HOW TO HANG A DOOR: PICKING HINGES FOR QUASI-FIDEISM

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Abstract. In the epistemology of the late Wittgenstein, a central place is given to the notion of the hinge: an arational commitment that provides a foundation of some sort for the rest of our beliefs. Quasi-fideism is an approach to the epistemology of religion that argues that religious belief is on an epistemic par with other sorts of belief inasmuch as religious and non-religious beliefs all rely on hinges. I consider in this paper what it takes to find the appropriate hinge for a quasi-fideist approach to the epistemology of religion. After rejecting several plausible hinges, I argue that quasi-fideism is best thought of as a schematic approach to answering particular questions in epistemology of religion.

I. HANGING DOORS

If you want to hang a door so that it opens, closes, stays in the frame, and generally does what a door does, you need hinges. Otherwise, you don't really have a door, but a very fancy wall. And, without a hinge of the right sort or function, your door won't do what you want it to. So, if you want to hang a door well, you need a hinge that will let the door do what it ought. Hinge epistemology is an approach to understanding the epistemology in the later works of Wittgenstein, according to which our beliefs are in some way dependent on or "rotate around" fixed indubitable commitments called hinge commitments. Our beliefs rotate around these commitments in the same way that a door rotates on its fixed hinges. In this paper I explore what it takes to find a hinge that works for Wittgensteinian Quasi-Fideism, one approach to a hinge epistemology of religion. My overall aim is to show that it isn't clear what the appropriate hinge or hinges are for quasi-fideism, but that this shouldn't be seen as a problem for the viability of quasi-fideism as an approach to the epistemology of religion.

I will first describe hinge epistemology, with particular attention to the work of Duncan Pritchard.[1] I'll then show how this extends easily into quasi-fideist epistemology of religion, and note the advantages of the view. I'll then contend that there's some unclarity about an important detail of the view: it isn't obvious what content the (or a) religious hinge has. Without this, the view is incomplete. I will propose that we can determine at least a couple likely features of that hinge, and then use these features, as well as intuitions about religious belief, to figure out what that hinge is. Unfortunately, this process is likely to yield little in the way of conclusive results, as some of the necessary inputs are on rather tenuous grounds. What we are left with is quasi-fideism as a schema. However, this isn't a problem, inasmuch as the aim of quasi-fideism is to show that religious beliefs can be as rational as any others.

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1   I don't intend this to be an exercise in Wittgenstein or Newman exegesis, and I don't intend to argue that Pritchard and other quasi-fideists have the "correct" interpretation of Wittgenstein or Newman. I'm simply interested in exploring the prospects and features of quasi-fideism.
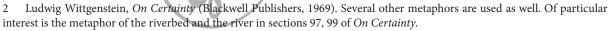
II. PRITCHARD'S HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

Quasi-fideism is a hinge epistemology of religion, so a natural way to understand it is to start with an account of hinge epistemology and then show how it extends to religious belief. The central contention of hinge epistemology is that epistemic rationality, including believing, knowing, and doubting, takes place with respect to and is grounded by optimally certain commitments. The name for the view comes from Wittgenstein's metaphorical description of these optimal certainties as hinges:

> 341. That is to say, the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

> 342. That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are in deed not doubted.

> 343. But it isn't that the situation is like this: We just can't investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put. [2]

These hinges on which rational activity is grounded are, in some way, exempt from doubt. Rational evaluation is not global but local, taking place with respect to hinge commitments. Genuinely doubting something requires that there be something more certain than that which is doubted to ground the doubt: "A doubt that doubted everything would not be a doubt."[3]

Exactly how hinge epistemology is supposed to work is a matter of some dispute. I'll focus on Duncan Pritchard's interpretation, as it is this interpretation which forms the basis for much of the current discussion of quasi-fideism.[4] Pritchard argues for what he calls the non-belief account of hinge epistemology. Hinge commitments are not rationally acquired and are not responsive to rational consideration.[5] Whatever belief is, inasmuch as it is of interest for epistemology, it is at least apt to be acquired rationally and responsive to rational considerations, whether or not people actually do acquire their beliefs rationally. Hinges, therefore, are not believed and because knowledge requires belief, are not known. However, they can be expressed propositionally, and one can have propositional attitudes towards hinge propositions, including commitment and endorsement. The propositional nature of hinges that may trick us into thinking that we believe, rather than endorse or commit to, our hinge commitments.[6]

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2   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Blackwell Publishers, 1969). Several other metaphors are used as well. Of particular interest is the metaphor of the riverbed and the river in sections 97, 99 of *On Certainty*.

3   Ibid., section 450. See also sections 115 and 613.

4   See, for example, Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, *Understanding Wittgenstein's On Certainty* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Annalisa Coliva, *Extended Rationality* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Annalisa Coliva and Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, eds., *Hinge epistemology* (Brill, 2016); Genia Schönbaumsfeld, *The Illusion of Doubt* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016) for recent discussions of other approaches to hinge epistemology and interpreting *On Certainty*. I suspect these other approaches could be the basis of a form of quasi-fideism, and exploring this possibility would be interesting in its own right. As it currently stands, however, the central quasi-fideist literature is centered on Pritchard's work, so I will direct my attention there.

5   Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemic Angst: Radical Skepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2016), 90.

6   Ibid., 91-92. Pritchard's non-belief approach to hinge epistemology has been subject to substantial criticism and inasmuch as his account of quasi-fideism is grounded in his hinge epistemology, it is subject to the same criticisms. Here, I will simply note that I don't expect a defense of quasi-fideism to win adherents to Pritchard's approach to hinge epistemology or to seem plausible to those who have already rejected hinge epistemology as a plausible account of epistemology on the whole. My aim in this paper isn't a complete defense of Pritchard's hinge epistemology but an elaboration of one of its applications, so I will not devote extensive time to responding to criticisms of the non-belief view. Interested readers may see, among others, Matt Jope, "Closure, Credence and Rationality: A Problem for Non-Belief Hinge Epistemology", *Synthese* (2019); Jonathan Nebel, "Doubting Pritchard's account of hinge propositions", *Synthese* (2019); Chris Ranalli, "Revisionism, Scepticism, and the Non-Belief Theory of Hinge Commitments", *International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* 8, no. 2 (2018); Chris Ranalli, "Deep Disagreement and Hinge Epistemology", *Synthese* 197, no. 11 (2020); Mona Ximian, Johanna Schnurr, and Emma Gordon, "Epistemic Norms, Closure, and No-Belief Hinge Epistemology", *Synthese* (2019) for criticisms of the non-belief account of hinge epistemology. See Pritchard, *Epistemic Angst* for the primary presentation of the non-belief view and Duncan Pritchard, "Scepticism and Epistemic Angst, Redux", *Synthese* (2019) for some responses to critics.

