triangulated model developed here is as important for understanding the sources political, moral, and broadly philosophical contrariety and for the "epistemics" of these domains, as for religious contrariety, and religious epistemics. The Triangulated model is neutral in all these respects, but what is not neutral would be to exempt one of these domains without a philosophically satisfying account of this exception.

[3] Kitcher's (2015) Terri Lectures discuss what he terms a *symmetry - of - generation thesis* in respect to belief-uptake in testimonial faith traditions. Aetiological symmetry holds wherever the proximate grounds behind beliefs are of the same general type. I develop how theological contrariety arises on the basis of aetiologically symmetrical processes in testimonial faith traditions, and use this to help explain the prevalence of exclusivist attitudes in the Abrahamic religions. This has bearing on how one can move from *de jure* aetiological challenges to potentially stronger *de facto* challenges (see Axtell 2019, Chapter 6).

[4] Marbaniang 2010 np, quoting Goldman1978, 509. Marbaniang continues, "As such, it would be appropriate to use the term 'epistemics of religious fundamentalism' to refer to that branch of philosophical enquiry that deals with active beliefs that fundamentalists hold to be justified and true, and that subjectively and/or intrasocially (within a particular community) appear to justify fundamentalist behaviors." So individual epistemology, social/collective epistemology, human psychology and the sciences which study religion are *all* acknowledged

by the term religious epistemics, as understood here. Religious and non-religious perspectives are both acknowledged.

[5] There may also be overlap with "epistemology of theology" as Abraham and Aquino use that term, since they explicitly say in their *Handbook of Epistemology of Theology* (2018, 1) that "no uniform epistemological or theological approaches are synonymous with the epistemology of theology," and also acknowledge the relevance of "generic considerations that cut across subject matter (e.g. perception; memory; and inference)." However, while it encourages fruitful traffic across theology and philosophy, that particular collection seems heavily given to Christian theological thought and this may skew some of its treatment of "history," when the more generic term affording an adequately comparative approach might be "sacred narrative" or "scriptural narrative." "Epistemology of theologies" would be better, being a philosophical *counterpart* to a theology of religions, while also *counterpoint* to relativist-cum-absolutist sounding "Christian epistemology," "Islamic epistemology," etc., or the still uglier "religious epistemology of religious belief." I am supportive rather than critical of "hyphenated" philosophers and philosophies [See also Axtell 2021a and b] . But these latter terms and others like them threaten to take "epistemology" and "philosophy" honorifically, where they are essentially just euphemistic for apologetics, as most everyone would concede that "Christian science" and "creation science" are.

[6] What counts as a disagreement is itself a contested question, and re-describing this contrariety with the negatively-valued term "disagreement" is, oddly enough, characteristic of what evidentialism and religious enthusiasm have in common. See Axtell 2021 for fuller development.

[7] "Let us introduce two antithetical terms in order to avoid certain elementary confusions: To the question 'How do you know that so-and-so is the case?', we sometimes answer by giving 'criteria' and sometimes by giving 'symptoms'." (*Zettel* p. 25 in CWW). I will often utilize the electronic *Collected Works* (CWW) for reference coordination, and fullest citations are available there. But compare other translations.

[8] See also A. Mogensen (2017), to whom (with apologies) I elsewhere incorrectly attributed this quote.

[9] My critique of the B-C dualists extends recent work explaining and responding to the attempt of post-liberals, including "Right-Wittgensteinians," to justify and 'normalize' polarized and polemical religious apologetics. This is something I argue philosophers and theologians should strongly oppose. Leaving everything as it is may be true of descriptive or explanatory science, but not of philosophy. Philosophy performs normative and critical functions, and philosophers and theologians both utilize various sorts of evidence in making arguments. But I fully grant that combating fundamentalism and instilling an evidentialist account are two quite different things. I only contend that the permissivism which Jackson utilizes B-C dualism to support needs to be cast in a risk-aware, and *risk-limited* form, and that recognition of the potential seriousness of aetiological challenges is necessary for this. The Triangulated model facilitates a re-balancing of form and content such that each can be given its due in conversations between when theologians, philosophers, and religious studies scholars.

