

A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF GLORY

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Abstract: Although the concept of glory has a central place in religious thought, philosophers of religion have had remarkably little to say about glory. What follows is a philosophical analysis of two distinct concepts we express with the term ‘glory’ and an explanation of how we can use one of them to dislodge Bayne and Nagasawa’s recent atheological argument from worship.

While the term ‘glory’ appears most frequently in religious contexts, it expresses concepts that are not fundamentally religious in character. Take what we consider to be our very best works of art, our most outstanding films, or our most impressive technological achievements. These are often acclaimed as being *magnificent*, *dazzling*, or *spectacular*. These notions are, if not quite synonymous with glory, close enough to justify the idea that the concept of glory is not far removed from common ways of thinking about the world. For this reason, an analysis of glory promises to help illuminate a concept we commonly employ in thinking about highly valued aspects of the world. Nevertheless, the concept of glory also has a central place in religious thought. For example, glory is commonly thought to be among the essential attributes of divinity in most religious traditions. Yet little-to-no rigorous philosophical effort has been devoted to investigating the concept of glory in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion.¹ The first sections of this paper defend particular analyses of two concepts we express with the term ‘glory.’ The final section shows how we can use one of them to dislodge Bayne and Nagasawa’s recent atheological argument from worship.

¹ The literature in philosophical theology that focuses on the nature of God often omits discussions of glory (e.g., [Wierenga 1989](#); [Morris 1991](#); [Swinburne 1994](#)). The recent Oxford and Cambridge handbooks to philosophical theology also omit any substantive discussion the nature of glory (e.g., [Flint and Rea 2009](#); [Taliaferro and Meister 2010](#)). A conceptual analysis of glory is also absent in all back issues of *Faith and Philosophy*, *Religious Studies*, and other like journals that specialize in the analytic philosophy of religion, as well as the recent thirteen volume *Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* series. Still, philosophers working in philosophical theology sometimes comment on the idea of glory. But their comments are often quite brief ([Adams 1999](#), 193–194).

1 An Initial Conception of Glory

In thinking about glory and how it might be analyzed, it helps to think about concepts in the vicinity. Clearly concepts like *being majestic*, *being magnificent*, and *being marvelous* are closely related to the concept of glory, but we won't get far if we try to analyze glory in terms of them. They are too semantically close to glory to offer an illuminating analysis of glory. Even if glory and these other concepts happen to be semantically distinct, they are not so very distinct that we will not have occasion to pursue the further question: What is it to be majestic/magnificent/marvelous?

There are other concepts that fall in the neighborhood of glory. For glory seems to bear a natural relation to notions that conjure visual imagery of light: *being radiant*, *being spectacular*, *being brilliant*, and *being dazzling*. Even if we could give an adequate analysis of glory in terms of these notions, these too will leave us with a further question as to how they ought to be analyzed in turn. I will return to these concepts later in [section 4.3](#). There is one other collection of concepts that have often been associated with glory: *praise*, *respect*, and *admiration*. For example, Cicero (*De Inventione*, II, 166) says that “Glory consists in a person’s having a widespread reputation accompanied by praise.”² Making the plausible assumption that having a (good) reputation is at least partly a matter of being respected, Cicero’s remark connects glory to both praise and respect. Hobbes (*Leviathan*, ch. 13) says that the desire for glory is the desire to have “one’s associates value him as highly as he values himself; and any sign that he is disregarded or undervalued naturally leads a man to try, as far as he dares, to raise his value in the eyes of others” (2017). Talk of being valued and well-regarded are highly suggestive of being admired and respected, and so Hobbes seems to tether glory to something in the neighborhood of admiration and respect. Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* II-II, q.132. a.2) connects glory to praise and respect when he says that “glory is an effect of honor and praise” and he connects it with something in the ballpark of praise and admiration when he says (*Summa Theologica* II-II, q.132. a.1) that “the word glory properly denotes that somebody’s good is known and approved by many.”³ The Oxford English Dictionary affirms that there is a common use of the English term ‘glory’ that is connected to praise, respect, and admiration.⁴ And Kittel (1985, 178–181) indicates that ancient Hebrew and Greek equivalents (or near-equivalents) are likewise connected to praise, respect, and admiration. At this point, we could doubtless become weighed down in a number of exegetical issues. Since my present aim is to analyze *our* concept of glory, these issues can be set to the side.⁵

² Citations to Cicero’s *De Inventione* are to book and page number (Cicero 1949).

³ Citations to Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica* are to part, question, and article (Aquinas 1920).

⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “glory,” accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.oed.com/>.

⁵ More specifically, while we can draw inspiration from historical sources in analyzing the concept we express with our current use of the English term ‘glory’ we needn’t rely on them.