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Hinges can and do change over time[7] and vary from person to person. Wittgenstein notes that it is as certain as anything that nobody has ever been on the moon[8] and this is certainly no longer the case. I may be optimally certain that I have the name that I have, and you may be just as certain that you have the name that you have. Given the potential for variation and context sensitivity in hinge commitments, one might fear radical incommensurability of hinge commitments between agents is a likely possibility. Pritchard avoids this danger by arguing that the hinges we all have are simply codifications of the uber-hinge: the deep commitment we each have that we are not radically or fundamentally mistaken in our beliefs.[9] Hinges can vary from person to person and across different contexts because different people in different places and times will of course codify in different ways that they are not radically mistaken in their beliefs. The uber-hinge also offers at least one argument for why relativism is not a deep worry for hinge epistemology.[10] Clearly, people have different personal hinges. It might be thought that these different hinges raise the possibility of people having hinges that support radically incommensurable worldviews, leaving at least some disagreements immune to rational resolution. What the uber-hinge makes clear is that there is in fact space for lots of agreement. While different people of different times and places with different personal histories may have a good many personal hinges that differ, we should expect many to be shared. These shared deep commitments make communication and rational disagreement possible.[11]

III. FROM HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY TO QUASI-FIDEISM

The application of Pritchard's hinge epistemology to religious belief is straightforward. Among the beliefs that people have are some involving religious matters. People might believe that God is triune, that Father and the Son are consubstantial, that God is really present in the eucharist, or that the structure of the eye is clearly evidence of divine design and intervention. There is a question as to how religious beliefs can be rational, and it is often thought hard to explain how they might be.[12] One strategy is to argue that there's no problem in explaining the rationality of religious belief, perhaps because there are a priori proofs of certain religious commitments, or because religious beliefs can be formed in a way analogous to perceptual belief.[13] Alternatively, one might argue that religious beliefs can't be evaluated like other beliefs. They just aren't rational in the way other beliefs are, or their rationality can only be evaluated "from within."[14] They may be a matter of arational commitment or faith.

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7   Duncan Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 81 (2017): 111.

8   Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* section 106.

9   Pritchard, *Epistemic Angst,* 95. All references to the uber-hinge will be explicit references. Any mention of a hinge, without a modifier, is meant to be a personal codification of the uber-hinge, a personal hinge.

10   Indeed, Pritchard is concerned to avoid the worst consequences of epistemic relativism and preserve rational resolution of disagreements. See, for example, Duncan Pritchard, "Epistemic Relativism, Epistemic Incommensurability, and Wittgensteinian Epistemology", in *A Companion to Relativism*, ed. Steven D. Hales (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and J. Adam Carter, "Epistemic Pluralism, Epistemic Relativism and 'Hinge' Epistemology", in *Epistemic Pluralism*, ed. Annalisa Coliva and Nikolaj Jang Lee Linding Pedersen (Springer International Publishing, 2017). Whether or not this is successful I don't expect to establish here, though I am personally inclined to give a fair bit of weight to the comments Wittgenstein makes with regards to the place of persuasion in discourse.

11   This does not mean that all deep hinge disagreements we have will be resolved that way. As Wittgenstein notes, in sections 262 and 612 of *On Certainty*, there comes a time when these things are resolved by persuasion. In light of this, I do not think we should expect Pritchard's, or perhaps any, hinge epistemology to eliminate the possibility of deep and radical disagreement, or to provide a knock-down argument that hinge epistemology is not subject to relativistic worries.

12   Duncan Pritchard, "WIittgensteinian Quasi-Fideism", in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 14-15

13   For examples of these positions, see Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1979); Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God", in *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2000).

14   This position is often known as the fideist position. There is a substantial literature on fideism. See, for example Kai Nielsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism", *Philosophy* 42, no. 161 (1967); Kai Nielsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism Again: A Reply to Hudson", *Philosophy* 44, no. 167 (1969) for classic pieces criticizing a specifically Wittgensteinian approach to fideism, W. D. Hudson,

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Quasi-fideism seeks a middle path: religious belief is somehow grounded in faith but is rationally evaluable.[15] This is achieved by recognizing that religious beliefs are grounded by a religious hinge or hinges. A religious commitment of some sort, arationally held with optimal certainty, makes possible rational religious belief.[16] All beliefs rely on hinge commitments, so religious beliefs are no worse off than any other beliefs with respect to rationality as long as there is an appropriate codification of the uber-hinge that grounds them. The essential difference between the theist and the atheist is not a belief they have or lack, but that they codify the uber-hinge differently. Each takes themselves to be not-radically-mistaken about the world: one does so in a way that provides for the possibility of rational religious beliefs, and the other does not.[17] Of course, they'll also have a wide variety of other differences brought on by the picture each has of the world, including many different beliefs. The rationality of these beliefs, and the having of these beliefs, however, goes back to having certain different personal hinges.

Quasi-fideism has much to recommend it. It provides an account of how it can be rational to have religious beliefs in exactly the same way that it is rational to have any other beliefs. Explaining the rationality of religious belief need not "ghettoize" religious belief such that it becomes rationally unassailable from outside the religious perspective.[18] After all, on the hinge picture all beliefs, religious or not, depend on hinges.[19] Further, quasi-fideism captures something that seems deeply correct about the psychology of religious belief: fundamental religious commitments are generally neither acquired nor lost easily. While the details might change with relative ease, it's unusual for someone's commitment to being religious (or atheistic) to change rapidly, particularly in response to (purportedly) rational criticism. This makes sense if fundamental religious commitments are hinges.[20] Hinges are "swallowed down" as part of a picture of the world and they are by their very nature not responsive to rational criticism because they are optimally certain. To doubt them would require grounds for doubt more certain than the hinge, and there is nothing that fits that role.

Bennett-Hunter has shown that, thanks to the mutability of hinges easily accounted for by the structure of the uber-hinge,[21] quasi-fideism is well placed to explain interreligious communication between theists and atheists, and between members of different religions. Because of the substantial commonality in codifications of the uber-hinge, religious disagreements take place against a mostly shared background of commitments, making at least some such disagreements rationally resolvable, at least in principle. When it comes to hinge disagreement between religious and non-religious agents, these may not be resolved rationally but by persuasion.[22] For any number of non-rational reasons, people may come to

"On Two Points against Wittgensteinian Fideism", *Philosophy* 43, no. 165 (1968) for a critique of Nielsen's critique of fideism, Ken McGovern and Béla Szabados, "Was Wittgenstein a Fideist? Two Views", *Sophia* 41, no. 2 (2002) for discussion of whether Wittgenstein is best understood as a fideist, and Thomas D. Carrol, "The Traditions of Fideism", *Religious Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008) for a history and catalogue of various uses of the term "fideism".

15   Pritchard, "Wittgensteinian", 147; see also Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", 103; Duncan Pritchard, "Quasi-Fideism and Religious Conviction", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 3 (2018).

16   Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", 118.

17   I don't mean to imply here that either religious or non-religious beliefs are generally or on the whole rational. I just mean that, if the right hinges are held, it's a possibility that they could be rational. Of course more goes into rationality than having a hinge which can ground one's beliefs.

18   Pritchard, "Wittgensteinian", 156; Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", 102; Pritchard, "Quasi-Fideism and Religious Conviction", 63.

19   Pritcharsd, "Wittgensteinian", 155; Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", 104; see also discussions of parity arguments in Pritchard, "Quasi-Fideism and Religious Conviction" section 3 and Pritchard, "Faith and Reason" section 2.

20   Pritchard, "Faith and Reason", 102; Pritchard, "Quasi-Fideism and Religious Conviction", 56.

21   Guy Bennett-Hunter, "Wittgensteinian Quasi-Fideism and Interreligious Communication", in *Interpreting Interreligious Relations with Wittgenstein*: *Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies*, ed. Gorazd Andrejč and Daniel H. Weiss (Brill, 2019). Bennett-Hunter also makes excellent use of the river-bed metaphor from Wittgenstein *On Certainty*, section 97.