[10] Ambiguity makes it difficult to adjudicate between what James would call "the religious hypothesis" and the "naturalistic hypothesis." While these reconstructions are rationalistic, we can still view the bringing of them into C-reasoning is a very positive event, and certainly James does not mean that faith is being construed as hypothesis. It just makes ground for

philosophers and theologians to develop research programs, and to recognize when they are "live" and going projects or degenerate ones. But James would say that the various, more specific religious "overbeliefs" a person holds have plural, temperamentally overdetermined sources; they do not stem *from* the hard core, but just need to be maintained as consistent with it. Our philosophical and religious overbeliefs help us "build out" the core idea we assent to into a fuller worldview, and into *praxis.* Logical underdetermination often leads to C-reasoning being displaced in favor of B-reasoning. Robert McKim's distinction between simple, rich, and extremely rich evidential ambiguity is relevant to this, since it shows when and where B-reasoning is utilized more than C-reasoning.

[11] Evidence of aetiological symmetries and of bias-mirroring use of B-reasoning contributes to aetiological challenges which undercut certain claims. A-type reasons are most forceful when religious agents engage in a) rhetorical as opposed to robust vice charging, b) radically asymmetrical trait-ascriptions to group insiders and outsiders, c) the mirroring of known social biases, or d) other measurable aspects of counter-inductive thinking.

[12] Ill-founded belief is challenged from the side of cognitive and social psychology by established markers of cognitive or moral dissonance, indoctrination anxiety, confabulatory explanation, or personal or social bias more generally. Thus, aetiological symmetry as a sober conclusion from evidence bumps up against the explanatory asymmetries of religious enthusiasts, or fundamentalists. This tension should make the attributional activities of the latter group a keener interest for researchers, or so I propose in PRL, Chapter 6.

[13] See also Biabanaki (2020) for an argument supporting Barrett's claim. CSR researchers differ somewhat on these issues, but most abide by the general idea that scientific studies are neutral to metaphysical debates, or at least that methodological neutrality demands a certain

separation of conclusions. There is a broader issue of explanatory monism vs pluralism that goes far beyond concerns with religion, specifically. Axtell 2019 Chapter 6 develops these points much more fully.

[14] Leeuwen (2014, 699). Leeuwen's contrast of "belief" and (religious) "credence" is markedly in contrast with the B-C dualists, whose account of the stability of faith implies a negative answer to Leeuwen's question, but who also take B-taken evidence to result in full-blown belief. Leeuwen's division has much surface agreement with Buchak's. and both endorse what Carter, Jarvis, and Rubin (2016) refer to as "doxastic state pluralism." But for Leeuwen, religious 'credences' as something closer to "avowals," do not *require* a doxastic interpretation, and show marks that sometimes disqualify it as belief. When that is the case the content is pushed from 'believing that' (qua theologically orthodox) to what is better described as 'believing in.' This seems like a plausible interpretation of B-taken evidence in contrast to C-taken evidence, but the B-C dualists import a propositional faith focus when they apply their dualism and insist on B-taken evidence as (often) rational grounds for agents to in assent to particular propositions including "historical" ones.

[15] The comparative validity of the invoked model of faith becomes an issue, as it seems to confuse faith's riskiness just with counter-inductive (yet full-blooded) *belief.* The most comparatively valid or generic conception of faith is arguably one which *does* involve an abiding active commitment, but which does *not* necessarily involve strong doctrinal components (let alone doctrinal beliefs of a "historical" nature. See Howard-Synder 2016, and Howard-Snyder, Daniel and McKaughan (2020a and 2020b and 2020c), especially in critique of Buchak's account of faith as lacking adequate breadth and thus comparative value.

[16] A qualification is in order. Some recent papers by Jackson suggest she now endorses a kind of belief-first reductionism. Unless I am missing something, this would be inconsistent with the "dualist" or "pluralist" description of her views. So, I am setting those papers aside and just treating those which articulate B-C dualism even if this was just an early formulation of her views

[17] For development see Axtell 2019, chapter 5: "The Pattern Stops Here?" Along with topics such as contingency anxiety, indoctrination anxiety or their absence which psychology sometimes studies across domains of controversial views, the tensions between evidentially underdetermined propositions and belief-avowals or self-ascriptions needs closer, and empirically-informed study by religious and non-religious philosophers alike. This overlaps with concerns that narrative testimony has characteristics which militate against its reduction to ordinary testimony. But the more general point for our present discussion is that epistemologists have too often taken agents self-ascriptions of beliefs as a given, and attempted only to evaluate the epistemic the mix standing of particular beliefs. Doxastic state pluralism challenges this assumption, as well and should: an agent's state and not just the standing can be studied, but the delineation categorization of doxastic and sub- doxastic states is conducted largely scientifically. A-reasoning brings these interests together; I elsewhere define their intersection as the study of SAST Effects, or *State and Standing Tension Effects*:

  (SAST) The effects (reported or indicated) of unresolved tension in an agent's thought process brought on by a combination of:

    a) the underdetermination of historical evidence for a justification of faith, and

    b) the overdetermination by multiple trait-dependent factors for taking purported special revelation to supply well-grounded historical /empirical beliefs.