There is no redundancy in claiming that glory is connected to praise *and* respect *and* admiration. Praise, respect, and admiration are distinct relations. *Praise* has to do with commendation and applaud for something's (at least apparent) characteristics.⁶ We praise galaxies for their unique beauty, we praise plays for their witty dialogues and subtle plots, we praise persons for their courage, we praise websites for their elegant use of space and color, etc. Crucial to praise is its evaluative aspect. J. J. C. Smart (1961, 303) rightly observed that to praise something is *to grade* it; it is *to give* it a positive mark relative to some evaluative standard. Accordingly, praise is a kind of *evaluative activity*; it involves *giving* something a positive evaluation.⁷ There are obviously many kinds of evaluative activity that can constitute praise. We can overtly praise something by exclaiming how great it is with a cheer, or by giving a verbal report, or by writing a laudatory blog post. We can also covertly praise something by simply inwardly affirming to ourselves how great it is.

Admiration has to do with valuing or esteeming something, or having some other related kind of pro-attitude toward it for its (at least apparent) characteristics. Yet admiration is not to be thought of simply as a pro-attitude; it's an *evaluative* pro-attitude. That is, like praise, it has an evaluative cognitive element; we only admire what we *believe* is good. Ross (1939, 278ff) observed this when he wrote that "Admiration is not a mere emotion; it is an emotion accompanied by the *thought* that that which is admired is good." While both praise and admiration share an evaluative aspect, they differ in kind. Praise is an *activity* and admiration is an *attitude*. Thus, like many other familiar attitudes, admiration is a dispositional state (i.e., a state one can be in even if one is not occurrently experiencing the state). For example, we *believe* in, and *hope* for, and *fear* many things. But these beliefs, and hopes, and fears don't cease to exist when we fall asleep or become temporarily unconscious or otherwise cease to be in an occurrent state of believing, hoping, or fearing. Similarly, our admiration for, say, a painting remains even when we are not occurrently admiring it.

The aim is to analyze *our* concept of glory, a concept which, I hope, overlaps significantly with the concepts expressed by historical uses of terms that have been translated as 'glory' in English. Whether or not our concept of glory does so overlap depends on the quality of the relevant translations and the vicissitudes of the shifting relations between words and concepts over time. Accordingly, my purpose for drawing attention to the historical sources above is merely to help guide us in selecting plausible starting points in analyzing our concept of glory.

⁶ The notion of "characteristics" is to be construed broadly to include an object's intrinsic and extrinsic properties. The parenthetical "at least apparent" is to create space for the phenomenon of *misplaced* praise. For while we typically aim to praise only people who *deserve* it, we can be misled about that, but that doesn't imply that we have not actually praised them.

⁷ Smart contrasted this sense of praise with a distinctly moral sense that involves attributions of responsibility. This latter sense of praise applies only to agents, and is thus unfit for a theory of glory that seeks to explicate how things like performances, galaxies, novels, sunsets, and other non-agents can be glorious. See Smart 1961 for more on this distinction between kinds of praise.

Concerning *respect*, we first need to note that there is not just one concept we express with the term respect. So, claiming that glory is connected to respect is not without some ambiguity. However, Darwall (1977) has drawn attention to a notion of respect, “recognition respect,” that is useful for present purposes. This notion of respect has two aspects. First, it has to do with being disposed to interact with something in ways that befit it in virtue of its perceived positive characteristics. In normal circumstances, we respect laws by obeying them, we respect paintings by displaying rather than destroying them, and we respect performances by not interrupting them. This sense of ‘respect’ involves a bare behavioral disposition: the disposition to treat something as it deserves to be treated. But recognition respect is not a mere behavioral disposition. It has a second aspect: it is a behavioral disposition that is, at least partially, *grounded in one’s belief* that the object in question has positive characteristics that make it deserving of one’s respect (Darwall 1977, 40–41). Accordingly, we can think of respect in this sense as being an *evaluatively grounded* behavioral disposition. Thus, acting respectfully toward something solely for, say, financial gain does not constitute respect any more than acting in a friend-like way toward someone solely for financial gain constitutes friendship. One must act respectfully *because* one views respectful behavior as fitting behavior.⁸

There are two more things to note about the target notion of respect. First, respecting something in this behavioral sense does not entail that one *admires* or otherwise *directly values* what is respected. One can view something as having characteristics that would make treating it in certain ways appropriate *without* admiring or otherwise valuing those characteristics. Lovers of modern art might not admire the work of impressionists, but that doesn’t mean they don’t respect it. Second, it is a presupposition of this notion of respect that the characteristics of some objects ground fitting behaviors in relation to those objects. Of course, it is a substantive question *what* characteristics ground *what* range of fitting behaviors, and *why* this is so. But *that* there is some set of characteristics that ground a range of fitting behaviors is reasonably uncontroversial (among non-philosophers anyway). I’ll use the term ‘respect’ only to denote respect in this evaluative-cum-behavioral sense described by Darwall.

There is doubtless more to say about each of the above notions of praise, respect, and admiration. But our intuitive grasp of these notions together with the above remarks are enough for us to effectively begin analyzing the concept of glory.