22   Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, section 612. We might find it worrying that there's possibly no way to rationally resolve disagreements between theists and atheists. If they disagree on a hinge that separates religious belief from non-religious belief (again, take as an example here "God exists"), might they not have incommensurable disagreements? Might leaving the resolution of these disagreements to persuasion invite the spectre of epistemic relativism? I'm not convinced that we should be worried that persuasion, rather than rational argumentation, bears the burden of resolving religious hinge disagreements. Pritchard, *Epistemic Angst*,

see the world a different way, and so codify the uber-hinge differently. To take a very basic example, an atheist may be persuaded to take on a religious hinge commitment by being persuaded to act as though they are religious. They might be cajoled into attending services, reciting prayers, and so on. Given that we know hinges can change through missionary means, it isn't hard to imagine something like this might make a person change how they codify the uber-hinge.[23]

IV. FINDING THE RIGHT HINGE

However, quasi-fideism as described thus far is incomplete. It isn't clear what the hinge(s) that make quasi-fideism work, the religious commitments that make possible rational religious belief, are. One might think that quasi-fideism is an excellent framework for the epistemology of religion, if we could just figure out what commitment(s) form an appropriately certain basis with respect to which the rest of religious belief could be rational. Without having at least some very plausible candidates to appeal to, one might worry that nothing can do this grounding. Without such a hinge, religious belief is just that: plain old belief. The entirety of religious belief, no matter how deeply committed or certain, would be open to the same criticism as all other beliefs, open to judgement as irrational or arational, and quasi-fideism would have failed to show that religious belief could achieve rational parity with the rest of our beliefs while still being distinctly religious beliefs.

In this section I'll propose some desiderata for whatever hinge(s) is to fill this role. The most obvious, I think, is that we want to avoid allowing too many or too expansive hinges. In other words, we want to avoid making it such that most or all of what we think of as religious belief is really religious hinge commitment. The reason for this is simple: we don't want to turn religious belief into something rationally unassailable. This wouldn't match what we see in the world. At least some religious beliefs do sometimes change for rational reasons. People can be and are argued into new religious views, especially with regard to the most nuanced points in theology.

While a fideist outcome clearly isn't the aim of quasi-fideism (after all, it is a quasi-fideism and aims specifically at putting religious belief on a rational basis) I think a similar worry arises even in a non-limit case. We don't want quasi-fideist hinges that rule out rational disagreement and if the hinges are too expansive, if too many religious propositions are codifications of the uber-hinge, there will be little in the way of possible rational disagreement. If this happens, quasi-fideism will cease to fit well with the psychology of religious belief. After all, while religious people and their atheist counterparts may be, in some sense, willing to accept that some portion of their disagreement is so deep that it amounts to their having radically different views of the world, and so having something other than a garden variety difference of belief, it seems clear that religious believers of different sorts (and atheists and theists) often take themselves to be genuinely disagreeing at the level of belief.

I don't think we should be seeking to eliminate, or even minimize the possibility for this kind of disagreement. It seems wrong that genuine religious disagreement would be relegated to the level of most fine

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110 notes that there is an intelligibility requirement on rational resolution of hinge disagreements. While I doubt this is the case for all religious disagreements, at least some may involve world-pictures so divergent that they are resolvable only through persuasion. Indeed, *On Certainty* bears out the importance, or at least the inevitability, of persuasion in *On Certainty* section 612 with an example that, tellingly, involves missionaries and natives. I suspect that when it comes to religious hinge commitments, at least, I am more open to relativism than either Pritchard or Jeroen de Ridder, "Against Quasi-Fideism", *Faith and Philosophy* 36, no. 2 (2019). I wouldn't find it particularly worrying if the best response to the critiques of quasi-fideism in section three of the aforementioned de Ridder piece turned out to be biting the bullet: religious believers and non-believers really do see the world radically differently in at least one way. I think this actually reflects fairly well the epistemic situation for many believers and non-believers alike. They just don't see things the same way and their disagreements are not always, or perhaps even mostly, rational.

23   For a classic discussion of moving from behaving religiously to being religious, see section 233 of Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Boston, MA: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1958): "You would like to attain faith, and do not know the way; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now stake all their possessions. These are people who know the way which you would follow, and who are cured of an ill of which you would be cured. Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc."

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grained, most technical or nuanced points of theology, that there couldn't be genuine disagreements about even very large religious matters. Besides, disagreements over large and important moral, political, and scientific matters are fairly commonplace, and the general response isn't to say that all of these disputes are over matters so deep that they can only be explained as involving fundamentally different ways of seeing the world. People disagree, for example, over whether there oght to be a death penalty. This is a very substantial moral and political issue and while it's certainly not the case that all dispute over the death penalty is conducted rationally, it's not hard to imagine people on opposite sides making efforts to rationally convince one another. For example, someone for and someone against the death penalty might share a commitment to act utilitarianism and genuinely disagree about whether particular instances of the death penalty promote the greatest good for the greatest number. Or, they might both identify as Nozickian minarchists and genuinely disagree about whether the state has been constituted in the right way to make executions permissible. At an even more fundamental level, the disputants might simply agree that there are moral facts people to which people have access and disagree about whether a certain mutually acceptable method of accessing these facts yields the result that execution is morally permissible. In short, it seems entirely possible to have genuinely rational disputes (in the sense that they are disputes over beliefs and not hinge commitments) over large matters outside of religion, so there's no reason to try to eliminate them within religion, especially if one of the aims of quasi-fideism is to show how religious belief can be rational in the same way other beliefs can.

Here, I'll sketch (or, if you prefer, paint with a very broad brush), examples of religious disagreement over large matters and argue that they could at least possibly be conducted rationally. Whether or not any of these disagreements were or are actually conducted rationally is beside the point. What matters is whether the analyses of the disputes I offer are at least plausible enough that we should avoid filling out quasi-fideism with hinges that would make it impossible to have such disagreements.

4th century disputes between Arian and trinitarian Christians over the relationship between the essences of the persons of the trinity were not disputes over pictures of the world and fundamental commitments so different that they were considered rationally unassailable. Each side can offer support for their position with the aim of genuinely convincing the other by drawing on personal revelation/religious experience, proposing interpretations of shared authoritative texts, and offering rational arguments about the implications of other shared religious commitments. It seems right, or at least plausible, that Jews, Muslims, and Christians genuinely disagree about the number of prophets.[24] After all, each group is committed to the world being the sort of place where there can be prophets and phenomena that count as evidence of prophets, and they share a commitment to at least some of the same figures as prophets. We can imagine a members of these religions presenting each other with evidence of the sort they all accept, perhaps interpretations of certain texts or accounts of miraculous phenomena, in an effort to cause one another to believe that there were such-and-such a number of prophets. Finally, we might think that Buddhists and Christians have a rational disagreement about how the universe works. Each group would agree, for example, that there is suffering in life and some kind of possible salvation or redemption from that suffering, and ineffable personal experiences and miraculous occurrences that count in favor of their preferred worldview. We might imagine that they could engage in a rational discourse on soteriology each attempting to show that the other's view of suffering is somehow inconsistent, and that their own view does a better job.[25] If the preceding are examples of substantial religious disagreement that is still rational disagreement then these cases, and others like them, must be accommodated by the religious hinge(s) that fill in the quasi-fideist picture of religious epistemology. Religion must not be completely, or even mostly, rationally unassailable. Still, nothing I've said should be taken to imply that I think people

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24 Should anyone suggest that this, or the preceding example, are not large disagreements perhaps because every religious tradition involved in each example is Abrahamic or some such thing, note that each is a disagreement large enough to lead to the fission of religious traditions. Having some shared historical or textual foundational does not suffice to make the views in question not substantially different.

25 This last example is, I admit, something of a stretch. However, I'll return to this example in the next section and discuss why this example is potentially problematic.