[18] Of course, everything can be said to dump into C-evidence eventually. But then, the other two can make a similar claim. So, we can set that further notion of dominance by one of the three aside. But here are some further bullet-pointed thoughts about A-taken evidence:

- The A/C relationship directly informs the project of religious epistemics; it informs the assessment both of the rationality and standing of agents' beliefs, not just in the religious domain, but in domains of controversial views more generally.

- A-evidence bearing upon religious language and its functions, whether acknowledged by the agent or not, contributes to and the C evidence that agent has or has available. But in doing so it bears upon religious belief broadly, rather than on particular faith-based commitments.

- A-evidence, as more externalist than an agent's self-described B evidence, draws upon CSR on its scientific side, and upon social epistemology and study of risk, luck, safety, sensitivity, etc. on its complementary philosophic side.

- If the agent takes B reasons as epistemically sufficient when they are not, the agent may be enkratic; if they reject the need for epistemic justification for their religious beliefs then their doxastic strategy is weakly or strongly fideistic.

- The A/C relationship directly informs the project of religious epistemics, and assessment both of the states and standings of agents not just in the religious domain, but in domains of controversial views more generally.

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Finally, A-reasoning is closely tied with inductive reasoning because:

- causal inference is inductive inference, and externalist concerns about abilities and dispositions, safety, sensitivity, truth-tracking, aptness, etc. are mainly concerns about the truth-linked *causal aetiology* of belief in actual agents. Without A-reasoning, we couldn't have the 'Arrow of Causation'; nor would the drawing of generalizations or the use of analogy/disanalogy be constrained by empirical evidence.

- Generalizations and applied generalizations are inductive, and the grounds we have for attributing moral and intellectual character-traits to ourselves and others depend upon recognition of generalizations and predictions based upon them. Without A-reasoning we couldn't have grounds for Attribution of traits to ourselves or others.

[19] We might want to distinguish, as Attribution theory does, between theory grounded in psychology and human sciences (the results of science), and 'folk' trait-attribution as a focus of study in psychology and the human sciences. A-reasoning is inductive and scientific because it studies valid generalizations about human psychographics, and how, in acquired beliefs, people draw more and less sound generalizations about other people's moral and intellectual character-traits, and, make more and less sound predictions about others' motives and actions. When unsound, the folk attribute traits to insiders and outsiders on a counter-inductive basis, where patterns and symmetries are ignored or neglected, and unprincipled asymmetric trait-ascriptions are substituted in ways which suggest that personal or social bias, rather than shared, objective evidence, is a best explainer.

[20] Larson, 2020, np.

[21] "Christianity is not based on a historical truth, but presents us with a (historical) narrative & says: now believe! But not, believe this report with the belief that is appropriate to historical report,—but rather: believe, through thick & thin & you can do this only as an outcome of a life. *Here you have a narrative*, *don't take the same attitude to it as you take other historical narratives*! Make a *quite different* place in your life for it. --There is no *paradox* about that!" …."Queer as it sounds: the historical accounts of the Gospels might, in the historical sense, be demonstrably false, & yet belief would lose nothing through this: but not because it has to do with 'universal truths of reason'! rather, because historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by a human being believingly (i.e. lovingly): That is the certainty of this "taking-for-true", nothing else." (CV 37-38; WCW editors citation MS 120 83 c: 8-9.12.1937).

[22] Lycan 1971, 110. Lycan goes on criticize several philosophers and their versions of a criterial conception of truth and knowledge.