So far I’ve only said that there is a conception of glory that “connects” glory to praise, respect, and admiration. But what is that connection? An

⁸ Darwall distinguished recognition respect from a notion of respect constituted by a positive appraisal of persons, ‘appraisal respect.’ This further notion of respect is too narrow for the purposes of analyzing glory since non-persons can be glorious. I pick this back up in [section 4.1](#).

initial idea is to simply press them together in the following, flat-footed way:

The Simple View

(1) Something has glory if and only if it is praised, respected, and admired for its, at least apparent, characteristics.

2 Our Normative Conception of Glory

While (1) is tempting, it is a temptation best resisted. First, (1) tethers glory too much to the activities of agents. For it implies that things lack glory to the extent that they lack praise, respect, and admiration. But it's not incoherent to claim that something is glorious even if it's neither praised, nor respected, nor admired by anyone in any set of circumstances. One might think that distant galaxies were glorious even before anyone was able to view them with the aid of the Hubble Space Telescope.

Second, (1) overlooks the evaluative character glory. This can be seen by considering what (1) predicts about the following:

(A) (i) The building's facade was repaired and thereby restored to its former glory. (ii) But the repairs effected no *improvements*.

(B) (i) The gymnastic performance was glorious. (ii) But it was not a *quality* performance.

If (1) is true, then there is no conflict between (i) and (ii) in either statement. For (1) does not require that something actually *be good* in order to have glory. Rather, in so far as praise, respect, and admiration involve *regarding* the praised, respected, and admired object as good, (1) only requires that glorious things be *regarded as good* (in some respect or other). It does not matter if that regard is for something that is not in fact good.

But, as (A) and (B) bring out, there is clearly something amiss in thinking that an object is *glorious* and not in some way *good*. So a theory of glory should entail that something is glorious only if it is also good.

Still we do not have to reject (1) completely. For the term 'having glory' does double duty. On the one hand, the term is used to express the concept of *being glorious*, which is an evaluative concept. On the other hand, the term is also used to express the concept of *being glorified*, which is a non-evaluative concept. Both concepts are (arguably) intimately linked to the notions of praise, respect, and admiration. I'll come back to the concept of being glorified in the next section. The remainder of this section will concern the concept of being glorious.

Here's our present question: Is it possible to provide an analysis of being glorious that remains tethered to the common idea that glory is related to praise, respect, and admiration while being adequately evaluative? There

is a fairly familiar and straightforward way of having both things, and it involves taking a page out of the fitting attitude theorist's handbook.

Consider how fitting attitude theorists analyze *desirability*. Desirability is a notion that is crucially tethered to the non-evaluative idea of *being desired*, but it also has an evaluative flare. Fitting attitude theorists have persuasively argued that these two facts about desirability come together in the following way: what it is for an object to be desirable is for it to have characteristics that provide *sufficient reason to desire* the object; or put differently, it's for the object to be *worthy of being desired*. Or take the idea of *being disgusting*. According to the fitting attitude approach, what it is for, say, an image to be disgusting is not for people to actually be disgusted by the image. Rather, it is for there to be sufficient reason for people to be disgusted by the image; it's for the image to be worthy of disgust whether or not people are actually disgusted by it or regard it as being worthy of disgust. Plausible fitting attitude analyses of concepts have been proposed for a variety of evaluative notions (e.g., being excusable, being amusing, being credible).⁹ The analysis of glory is just one more place where a fitting attitude analysis offers assistance.

Here is one kind of fitting attitude approach to glory that can explain the observation that our concept of being glorious is an evaluative concept that is connected to praise, respect, and admiration:

Being Glorious

(2) Something is glorious if and only if its actual characteristics make it *worthy of* praise, respect, and admiration.

I've changed "apparent" in (1) to "actual" in (2) because it's implausible that one's *merely* apparent characteristics can generate sufficient reason to praise, respect, and admire it. Put differently, something is not plausibly regarded as *worthy of* praise, respect, and admiration for its merely apparent properties.

We'll shortly see why (2) cannot be correct. But while (2) is in need of refinement, it's worth pausing to appreciate its virtues. First, it easily explains the evaluative nature of being glorious and the idea that something can be glorious while utterly lacking in actual praise, respect, and admiration from others. For, in general, being worthy of some kind of response does not depend on whether or not that response is actually received. A parent can be worthy of respect even if their child always fails to respect them.

Second, (2) also easily explains why it's so counterintuitive to think that it's possible for something to be glorious while also being *unworthy* either of praise, or of respect, or of admiration. Consider the following conjunctions:

- The performance was glorious, but not worthy of praise.
- The performance was glorious, but not worthy of respect.

⁹ For examples see D'Arms and Jacobson 2000, Zimmerman 2001, and Schroeder 2010.

- The performance was glorious, but not worthy of admiration.

I doubt anyone familiar with concept of being glorious would countenance these claims. It's quite intuitive to think that, say, a glorious performance is a performance that deserves praise, and respect, and admiration, and statements to the contrary will sound quite puzzling. This is only evidence that being worthy of praise, respect, and admiration are necessary for being glorious. Is being worthy of praise, respect, and admiration also sufficient for being glorious? I think this sufficiency claim is very nearly correct. However, there are four objections to this sufficiency claim to be addressed. I'll deal with two objections in this section and the remaining objections in [section 4.2](#) and [section 4.3](#).