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will actually get to their religious commitments rationally, or that such disagreements and disputes will generally be entered into, or resolved, rationally. We can and do believe things irrationally and arationally. Having a minimal religious hinge makes possible the maximal amount of religious belief that is apt for analysis as belief.

In articulating hinges that leave ample room for substantial and rational religious disagreement, it is important not to go too far in the other direction. Intuitively, there is something that makes being religious distinct from being non-religious, and that distinguishes religious beliefs from other beliefs.[26] The hinge(s) that complete quasi-fideism must not be so generic and vague that the distinction between religion and everything else is washed away. Otherwise, quasi-fideism loses its character as an epistemology of religion. One of the most impressive features of quasi-fideism is its ability to show that religious belief is rational in the same way other beliefs are while still capturing the intuition that religious belief is somehow different from other beliefs. Religious belief is rational in the same way as other beliefs because all belief relies on arational, optimally certain commitments. However, because all hinges are codifications of the uber-hinge, the commitment that we are not radically mistaken about the world, the atheist and the religious believer can have different codifications of the uber hinge. There is something that distinguishes the religious worldview from the atheist worldview, and it is expressed in the personal hinges that codify their respective uber-hinges. If the hinge or hinges used to complete quasi-fideism and so provide the rational basis for religious belief are too inclusive, quasi-fideism will no longer be able to capture the idea that there are distinctly religious beliefs that are rational. It will no longer be an epistemology of religion. So, whatever hinge(s) one uses to fill in the quasi-fideist picture must capture the demarcation between religion and non-religion, whatever that may be.

Here, then, we have three basic desiderata for hinges that fill out quasi-fideism. First, they must not make religious belief entirely rationally unassailable. It must be possible to engage in rational religious disagreement, that is, disagreement about belief, both inter- and intra-religious. If the hinges encompass too much, then religious belief will no longer have been given a rational footing, or shown to have parity with other beliefs. Instead, it will have been made entirely arational. We are guided to this desiderata by the general aims of quasi-fideism. Second, the hinges must leave room not just for disagreement but ample disagreement. Religious disagreements must be possible with respect to large religious questions, and not just the finer points of theology. We are guided to this desiderata by examples of large religious disagreement that still seems to be rational disagreement. Third, the hinges must capture whatever it is that distinguishes religion from non-religion. Without this, religious belief will not have been shown to have a rational basis. If the hinge cannot mark a distinction between religion and non-religion, quasi-fideism will simply be a statement that beliefs in general depend on hinges. Further, hinge epistemology would no longer capture the intuitive notion that there is at least something distinct about religious belief, and that, in a deep way, those who are religious see the world somehow differently than those who are not. In other words, there is, intuitively, a religious worldview, and the hinge(s) that complete hinge epistemology must account for this. Having laid out these criteria for any suitable religious hinge, the next step is to consider whether hinges that fit these desiderata also fit with our extant intuitions about religious beliefs.

V. WHICH HINGES?

Let's consider a few possible hinges that have been presented as ones which might provide a rational basis for religious belief. Pritchard discusses the possibility of treating "God exists" as the hinge which grounds religious belief.[27] It is clear why this would be an obvious choice for a hinge to ground religious belief.

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26 I take it that the distinction at which I point is plausible, though hard to pin down. Indeed the difficulty in articulating it will be important in subsequent sections. For now, just think about how odd it would be to say something like "Oh yes, he's a very devout Catholic, just not remotely religious" or "She's an absolute, die-hard atheist. Very religious person." At the very least, these claims would need a good bit of explaining.

27 Duncan Pritchard, "Is 'God Exists' a 'Hinge Proposition' of Religious Belief?", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47, no. 3 (2000); see also Pritchard, "Wittgensteinian", 153-54.

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First, it would ground a lot of religious beliefs, because many religious beliefs concern the divine in one way or another. For example, one might believe "that God is triune", "that God is omnibenevolent", or "that God offers redemption from suffering". Second, it meets many of the desiderata set out above. To take a commitment to God's existence as a hinge leaves plenty of space for religious disagreement that isn't hinge disagreement. Most obviously, members of various religions, even similar ones, disagree quite a bit. Catholics and Anglicans share an extensive religious history and have structurally similar ritual practice, but the former faith holds the presence of Christ in the eucharist is a matter of transubstantiation, while the latter holds that Christ's presence in the eucharist is a matter of consubstantiation.[28] Christians and Jews disagree as to whether Christ is the messiah, though they all have a commitment to the existence of a single God, and believe that many of the same individuals were prophets and study many of the same texts. Christians and Sikhs share essentially nothing in the way of common religious history, texts, or ritual, but each affirms the existence of one God, and agree that this deity is eternal and in some sense a creator. While I've stuck with examples from monotheistic religions here, there's even more space for disagreement if the hinge is not read as committed to God-unitary but just some kind of deity with no commitment to the particular number. In this sense, monotheists and polytheists may be said to disagree about matters as weighty as the number of gods, while sharing a hinge commitment to the existence of at least one divine entity.[29] It's clear, then, that a hinge commitment "that God exists" doesn't make religious belief rationally unassailable. There is plenty of room for both inter- and intra-religious disagreement, and that this disagreement can range over matters small and large.

Taking "God Exists" as the religious codification of the uber-hinge also enables the drawing of a clear line between religious beliefs and non-religious, between a religious worldview and a non-religious one and so in this sense meets the third desideratum. Those who affirm the hinge are the religious, and those who deny it or affirm its negation are the non-religious. However, the ease with which this hinge meets the third desiderata also points to serious problems. Even if we grant that it is sufficient to count as being religious if one believes in at least some god[30] it doesn't seem to be necessary. There are a variety of purportedly non-theistic traditions that plausibly qualify as religious. Some of the clearer cases include some Buddhist traditions and certain approaches to Unitarian Universalism.[31] More ambiguous cases include Taoism and Jainism. If the god in question in the hinge is understood to be an entity, then these ambiguous cases become unambiguous cases of non-theistic religions. Further, it is at least plausible that, say, Jains and Christians could have a real disagreement about soteriology, and not merely an unassailable commitment to radically different worldviews. For better or worse, this paper is not an exercise in comparative theology, and I freely admit that exactly how to interpret what counts as an instance of

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28   Really, the matter is much more complicated. Anglican eucaristic theology is not uniform across churches in the Anglican communion. If anything, this should emphasize just how much disagreement can be found in what might be thought extremely similar religions.

29   Bennett-Hunter, "Wittgensteinian" suggests that disagreements between monotheists, polytheists, and henotheists regarding the number and structure of the divine entities might be a matter of hinge disagreement. I think it is easier, and leaves more room for religious disagreement, to treat this as a matter of disagreement at the level of belief, not hinge. After all, if we interpret the God "God exists" broadly, we can see that the monotheists, polytheists, and henotheists share a deep commitment to the existence of some divine or supernatural entity.

30   While I'm open to counterexamples here, I cannot think of a case of being committed to the existence of at least one god and not being at least loosely religious. The closest thing that comes to mind is deism, the affirmation of the existence of a creator deity who does not intervene in life.

31   The metaphysics and theology (loosely construed) of Buddhism is exceedingly complex, and I don't intend to canvas it here. For now, it suffices to note that while there is a general acknowledgement of beings that are in some sense supernatural and superior to humans in many respects, they are still susceptible to the cycle of death and rebirth, and there is no entity comparable to the God of the Abrahamic traditions. For some far from exhaustive discussion of atheistic threads in Buddhist thought, see Richard P. Hayes, "Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition", *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (1988); Roy W. Perrett, "Introduction", in *Indian Philosophy: A Collection of Readings*, ed. Roy W. Perrett (Routledge, 2001), xiii-xviii; and Andrew Skilton, "Buddhism", in *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, ed. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013). For a very brief discussion of this issue with respect to unitarians, see the "Atheist/Agnostic" subsection of the "Many Beliefs Welcome" section of the Unitarian Universalist Association website.

theism and what doesn't is certainly contentious. My only aim here is to argue that "God exists" plausibly fails to be inclusive enough in describing what hinges could ground religious belief.