[23] In Lakatosian terms, by decision the 'hard core' of one's research programme is comparatively more stable than the person's commitment to either auxiliary assumptions or the more specific claims of the 'protective belt.' Yet even a 'hard core' may change somewhat over time, and some programs will be abandoned if they are no longer live options to those who once adhered to them. But the bed isn't so thin as to be a capturable in a single-proposition, as James tries to do with the "religious hypothesis" and its counter-point, the "naturalistic hypothesis." While James would easily accept that this effort is merely a rational reconstruction, for the purpose of dialogue, of beliefs accepted on other than probative reasoning, Wittgenstein's use of "language game" as previously mentioned, suggests a that it is a "whole system" (OC §141) or "nest of propositions" (§225). While both were holistic

thinkers, this special emphasis by Wittgenstein led him to be perhaps less concerned about ongoing revisions among what James termed religious "overbeliefs," or direct responses to a materialist challenge to supernaturalism. But at the same time Wittgenstein seems *more* concerned with probing himself over whether fideistic faith's "irritation to the intellect" can be assuaged in another way than conflating the "certainty" of faith with having compelling grounds, which presumably is a form of bewitchment by means of language. But it is not a matter of being in good religious faith meaning to be in bad philosophical faith, as this might suggest. The confusion is already bad religious faith to begin with, since it both asserts and denies epistemic/alethic risk at the same time and in the same respect.

[24] Kusch and McKenna (2018, 598) argue that "Wittgenstein is an ally [of genealogical methods,] since he opposes conceptual analysis in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, studies the function of concepts, and introduces the category of family-resemblance concepts." Genealogical methods can be a form of *critique*. See also Koopman (2011) on Foucault and Dewey's genealogical methods. Still, while Wittgenstein insists on "taking account" of the context of language games, he does not think they should be reductively "explained" by philosophers (a philosopher's disease) through focus on a small set of potentially one-sided examples (PI §593).

[25] Queloz 2021, p. 16, note 32. See also Baker and Hacker (2009) and Savickey (2014) on this important theme in Wittgenstein. Queloz examines the normative significance of genealogical accounts, what in particular he terms "pragmatic genealogies." He develops "a systematic account of pragmatic genealogies as dynamic models serving to reverse-engineer the points of ideas in relation not only to near-universal human needs, but also to socio-historically situated needs." Back cover.

[26] Queloz, 2021, back cover

[27] Queloz develops Wittgenstein's genealogical methods together with a broader critique of people's pronounced tendencies (found especially in theology and philosophy), "to dehistoricize and denaturalize what they respect" (102). But genealogies are not strictly explanatory, and are shown to often be used for ameliorative purposes, and to exhibit vindicatory and not just debunking aspects. Sometimes – and perhaps at its best-- "genealogy is conceptual reverse-engineering in the service of ameliorative conceptual engineering" (194).

[28] CV p. 3. To recognize A-reasoning as epistemologically significant for the study of religious belief does not at all mean that a descriptive account of religious assent in any direct or general way 'debunks' B-reasoning, or undercuts the positive epistemic status of belief which religious believers self-ascribe. Rather, A-reasoning affirms the widespread use of pragmatic reasoning (will, emotion, values), and its reasonableness in most cases for the functions which religious identity and value bring for religious practitioners. But it does mean recognizing that agents differ in how fideistic conception of faith is, their attitude to reason, science, philosophy, etc. and that serious, non-overbroad aetiological challenges to the warrant or well-foundedness of belief are possible in the religious domain, just as in the philosophical, the moral, and the political domains. Neither pragmatic reasoning nor psychological description of agents and their varying conceptions of faith, nor CSR evidence bearing on pointing to affective origins, is 'belief-centered' or focused on propositional attitudes in the way that C-reasoning is. Apart from reductions of epistemology (or the ethics of belief) to proposition-focused internalism, their epistemological value is not in question, and B-reasoning and A-reasoning each affirm the importance of the other rather than negating it. See Axtell 2019 Chapters 3 & 5 for more on Testimonial Authority Assumption, describable in terms of ascent

up the "faith-ladder," and other aspects of James' William James thesis of psychological fideism.

[29] There are, of course, various strategies for a 'symmetry-breaking' response to the aetiological symmetries and generalizations which comparative studies draw upon. PRL examined these responses in relationship to specific religious apologetic strategies, internalist and externalist and so forth. My more recent papers begin with the need for an epistemology for domains of controversial views (political, moral, philosophical, and religious worldviews) as distinct from everyday beliefs, and with the normative concerns of "risk-aware" social epistemology, able to diagnose bias and to address growing concerns over belief polarization, echo chambers, radicalization or fundamentalist tendencies, etc.

[30] Pittard (2019) adopts a related methodological stance on which philosophy should avoid commitment to a rigorous epistemic impartiality which leads to disagreement-motivated religious skepticism, as well as to any account of disagreement or testimony which treats as unproblematic the privileging of one' first-personal perspective.