Third, (2) also explains why being glorious is goodness-entailing (i.e., why something cannot be glorious and fail to be good). Fitting attitude theories of goodness claim that being good *just is* a matter of *being worthy of being valued*. Now, whether or not the reductive ambitions of fitting attitude theories with respect to goodness are correct, the idea that being worthy of being valued entails being good (and vice versa) is extremely plausible.¹⁰ And since admiring something is a way of valuing it, it follows that something is worthy of admiration only if it is good. Additionally, praise and respect were seen to have an evaluative aspect: to praise and respect something is, in part, to view it as good. Accordingly, this suggests that only those things that are in fact good will be worthy of praise and respect.

Fourth, (2) can explain the idea that glory comes in degrees (i.e., some things can be *more or less* glorious). (2) can accommodate the degreed nature of glory in two ways. First, something can be worthy of praise, respect, and admiration by *more or less people in greater or lesser ranges of circumstances*. Second, something can be worthy of *more or less praise, respect, and admiration*. Variations along these dimensions can easily explain comparative facts about glory as well as the fact that something's glory can increase or decrease.

Despite (2)'s theoretical virtues, it's not quite right. Here's the first problem. We've noted that glory is goodness-entailing, but being glorious is not just goodness-entailing; it's also *greatness-entailing*. That is, being glorious is partly a matter of being great or excellent. It's easy to refine (2) to accommodate this thought. For, if being *worthy of* praise, respect, and admiration is enough to ensure goodness (as argued above), then being worthy of *much* praise, respect, and admiration is intuitively enough to ensure greatness or excellence. How could, say, a performance be worthy of *much* praise, respect, and admiration qua performance, but fail to be a great performance? Intuitively, such a performance could not fail to be a

¹⁰ Even critics of fitting attitude accounts of goodness are comfortable with the logical equivalence between being worthy of being valued and being good. See [Wedgwood 2009](#).

great performance. Hence, we can revise (2) to accommodate the idea that being glorious is greatness-entailing:

(2*) Something is glorious if and only if its actual characteristics make it worthy of *much* praise, respect, and admiration.

This is altogether intuitive. Think about the ease with which we transition from thoughts about something being glorious to something being *magnificent*. Magnificence is definitely a greatness-entailing concept, and further testimony to the idea that greatness is apart of the conceptual content of being glorious.

While (2*) is quite plausible, it suppresses something important. (2*) tells us that glorious objects, events, and persons are worthy of much praise, respect, and admiration. But *from whom* and *when*? Are glorious objects objects that are worthy of *everyone's* praise, respect, and admiration *at all times*? If so, then a glorious painting would be worthy of my praise during my wedding ceremony. But that seems odd, if not absurd. Indeed, it's not only some *one* painting that would be worthy of my praise during my wedding if (2*) happened to be true, but every glorious painting, every glorious sports performance, and every other thing that is glorious. Surely there's something to the idea that a painting can be glorious even if it's not worthy of being praised during my wedding. Similarly, I played soccer for many years. After each game there would be some plays made (typically by other players) that I would say were "really awesome." But from year to year my standards for evaluating glorious plays in soccer would change. The very challenging accurate header pass in the first year seemed so much less impressive in year ten. Was my first-year self just wrong in identifying accurate header passes as glorious? Or is my present self somehow not appreciating what my earlier self was quite easily able to appreciate?

One way of responding to this worry is to treat glory as, in some sense, relative to persons and occasions. It might be that being glorious *simpliciter* is simply a matter of something being worthy of much praise, respect, and admiration *by someone on some occasion*. But two things that are glorious might differ in respect to *from whom* and *when* they are worthy of praise, respect, and admiration. Perhaps this is what distinguishes the glory of divinity from the glory of lesser things; the divine is, or would be, worthy of *everyone's* praise, respect, and admiration *all (or very much) of the time* while even humanity's best works of art are only worthy of *some* people's praise, respect, and admiration *some* of the time. If these reflections are along the right lines, we can correct (2*) in the following way:

(2***) Something is glorious *simpliciter* if and only if its actual characteristics make it worthy of *much* praise, respect, and admiration by a certain range of people in a certain range of circumstances.

With (2**) we can rank glorious things in relation to the breadth of occasions and persons they merit praise, respect, and admiration from, and thus explain a further sense in which glory intuitively comes in degrees. Of course, this raises a further question: What features of a person and their situation determine whether or not an object is worthy of praise, respect, and admiration? What changes occurred in my first-year self and my year-ten self that made accurate header passes less glorious? My hunch is that one way to answer this is to appeal to some kind of assessor contextualism that makes facts about glory depend, in part, on facts about how one is situated with respect to the glorious object. Developing the details of and then defending this view against alternatives would take us far afield. The main point I want to make is that (2**) is true if not fully fleshed out, and that some kind of contextualism is perhaps one way of illuminating what's behind the final clause in (2**).