In short, the hinge "God (loosely construed) exists", or something similar, has the great advantages of allowing plenty of room for religious disagreement and drawing a sharp line between cases of religion and non-religion, thereby preserving quasi-fideism's place as an epistemology of religion. However, it may fail to include important cases of non-theistic religion. It may not quite capture our intuitions about what counts and does not count as religious. This may be for any number of reasons. Perhaps our intuitions about what constitutes a religion are not typically well formed. Or, it may be that "religion" is a cluster concept, or in some other way has vague boundaries. After all, there are clear examples of religions (Catholicism, Sikhism, Jainism), clear examples of non-religion (atheism), but an awful lot of things that fall in between. What are we to make of Unitarian Universalism (the non-theistic and theistic Unitarian Universalist do seem to have an equal claim to being members) or Buddhism? Unfortunately, it is unclear and whatever the reason for this unclarity, it does present a problem for quasi-fideism inasmuch as it requires that there be a distinction between religious and non-religious beliefs.

One option for resolving this issue is simply to bite the bullet and accept that we'll have to make some tough calls as to which beliefs we mean to be grounding by means of quasi-fideism. However, it isn't clear why theism is the line that ought to be drawn, or how it could be justified as the line between religion and non-religion without begging the question, especially because quasi-fideism aims to provide an account of how religious belief can be rationally grounded and not an account of religion simpliciter. I am inclined to think that this problem will arise for any hinge that attempts to draw a bright line between religion and non-religion. Unfortunately, quasi-fideism needs a hinge that finds a way to make such a distinction if it is to be preserved as an account of the epistemology of religion. If quasi-fideism is to remain a plausible account of the rationality of distinctly religious belief, I think it is best to avoid biting this particular bullet and instead to look for another hinge that meets the desiderata while drawing a more plausible line between religion and non-religion.

Another issue with this hinge is that it fails to track with common religious speech and introspection. Theists often speak of themselves and think of themselves as believing in God. While we shouldn't place excessive weight on ordinary speech in our philosophical analysis, or give too much credence to introspection on doxastic attitudes, finding a hinge that could accommodate the possibility that theists might genuinely believe that God exists would be beneficial in that it would not conflict with this seemingly natural sort of everyday speech or introspection.

If "God exists" draws the boundaries too narrowly, then perhaps a much broader hinge will do. Bennett-Hunter[32] suggests that a commitment to the presence or existence of the ineffable might do as a religious hinge commitment. The ineffable, in this case, is that which is in principle, not just in practice, literally unconceptualizable, and so inarticulable.[33] Religious beliefs will be those that rely on the hinge commitment to the ineffable, and non-religious beliefs those that do not rely on that hinge or rely on the negation of the ineffability hinge. A hinge commitment to the ineffable would allow for plenty of religious disagreements. After all, it is entirely plausible for people to commit to the existence of the ineffable and disagree about whether such-and-such an experience is really ineffable, how to respond to the existence of the ineffable, or what the importance of the ineffable really is. Further, this kind of commitment is certainly broad enough to capture at least some aspects of both theistic and non-theistic religions. There are very basic teachings or commitments at the center of many theistic and non-theistic religions

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32   Bennett-Hunter, "Wittgensteinian".

33   Guy Bennett-Hunter, "Divine Ineffability", *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 7 (2015). There is substantial philosophical and theological work on the ineffable. I won't go further into it here because this definition is functional enough to show that there are at least some plausible problems in using a commitment to the ineffable to ground religious belief. For a few examples of further discussion of ineffability in philosophy of religion, see, among many others, William P. Alston, "Ineffability", *The Philosophical Review* 65, no. 4 (1956) and Guy Bennett-Hunter, *Ineffability and Religious Experience,* (Pickering & Chatto, 2014). See David E. Cooper, "The Inaugural Address: Ineffability", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 65 (1991) for a less theological, more conventionally philosophical discussion.

that could plausibly be grounded by such a hinge. For example, one might consider the commitment of many Christian traditions to the trinitarian nature of God to be a belief in something deeply mysterious or ultimately unconceptualizable. On the non-theistic side, a commitment to the ineffable might ground some approaches to the kind of ultimate connectedness or impermanence that is key for various Buddhist traditions. While providing clear examples of that which is unconceptualizable and inarticulable is obviously a bit tricky, I think the point is clear enough.

However, "There are ineffable experiences" or something similar seems to be too broad in one way and too narrow in another to serve as the hinge that fills out quasi-fideism. With regards to the former, it doesn't seem that this needs to be a particularly religious commitment in any way. One can be committed to and experience the experience of the unconceptualizable and inarticulable without thinking this has anything to do with religion.[34] It doesn't make sense to say that the fundamental commitments that grounded, say, Christopher Hitchens's beliefs are the same ones that ground those of the deeply religious.

One possibility is that the hinge which grounds religious belief is in fact widely held by those who are certainly not religious. If this is the case, then the fact that Hitchens is committed to there being experiences of the ineffable doesn't mean this couldn't be the hinge that grounds religious belief. On the one hand, this fits well with the idea that there is, between different agents, substantial overlap in codification of the uber-hinge. However, if we take this route, we lose the idea that quasi-fideism is a distinctively religious epistemology. We can grant that there is a lot of hinge overlap between the religious and non-religious while still seeking to ground religious belief in a way that captures the distinctiveness of religious belief. A hinge commitment to the ineffable, then, would require a further account of what kind of ineffability is the really religious kind, which would bring us back to the problem encountered in exploring hinge commitments to the divine: drawing a clear distinction between the religious and the non-religious is rather difficult.

On the other hand, and perhaps even more problematically, I think there's at least a possibility of being religious in an entirely mundane way that avoids anything remotely ineffable or mystical. It seems that one can hold the right beliefs, perform the right rituals, espouse the right moral standards, and generally be as religious as you like without ever having had any kind of experience they take to be in principle uncapturable.[35] There doesn't seem to be anything in principle wrong with the idea of, for example, a very mundane Catholic who is fastidious about attending mass, fasting at the appropriate times, praying for the right things, believing in God and so on who has no mystical experiences, does not think such experiences are required to be a member of the faith, and never thinks deeply enough about the metaphysics of the Trinity or the Eucharist to have any beliefs that require a commitment to the ineffable (or perhaps they find the best available explanations for the Trinity and the Eucharist to be perfectly ordinary and comprehensible, not requiring any appeal to mystery or unconceptualizability). Ruling this out as being genuinely religious strikes me as begging the question. In other words, religion doesn't require the experience of the inarticulable or unconceptualizable, or a commitment to its existence. A commitment to the ineffable probably does a better job than other potential hinges at including non-theistic religions as they seem apt for ineffable experience. However, it divides religious from non-religious commitments in such a way that it includes some who are definitely not religious and fails to include some who probably ought to be included.