3 Our Non-Normative Conception of Glory

Earlier, I argued that (1) offered us an inadequate account of *being glorious* because (1) entails that glory is a non-evaluative notion. Still, one might think (1) offers us an adequate account *being glorified*. After all, there is no reason to think the activity glorifying something must be goodness-entailing any more than there is reason to think that asserting that something is good must be goodness-entailing. So something in the neighborhood of (1) might well direct us to what we're after for the concept of being glorified:

- (3) Something is glorified by some person at a time if and only if at that time they praise, respect, and admire it.

This certainly tethers the activity of glorifying something to the notions of praise, respect, and admiration.

Yet there is room to worry about (3). First, some might think that not all acts of praise need be sincere. For example, suppose a journalist were offered a million dollars to write a laudatory review of a given performance. If the review is written *solely because* of the potential monetary gain, it seems odd to claim that the journalist glorified the performance even if they also happened to respect or admire it. Arguably, the performance is glorified only if it is praised, at least in part, *because* one respects or admires the performance. In other words, it's not implausible to think that being glorified is a matter of being *sincerely* praised, where what makes praise sincere in the target sense is the fact that it stems from one's positive inner attitudes and not simply from coincident incentives to praise.¹¹

¹¹ Recall that praising something is a matter of expressing one's positive evaluation of something. Perhaps it really is possible to have and express a positive evaluation of something *without* respecting or admiring it. If such cases are possible, they are not cases where it will be very intuitive to claim that one is glorifying something by praising it. Praise in the absence of respect and admiration seems like no praise at all—or at least a kind insincere praise.

Second, (3) makes the strong claim that one's praise must result from *both* respect and admiration, but this seems too demanding. A fan of modern art might not care for (i.e., not admire) the impressionists but still respect their work. Just because someone doesn't admire impressionism doesn't mean they can't *believe* it to be good art, nor does it mean they will be inclined to burn or bash any piece of impressionistic art they come across. Accordingly, it seems like one can sincerely praise, say, Monet's work for being excellent works of art even if one fails to also admire them.

Lastly, recall that (2) included a "much" qualification—that being glorious entailed one's being worthy of *much* praise, respect, and admiration. But (3) fails to include any qualification to the effect that one's respect and admiration are more than minimal.

It's fairly easy to make (3) sensitive to these concerns:

Being Glorified

(3*) Something is glorified by some person at a time if and only if at that time they praise it as a result of their high degree of respect or their high degree of admiration for it (or as a result of both).¹²

So we have two distinct yet related notions of glory: one is evaluative and is best thought of under the guise *being glorious*, while the other is non-normative and is best thought of under the guise *being glorified*. These concepts are arguably specified by (2**) and (3*).

4 Objections

The concerns to follow regard the general approach I have taken to analyzing our concepts of glory.

4.1 Glory and Met Admiration

While discussions of the nature of glory have largely been absent in contemporary philosophy, there is one notable exception. In her discussion of glory Chappell (2011, 108; 2014, 160ff) writes that "glory is—typically—*what happens* when a spectacularly excellent performance within a worthwhile form of activity *meets the admiration that it merits*." While Chappell intends this characterization of glory to be somewhat stipulative, she also

¹² This is best thought of as an account of *occurrently* glorifying something in so far as praise is an activity and, unlike respect and admiration, it is not a dispositional state of any sort. Still, there is nothing to stop us from constructing a wholly dispositional notion of being glorified. For respect and admiration have to do with having a disposition to treat something respectfully and to feel admiration in a certain range of circumstances. So, if needed, we can explain how something could be glorified even if it's not *presently* the object of any praise-constituting activity in roughly the following way: something is *dispositionally* glorified by some persons at a time if and only if at that time they are *disposed* to praise it as a result of their respect or their admiration for it (or as as result of both).

intends it to resonate with our ordinary notion. My defense of (2**) suggests that she is right. For her characterization does resonate with the analyses offered above by connecting being glorious with *goodness* (via excellence) and *merited admiration*.

However, while Chappell's view is adequate to her purpose of locating a place for glory (stipulatively construed) in ethical thought, it may not be best to take it as an analysis of our concept of being glorious. For on Chappell's account, only objects that engage in *performances within a worthwhile form of activity* can be glorious; things that don't perform activities cannot be glorious. But it's natural to think that things such as galaxies, sunsets, paintings, elegant proofs, and other things are glorious and that people sometimes properly glorify these things even though they don't perform activities. For example, it would not be at all odd to hear someone sincerely exclaim that a planet-engulfing solar flare is *spectacular* or that the iridescently rippling northern lights are *marvelous*. These are just more colloquial ways of claiming that these things are *glorious*. So I take it to be an advantage of (2**) that it allows non-agential, non-performing objects to be glorious.

4.2 Uniqueness

In conversation, people have conveyed a tendency to identify only those objects as glorious that are in some way unique, or rare, or special, or at least not especially common. For example, it's not entirely implausible to think that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Handel's Messiah, and other such works of music are glorious in part because they *stand out* from the vast majority of other tunes we're familiar with. These considerations suggest that being worthy of praise, respect, and admiration is insufficient for being glorious and that (2**) should be augmented with some kind of uniqueness constraint: something is glorious only if it is not especially common, or is unique, or is rare, and so forth.

There is reason to resist not just the letter, but also the spirit of this uniqueness constraint on being glorious. We need to distinguish two things: what it is for an object *to be glorious* and *experiencing the glory of something*.¹³ To get a handle on the distinction, start with an analogy involving beauty. Any plausible analysis of beauty will allow that objects can be beautiful, but there's a clear difference between *being beautiful* and *experiencing the beauty of something*. Recall that our experiences of beauty can be *diminished* or *deadened* for various reasons. Objects, persons, and performances that may have initially *stunned* and *floored us* with their beauty might later have only a diminished effect (or no effect at all) on us.

¹³ Some will be suspicious of the idea of experiencing normative properties. That's fine. Talk of experiencing the properties such as glory or beauty can be rephrased in terms of talk of experiencing *the objects* that are glorious or beautiful. For defense of the idea that we can experience normative properties, see Audi 2013.

This kind of experiential deadening to beauty can be owed to any number of things (e.g., a foul mood, fatigue, overexposure). However, the fact that our capacity to experience an object as beautiful can become deadened and unresponsive to an object's beauty does not tell against the beauty of the object.

Similarly, in the case of glory, it's reasonable to think that our capacity to experience an object as glorious can be impacted by things like foul moods, fatigue, and most importantly for the uniqueness objection: overexposure. I would suggest that people's intuitions about glory having a uniqueness constraint speak to the impact of overexposure on our experience of the glory of an object. For it's simply plausible to think that we can become experientially deadened to the gloriousness of, say, a particular kind of performance if overexposed to performances of that kind. So there is reason to resist the idea that (2**) needs some sort of uniqueness constraint if it's to offer an adequate sufficient condition for being glorious.¹⁴

4.3 Luminosity Language

C. S. Lewis (1941) wrote that "Glory suggests two ideas to me. . . . Either glory means to me *fame*, or it means *luminosity*." I think the concept of *being glorified* as specified by (3*) can nicely explain why Lewis found it intuitive to regard 'glory' in connection to fame. Arguably, being famous is at least in part a matter of being glorified by others. But what of the connection between glory and luminosity? Chappell (2011, 107; 2014, 160) drew a similar connection as Lewis:

we might also say that glory is a kind of *radiance*. . . .
Obviously to speak of radiance or aura is metaphorical,
but it is hard to get beyond the metaphors. . . . What is
glorious is what is *dazzling*.

Does the account of our concepts of glory I've given help to explain why it's intuitive to think of glory in connection with language that brings to mind visual imagery of light? If (2**) is unable to do this, then perhaps there's a worry with the sufficiency of (2**).

There is good reason to think that (2**) is well positioned to help discharge this explanatory burden. To see this, start by reflecting on things you yourself regard as glorious (spectacular, dazzling, electrifying, etc.). For example, reflect on the first time you saw your favorite film, the first time you heard Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, or some occasion on which you saw an especially colorful and mesmerizing sunset. When we experience

¹⁴ Joseph Corabi suggested that part of what might also undergird the uniqueness worry is a subtle conflation of what it takes to be glorious with what is evidence that something is glorious. For a primary source of evidence for us that something is glorious is our first person experience of being moved toward praise, respect, and/or admiration. So when we're experientially deadened, we lack that primary source of evidence and perhaps naturally transition to the thought that the target object is not glorious. But that is an illicit inference.

something as being glorious (especially in the first instance) our response tends to involve being *occurently and involuntarily pulled to respect and admire it* and then to give voice to this felt welling of respect and admiration *by praising it*. There's *something it's like* to have this kind of experience, and part of what it's like involves *having one's attention profoundly arrested by the glorious object*. That which is glorious tends to seize our attention and force other possible objects of attention to fade into the background. In this way, experiencing something as glorious is a lot like having a very bright light appear in one's visual field: the bright light seizes one's perceptual attention and pulls one's attention away from other objects in one's visual field.

It is my suspicion that it's this common kind of experience (the experience of having one's attention arrested by an object) that has lead people to, over time, take terms that are tethered to visual imagery of light and use them to express thoughts about glory. This is obviously a historical hypothesis I'm floating, and certainly more robust empirical evidence would be needed to substantiate it. But it is at the very least a *prima facie* plausible hypothesis that falls out of reflecting on some facts that we have reasonably good reflective access to: our concept of glory, our concepts involving related luminosity language, and the phenomenal character of our experiences.

4.4 Religious Uses of the Term 'Glory'

The final concern with (2**) and (3*) stems from the variety of ways the term 'glory' is used in religious contexts. Here's a punchy way of putting the concern that others have put to my theses about our glory concepts:

There is a wide range of uses of the term 'glory' in religious contexts that (2**) and (3*) are ill-suited to explain. Since a correct theory of our concept of glory must be able to explain such uses, (2**) and (3*) must be false. Here are some examples Kittel (1985, 178–181) draws our attention to:

- *Efficacious*. It is *by* the glory of God the dead are raised (Rom. 6:4, ESV).
- *Transitional*. People are said to be taken *up into* glory (1 Tim. 3:16, ESV).
- *Perceptual*. The glory of God is said to *appear* in physical phenomena like clouds and fire (Exod. 13:21ff, ESV).
- *Laudatory*. Worshipers utter "Glory to God in the highest!" (Luke 2:14, ESV).