If neither of the two hinges discussed above fits our desiderata quite right, perhaps some success can be found by using both of them together. Nothing, in principle, prevents filling out quasi-fideism with multiple hinges or a hinge in the form of a disjunction. Perhaps it was a mistake to try to capture everything quasi-fideism needed with a single hinge, and each of the above hinges did meet at least some of our desiderata. So, we might say that either an optimally certain commitment to either the divine or an optimally certain

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34   See, for example, the final minutes of Christopher Hitchens' 2010 interview with Sally Quinn, in which he discusses the need for words like "transcendent", "ecstatic", and "numinous".

35   See Bennett-Hunter, "Divine" for a survey of discussions about how much sense can be made of appeals to ineffability, in particular when talking about the divine. The harder it is to make sense of this concept, the less appealing I think it is to play the role of a hinge grounding religious experience.

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commitment to the ineffable may be used to fill out hinge epistemology.[36] In combining the two previous hinges into this single disjunctive hinge, we certainly get a broader scope than either disjunct would provide on its own. However, I think this disjunctive hinge inherits the problems of its disjuncts. The second disjunct, a commitment to the ineffable, still rules in too many agents as religious. The problems with the bright line drawn by the first disjunct, a commitment to the divine, are dodged only by appeal to the second, too broad disjunct. This approach, then, fares no better than its predecessors. If it turns out that there are intuitively plausible examples of religions that involve no commitment to the divine and no commitment to the ineffable,[37] then this approach has problems of its own in addition to the problems it inherits.

Still, the disjunctive hinge might be thought to get something right in that it doesn't look to reduce religion to a single aspect. Perhaps a more complex hinge commitment will have greater success. As an example, let's consider Crane's (2017) two-part definition of religious belief.[38] Perhaps it can be adapted to yield a hinge that can fill out hinge epistemology.[39] According to Crane, religious belief is characterized by what he calls the religious impulse (the belief that "this is not all there is" or that there is an unseen normative order to the world, and that our greatest good comes in living one's life "in harmony with the transcendent")[40] and "identification" (the repetition of action or ritual in a social setting, seeing the faith as in some sense constituting part of one's identity; religion essentially involves belonging to a group and having a set of social connections.[41])

In adapting Crane's views to serve as a hinge commitment of religious belief, a couple things should be noted. First, at various points, Crane's exposition of the religious impulse involves explicit reference to living in accordance with the wills of certain deities. While divine entities are certainly one way to explain the religious impulse, the above rejection of "God exists" as a potential hinge for quasi-fideism suggests that we should avoid building this interpretation of the religious impulse into the hinge.[42] Similarly, the exposition of identification also involves various mentions of religious ritual[43] and these will have to go as well. Religion can't usefully be defined as involving religious ritual or practice. It also bears noting that quasi-fideism is a view about the rationality of religious belief and so relies on there being a definition of religion, it isn't a view about how to define religion. The position that being a member of a religion requires participation in ritual and/or identification with and connection to a community doesn't by itself say much about what religious people rationally believe or take to be optimally certain in an epistemic sense. Still, Crane is surely right that certain practical considerations or involvement in a particular kind of social life are intuitively part of what we consider in thinking of how to separate religion and non-religion. This insight can be retained if the hinge constructed from Crane's view of religion is something like this: "There is a transcendent order to the universe, the good life involves living in harmony with that order, and participation in ritual and social life is at least part of what constitutes the appropriate harmonious living." For ease, I'll call this three part conjunctive hinge "Crane's Hinge."[44]

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36 This could be thought of as allowing for multiple hinges or a single disjunctive hinge comprised of as many disjuncts as one thinks necessary to get the result one wants.

37 I confess I have no easy or uncontroversial example of such a thing at hand, but I am certainly open to there being such an example. Perhaps some schools of Buddhist thought fit here, or some kind of adamantly naturalist, scientistic atheist Unitarian Universalist fits the bill.

38 Tim Crane, *The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2017)

39 I thank a reviewer for directing me to this work, and I regret that there isn't space to explore Crane's views further. I find the definition of religion proposed in Crane's work particularly interesting in that it is part of an account of religious belief given by an atheist with the express aim of developing a careful and honest, as opposed to dogmatic and polemical, understanding of the views of his opponents.

40 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 11, 35-38.

41 Ibid., 90, 94, 98

42 Crane himself suggests as much at page 19 of *The Meaning of Belief*, though also notes at page 19 that his view should apply just as well to religions like Buddhism or Hinduism, which lack a single deity.

43 Ibid., 87-88.

44 A couple of notes. First, I don't think the hinge takes too many liberties with Crane's view. See Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, chapter 3 for some discussion of the connections between the ritual, social, and epistemic lives of believers. Crane makes great use of the concept "sacred" which is, I suspect, another concept that needs to be excised for a fully informative definition.

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While Crane's definition of religion is prima facie as plausible as any and Crane's Hinge is prima facie as plausible as those considered so far, I think it still fails. First, once we excise overtly religious terminology and concepts from Crane's view (which we must do in order to avoid circularity in our definition of religious belief; simply asserting that we can use Crane's definition to pick out religion when we see it merely denies the very apparent difficulties we found with our previous attempts at finding a hinge for quasi-fideism) it seems as though Crane's Hinge includes too much. An ardently non-naturalist moral realist who routinely convenes a study group that discusses G. E. Moore's Principia Ethica for the betterment of all involved is a person who seems to me to be, in some meaningful sense, committed to the transcendent, the value of a life lived in line with the transcendent order, and the importance of doing so socially. Indeed, Crane makes reference at various points to different sorts of humanist groups, and rejects their inclusion as religious according to his definition. However, once we remove overtly religious concepts from his definition, it isn't clear what justifies such an exclusion (especially if we imagine our humanists to be, say, atheist Unitarian Universalists). Insisting that such humanist associations "aren't what we mean by religion" does little to explain why they don't count.[45]

Second, this hinge may not capture all of the cases we'd want to rule as religious. It is unclear what Crane's view makes of the deist who believes in a disinterested deity, the ardent theist who identifies with no particular tradition but is absolutely sure there is a god, the very observant and committed member of a long established religion who nonetheless doesn't think the idea of living in accordance with the transcendent really captures what they're on about, the solitary mystic whose commitment to living in harmony with the transcendent order involves no ritual or social connections but an eremitic life in harmony with nature, or the adherent of the small new religious movement that lacks the depth of tradition or history that seems central to paradigmatic cases of religion. These are all cases of beliefs and agents whose rationality we may hope to explore and explain by means of quasi-fideism. If Crane's Hinge is used, what to make of these cases just isn't clear at all. In other words, the difficult cases are still the difficult cases.

VI. FURTHER THOUGHTS

I won't claim to have covered every hinge that might be used to complete quasi-fideism and it doesn't follow from the fact that a few candidates have failed that all will.[46] However, the failure of several plausible candidates is, I think, cause for at least some pessimism. Once we consider why these hinges have failed, we can see that the case for pessimism is fairly strong. The hinges considered above all struggle in making sure that quasi-fideism encompasses all and only religious beliefs. Demarcating between religion and non-religion, it turns out, is quite difficult. That a variety of intuitively sensible candidate hinges have failed in the same way suggests that this is a serious sticking point. This problem is most directly caused by the third desideratum,[47] so one possible solution would be to abandon this desideratum; perhaps quasi-fideism does not need to make sense of the division between religious and non-religious beliefs. However, the cost of abandoning this desideratum is too high. Besides flying in the face of the intuition that there in fact is something unique about the religious worldview, abandoning the idea that there is

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Second, I don't mean to imply that Crane offers a quasi-fideist view of religious belief. "Crane's Hinge" is just a good, short name for the hinge under consideration.