None of these uses of the term 'glory' can be explained in terms of (2**) or (3*). Consider the efficacious use. It makes little sense to claim that either *being glorious* or *being glorified* as specified by (2**) and (3*) play a role

in raising the dead. After all, how could praise, respect, and admiration—or being worthy of such—bring about a resurrection? Similarly, with respect to the transitional use, (2**) and (3*) seem to preclude the idea that glory could be a location of any sort. Concerning the perceptual use, it's not obvious how the glory of an object—as specified by (2**) or (3*)—could be the sort of property that appears in a cloud. In the final case, glory is being used as an exclamation of some sort and it's not clear how to connect this with (2**) or (3*). So it seems like the sufficient conditions given by (2**) and (3*) cannot exhaust our concepts of glory.

This is a questionable argument for the idea that (2**) and (3*) fail to adequately explain the notions of being glorious and being glorified. The basic worry expressed in the paragraph above stems from a potentially simplistic understanding of the complex ways we can express our thoughts with language.

Grice (1989) was correct to point out that it's preferable to resist positing extra senses of words to explain a speaker's use of words whenever we can instead explain a speaker's use in terms of a conversational implicature. Conversational implicatures are cases in which sentence-meaning and speaker-meaning separate. They are quite common and can sometimes be subtle. Here's how a kind of Gricean story could play-out in cases like those above where the term 'glory' is used in ways that seem at odds with (2**) and (3*).

Suppose someone says that:

(4) So-and-so was raised from the dead by the glory of God.

Now, suppose this is uttered in a context where the speaker and his audience believe (and know that each other believe) that: so-and-so was *actually* raised by the *power* of God, that God is glorious (in part) because he is powerful and benevolently exercises his power. In such circumstances, it would be natural for the speaker's audience to infer that the speaker intended to communicate the following thought with his utterance of (4):

(5) God displayed his gloriousness by exercising his power to raise so-and-so from the dead.

That is, while (4) is literally false and believed to be false by the speaker and his audience, the speaker is communicating something that is not taken to be false by either the speaker or his audience—namely, (5). This is apparently not just a conceptual possibility either. Some New Testament

scholars seem to think that this is just how the efficacious use of the term ‘glory’ referenced above is to be understood.¹⁵

Consider the laudatory case involving the phrase “Glory to God in the highest.” Uses of this phrase are quite naturally construed as performative utterances involving the term ‘glory.’ Suppose a thinker regards God with admiration and respect and utters, with verve, something like “Glory to God!” A very natural interpretation of this behavior is that the agent is engaged in a kind of speech act: he is *sincerely praising* God because he is *glorious*, and he is *glorifying* God by uttering the phrase “Glory to God.” Performative uses of the term ‘glory’ do not demand an additional analysis of the concept of glory beyond (3*) anymore than performative uses of terms such as ‘christen’ or ‘promise’ demand an additional analysis simply because they can be used performatively to effect a christening or a promising.

I think it’s fairly easy to see how one *could* argue that the remaining cases are ultimately to be understood in terms of (2**) or (3*). For example, the statement “*the glory of Israel* will not lie or have regret” could be used to express the thought that “*that which makes Israel glorious* (i.e., their God) will not lie or have regret.” The statement “being taken *up into* glory” conveys a transfer or transition from one state or condition to another. One could easily use the phrase “being taken *up into* glory” to suggest that a transition may be from one state which is not glorious (or is less glorious) to another state which is glorious (or is much more glorious). The sentence “the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud” could be understood to express the thought that “*the gloriousness of God* was manifested/seen/displayed in the events involving the cloud.” None of these ways of understanding those phrases challenges (2**) or (3*). Of course, whether or not these suggested readings of the referenced texts involving the term ‘glory’ are the best readings of these texts is something that I, as a philosopher, am not ideally situated to weigh in on. This is work for scholars of the relevant religious texts.

5 On the Atheological Argument from Worship

Bayne and Nagasawa (2006) have pointed out that traditional theism entails that we have an obligation to worship God. However, they proceed to argue that there is no good explanation for how there could be such an obligation, nor is the obligation plausibly a brute fact. So by *modus tollens* it would follow that there is no such obligation. Accordingly, to the extent that we have reason to think there is no such obligation we have reason to think that traditional theism is false. My aim in this section is to show how the previous account of being glorified (i.e., (3*)) can be

¹⁵ Dunn (1988, 315) notes that this, or something along these lines, is one way of understanding St. Paul’s thought in Romans 6:4. He credits Black (1984) as holding this interpretation.

leveraged to facilitate an explanation of an obligation to worship God on the supposition that God exists and is responsible for our existence.