45   In the section "Humanism" of chapter 1 of *The Meaning of* Belief, Crane argues that humanism lacks the right sort of commitment to the transcendent, or the right concept of the transcendent. This contrast is clear enough when the transcendent involves a deity as is the case in western monotheism, but the distinction breaks down as soon as one starts considering religions with alternative conceptions of deities, a complete lack of deities (e.g. some Buddhist traditions), or traditions that count as religions depending on what one chooses to emphasize when analyzing them (e.g. Confucianism).

46   I thank anonymous reviewers for pressing this point.

47   Though, note that it impacts the others as well: we need to know the scope of the religious in order to make sure that the disagreements we account for are generally religious disagreement.

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a division between religious and non-religious belief means abandoning the idea of quasi-fideism as an epistemology of religion.

Quite simply, there's no obvious way to draw the line between religion and non-religion. Perhaps this is because we lack a clear definition of religion due to insufficient analysis of the concept, maybe religion is a cluster concept, or maybe it has vague boundaries. After all, it is easy to find paradigmatic examples of religious beliefs (that God is triune, that God's begotten son died for our salvation, and so on) and non-religious belief (that the Earth and life were in no way created by an outside force, that prayer is not and has never been effective, etc.) But, there are an awful lot of cases that just aren't clear. Without a clear account of which beliefs ought to be grounded in which sort of hinges, it'll be more than a little difficult to come up with the right hinge to complete quasi-fideism.

The difficulty in finding the right hinge points to a real issue for quasi-fideism, but it shouldn't be considered a devastating problem, and I think one should not abandon the view because of difficulty in finding the right hinge. The best approach to resolving this issue will be one that finds a way to dodge the issue or mitigate the damage. One such approach might be to accept a buck-passing strategy: figuring out what a religion is, and so how to demarcate between the beliefs we seek to ground by means of quasi-fideism and those we do not, is not the work of epistemology of religion in general or quasi-fideism in particular. It is the work of comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and so on.[48] While something in this is surely correct (after all, epistemology is not anthropology), it isn't clear how much mileage this gets us. It is, and has been, something of a commonplace in scholarship of religion that attempting to define religion is probably a fool's errand, especially if one wants a particularly clear definition. There is simply too much to try to account for and chances are any proposed definition will be counterexampled with relative ease.[49]

Instead, I think we should follow the lead set by J.Z. Smith[50] and embrace the idea that there might be a multitude of definitions of religion, each of which has use in different contexts. In order to be a viable strategy for grounding religious belief, quasi-fideism just needs to be able to provide a rational basis for religious belief, whatever it turns out to be. After all, quasi-fideism is an approach to placing religious belief on the same rational footing as beliefs in general, not an approach to defining religion. Even if no single definition of religion is forthcoming, quasi-fideism can be treated as a schematic approach to grounding religious beliefs. The idea here would be to make the hinges that fill out quasi-fideism dependent on the question one is asking and the context in which one asks it. As epistemologists who might appeal to quasi-fideism in an attempt to understand whether certain beliefs are justified or certain agents are rational, we'd need to know in advance which beliefs and which agents we're asking about in order to formulate a sensible question. A variety of beliefs and agents might be investigated, and so a variety of definitions of religion and demarcations between the religious and non-religious might be used in order to fill in the details needed to find a hinge to complete quasi-fideism.

Given the number of different questions one might ask about religion, religious beliefs, and religious believers, providing a comprehensive taxonomy of the ways in which one might make the division between religious and non-religious is a daunting task. Instead, I'll proceed by sketching a couple of examples of how one might make use of a schematic approach to quasi-fideism to illuminate certain epistemological problems.[51] A very basic problem might involve a single agent. Suppose you're a hinge

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48 The definition of religion is a long running issue in the study of religion. There are many competing definitions. For survey and discussion, see Jonathan Z. Smith, "A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion", *The Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 4 (1996); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious", in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Marc C. Taylor (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998); and Jeppe S. Jensen, *What is Religion?* (Routledge, 2020) That there are many competing definitions is not obviously a case for pessimism, though.

49 Variations of this thought can be found in Crane, T*he Meaning of Belief*, 4-6; William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Longmans, Green and Co, 1903). Chapter 2, and many other places. See also Smith "A Matter" for a history of various attempts to define religion, though it is important to note that Smith is not particularly pessimistic about defining religion.

50 Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious".

51 I thank anonymous reviewers for pressing me to elaborate on what it means to treat quasi-fideism as a schema.

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epistemologist, wondering if S, a Catholic, is rational in believing that God is triune.[52] In investigating whether it is rational that S so believe, one thing you'll almost certainly consider is how S goes about justifying their belief. So, once traces the evidence for their belief, the reasons they cite for it, the principles they rely on, and so on. As a hinge epistemologist, one thing you'll likely look for is a hinge (or hinges) that all of this ultimately points back to, at least loosely, because it is the presence of such a hinge that partly constitutes the agent's rationality. In the case of S, if you find a hinge commitment to the existence of a divine being, then you're on your way towards being able to confidently assert that S is rational. But, according to the schematic approach to quasi-fideism, just because a hinge commitment to the divine is part of what makes S rational in their belief in a triune God, one need not import that hinge commitment when investigating other cases of religious rationality. If you then go on to make a similar analysis of a Jain's belief in a certain instance that they ought not harm a particular creature, you don't need to trace this Jain religious moral commitment to a belief in a deity of some sort. Instead, if you trace it back to an optimally certain commitment to a belief in the existence of karmic matter, a particular kind of cyclical cosmic structure, or reincarnation, any of these hinges might suffice equally well. The lesson here is that once we take a schematic approach, we're not bound to look at all religions as relying on identical sources of rationality, as turning on the same hinges.

Or, you might be interested in understanding the nature of some disagreement between a devout Catholic and a devout Buddhist regarding some point of morality or cosmology. One question you might have concerns the depth of the disagreement: are the Catholic and the Taoist really disagreeing, or are they speaking past one another as a result of having radically different worldviews? If they disagree, could they do so as peers or is one in an obviously superior position? When we treat quasi-fideism schematically, we can see that the answer to these questions might not be so straightforward. Inasmuch as the moral and cosmological commitments of the Catholic and the Buddhist are matters of religion (and religions certainly at least sometimes demand that their adherents take particular stands on these matters), the nature of the disagreement (and certainly whether the disagreement can even in principle be a peer disagreement) will be at least partly determined by (((the hinge commitments of the particular disagreers. If each has optimally certain commitments to the same things qua religion, it becomes easier to see them as genuinely disagreeing. So, for example, if we understand them as each committed to the existence of the ineffable, we might see them as genuinely disagreeing about whether the ineffable is best accounted for by a single deity. If they are not optimally certain about the same things, whether this takes the form of one being optimally certain of X and the other of not-X or one being optimally certain of X while the other has no commitment to anything resembling X, it becomes much harder to see the disagreement as a genuine disagreement, and probably impossible to see them disagreeing as peers.

Another way we might use a schematic approach to quasi-fideism to shed light on the purported disagreement between the Catholic and the Buddhist is to "see what pops out" when we look at their disagreement through a variety of different quasi-fideist lenses. In analyzing their disagreement, we may consider it in the context of any number of particular instantiations of quasi-fideism. For example, we might choose to fill out our quasi-fideist schema with a hinge or hinges that puts Catholicism and Buddhism in opposing categories. Perhaps we fill out quasi-fideism with a hinge commitment to the existence of deities. In this case, we are left with the Catholic and Buddhist being best characterized as genuinely talking past each other. Alternatively, we might fill out quasi-fideism with a hinge that leaves our disagreers on the same side (e.g. a hinge commitment to the ineffable). When considered in light of this particular instantiation of quasi-fideism, it becomes (at least) possible to see the Catholic and the Buddhist as genuinely disagreeing.

The lesson here is twofold. First, a schematic approach will allow us to not only resolve certain questions, but appreciate just how difficult it is to resolve certain questions before committing to looking at them from a particular standpoint or within a particular context. Second, quasi-fideism is more usefully

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52 Again, I feel the need to emphasize that I don't expect anyone that isn't at least someone sympathetic to hinge epistemology to find quasi-fideism an attractive position. Thus, I feel comfortable in using examples that appeal to hinge epistemology.

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thought of as a tool for epistemologists of religion than it is a single position in the epistemology of religion. If treated schematically, quasi-fideism can be called into service to analyze the rationality and understand the structure of religious belief, whatever the conception of religion one is working with, as long as this conception has at least some way for one to make a distinction between religion and non-religion.[53]

The cost of treating quasi-fideism as a schematic approach for grounding religious belief is not so high. The most obvious downside to my approach is that when considering quasi-fideism in the abstract or before specifying the context of our appeal to quasi-fideism, we won't have a sense of which beliefs will be rationally grounded. It just isn't enough to say "quasi-fideism is a view about the epistemology of religious beliefs." We will need more details, a sense of the context of a particular investigation into religious belief, in order to make any progress. We can see exactly why it is so appealing to, why it is one of the desiderata discussed above, to have figured clearly beforehand where and how to draw the lines between religion and non-religion, and so have figured out what hinge fills out quasi-fideism. For example, if a commitment to the existence of a deity were the thing that separated religion from non-religion, we might plausibly "God exists" or something in the neighborhood to be the hinge that completes quasi-fideism. We'd know at least loosely or generally, simply by considering quasi-fideism even in the absence of any particular question about religious beliefs, what beliefs we might expect to find being rationally supported: beliefs in the details of deities, and whatever follows from those beliefs, for example. Instead, we actually find that quasi-fideism does not ground one monolithic thing that is religious belief. Rather, it shows a way to ground religious belief, however one thinks it ought to be categorized.

While the costs are minimal (but real), the benefits of treating quasi-fideism as a schema are great. First, we retain the spirit of quasi-fideism in seeking a way to place religious belief on the same rational ground as every other belief. Second, a schematic approach also has the feature of drawing attention to quasi-fideism's status as an instantiation or application of hinge epistemology. It is not a free-floating epistemic system, but a way of making use of a much larger epistemic framework.[54] As I've shown above, particular approaches to quasi-fideism, demarcated by the hinges to which one appeals, have problems. However, the success or plausibility of quasi-fideism in general doesn't ultimately depend much on particular hinges. It doesn't matter much exactly what religion turns out to be, as long as an appropriate hinge can be found to ground the relevant beliefs. It is the plausibility (or implausibility) of hinge epistemology in general that makes the quasi-fideist approach to the epistemology of religious belief worth pursuing (or worth abandoning, as the case may be). Third, the impact of a counterexample to any particular definition of religion is reduced. Because quasi-fideism is not committed to one particular hinge, just that there be a hinge sufficient to separate religion from non-religion well enough for whatever one is investigating at the time, it doesn't impact the viability of quasi-fideism as a project if a particular hinge is subject to counterexample in some context. If quasi-fideism doesn't stand on the strength of a particular hinge, then it doesn't fall if a particular hinge turns out to be subject to counterexample in some contexts.

A schematic approach to quasi-fideism is also less susceptible to certain criticisms that stem from its origin in a non-belief approach to hinge epistemology. While it isn't in a position to answer criticisms directed at the non-belief approach on the whole, it is a viable approach to answering particular criticisms directed at the conjunction of non-belief hinge epistemology and religious belief. For example, many of the criticisms offered by de Ridder turn on taking "God exists" or something similar as a hinge. In sections 4 and 5, he considers the issue that arises when one takes hinges to be arational non-belief states.[55] If "God exists" is the hinge that fills out quasi-fideism, a great many religious believers, from ordinary people to the greatest theologians, turn out to be very mistaken in their assessment of their mental states and doxastic attitudes.

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53   See Smith, "A Matter of Class" for a discussion of the value of having a plurality of taxonomies of religion.

54   I take this to be an advantage, though I can see how one might think it counts against my approach to quasi-fideism. After all, the line between quasi-fideism and hinge epistemology on the whole is much blurrier when quasi-fideism is a schema and lines between religion and non-religion are drawn as needed in a context dependent way. Even if this is counted as a cost and not a benefit, I still think the benefits outweigh the costs.

55   Ridder, "Against Quasi-Fideism".

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While I think that it is actually not so odd to be mistaken when one introspects, one need not even retreat to this response if they accept the schematic approach to quasi-fideism because the schematic approach is not wedded to "God exists" as the hinge which marks out the fundamental commitments of religious beliefs. If this is not the hinge, then there is room for the possibility that theistic religious believers genuinely believe in their deity, and so room for rational disagreement rather than deep or radical epistemic relativism.

Finally, it may be that if we treat quasi-fideism as a schema or tool rather than as a single approach to grounding religious belief, we are in fact successfully reflecting something about the nature of religion. It just might be that religion considered "on the whole" or in the absence of a particular scholarly context, is a category too heterogeneous, artificial, or otherwise difficult-to-work-with if we hope to make progress in understanding the epistemology of religion. We need to specify a purpose or context against which we define religion before we go about determining whether and how such-and-such beliefs are rationally grounded. As Smith puts it in a discussion of the taxonomy of religions:

> The moral... is not that religion cannot be defined, but that it can be defined, with greater or lesser success, more than fifty ways. Besides, Leuba goes on to classify and evaluate his list of definitions. 'Religion' is not a native term; it is a term created bv scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as 'language' plays in linguistics or 'culture' plays in anthropology. There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon.[56]

Indeed, the idea that the uber-hinge can be codified in many different ways fits quite well with the schematic approach. Instead of seeking a single hinge or even several hinges that provide for a clear demarcation between religious belief and non-religious belief, it may be that the gap between religious and non-religious belief happens in many ways in many contexts. It is important to emphasize here that if we approach quasi-fideism as a schema for grounding religious belief, we must still respect the mandate to ground religious belief in a way that is different from non-religious belief. All the schematic approach does is put the onus for making the distinction on something outside of the structure quasi-fideism, which is nothing more than an acknowledgement of the fact that quasi-fideism (and hinge epistemology generally) is a view about the structure and rationality of religious beliefs, rather than a view about the nature of religion. Of course, there still needs to be a distinction between religious and non-religious belief in play, and the hinge chosen must respect that. But perhaps there is no single thing that unifies all religious life, and no single hinge that grounds all religious belief. It simply matters that some hinge ground the beliefs in question, and that religious life revolves around some arational commitment. In this way, religious beliefs are structured and justified just like the rest of our beliefs.

I've argued that there are three desiderata for any hinge that fits into a quasi-fideist epistemology of religion. It must not make religious belief rationally unassailable, it must leave room for substantial religious disagreement, and it must recognize the demarcation between religion and non-religion. I've considered two prima facie plausible hinges one might use and found them wanting. Understanding the ways in which these hinges fell short, however, provided a possible path forward for considering how to select hinges for quasi-fideism. By treating quasi-fideism as a schema, rather than as something that provides a grounding for the beliefs of a well defined domain of thought, we can see how it is a useful approach to the epistemology of religion, even if we do not have all the details. [57]

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56   Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious", 281.

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