The crucial premise in Bayne and Nagasawa's argument is that there is no explanation for how we could have an obligation to worship God. They argue for this by elimination of various candidate explanations that theists have either explicitly or implicitly relied on. One putative explanation they challenged was a creation-based explanation that goes, roughly, like this:

OBLIGATION TO WORSHIP—CREATION-BASED ACCOUNT
(OTW)

(a) Each person created by God has a *life of value*: that is, a life that is of enormous value and worth living. (b) In virtue of (a), every person capable of worshipping God ought to worship God.

They suggest that representative expressions of this general explanation of the obligation to worship can be found in Thomas V. Morris's (1987, 26) claim that we "have a duty to worship God and be thankful for his benefits" and Richard Swinburne's (1981, 126) claim that "Worship is obligatory—it is the proper response of respect by man to his creator."

But Bayne and Nagasawa object to both (a) and (b). Against (a), they contend that it is less than clear that *every* life is a life of value since some lives might not be worth living. For example, think of the many people whose existence is dominated by constant suffering. They suggest that for persons living such lives, it's false that they should worship God because he created them; their lives are just too awful for them to have such an obligation. But Bayne and Nagasawa (2006, 305–306) themselves note that this objection is limited to theological perspectives on which the suffering of one's earthly life is not made up for by eternal postmortem happiness. For arguably the disvalue of a finite period of suffering would be outweighed by an infinite duration of happiness. So successfully refuting OTW(a) depends on further controversial theological issues that neither they, nor I, wish to delve into.^{16,17}

But Bayne and Nagasawa (2006) issue a further objection to OTW, one that concerns only OTW(b). It's this further problem that I think our preceding discussion of glory can speak to. Here's their objection:

¹⁶ It should be noted that their opposition to (a) seems to conflate the idea of having a life *worth not living* with having a life *not worth living*. The distinction matters because it's well known that mutually incompatible actions can be worth performing. Thus, a life might be worth not living even if one's life is also worth living. For example, suicide to escape severe suffering might be fitting in some circumstances even if choosing to continue suffering because one values living is also fitting. So to establish their objection Bayne and Nagasawa need to show not only that significant suffering can make a life *worth not living*, but that it can also make a life *not worth living*. This strikes me as much more difficult to argue.

¹⁷ For alternative responses to Bayne and Nagasawa see Crowe 2007 and Cray 2011.

A final problem with the creation-based account is that it runs the risk of ‘domesticating’ worship—that is, of presenting it as continuous with attitudes it is appropriate to take to mundane entities. *If our dependence on God gives us an obligation to worship God, it ought to follow that our dependence on our parents, our friends, and family, and even our society will generate obligations to worship these individuals.* The theist who emphasizes . . . that worship has ‘no real parallel in our relations with created things’ will want to resist this inference. Of course, the theist can always insist that our dependence on God is qualitatively distinct from the dependence we have on terrestrial realities. God is the ultimate ground of our being, whereas our dependence on terrestrial realities is merely causal. And since our dependence on God is of a different order from our dependence on other beings, so too our response of thankfulness to God should also be of a different order. Even if we were to accept this distinction between forms of dependence, the original worry remains: *worship has, on this account, been reduced to thankfulness or gratitude. It has been emptied of its moral, aesthetic, and noumenal components.* This suggests that creation-based considerations can, at best, provide only a partial account of the grounds of our putative obligation to worship God. (306)

The primary worry articulated here is that OTW generates an objectionable asymmetry. On the one hand, we lack an obligation to worship those on whom our lives depend generally. For instance, there is clearly a sense in which I have no obligation to worship my parents even though my existence and the quality of my life depended on their choice to create me and their wise parenting of me through crucial developmental years. On the other hand, OTW aims to ground the worship of God in this general kind of dependence. This seems inconsistent. In other words, there is either an obligation to worship both God and our parents or there’s no obligation to worship either God or our parents. Theists seem committed to the former and so seem stuck with something like parent worship if they’re consistent. Bayne and Nagasawa have a secondary worry related to how theists might attempt to address the primary worry; theists should avoid addressing the primary worry by thinning out the notion of worship so much that it’s reduced to something as mundane as mere thankfulness or gratitude. For doing so would strip down, or “domesticate,” the concept of worship to something unrecognizable as worship.

There is, I think, an elegant solution available to these concerns. It begins with the observation that OTW can be derived from the previous

account I've offered of what it is *to be glorified* together with a couple additional premises that *theists* will find attractive. Here's the first premise:

(5) God is worthy of much respect because he has given us lives of value, and disrespect and indifference would be inappropriate responses to someone who has given us, and continues to sustain, our lives of value. Moreover, there are also some times at which it would be inappropriate for us to withhold praise from God for giving us lives of value.

Tabling the question of whether God exists and is responsible for creating and sustaining our lives, why should one think (5) is true? Richard Swinburne (1981, 79, 126) writes that:

[Persons] ought to *acknowledge* other persons with whom they come into contact, not just ignore them—and *this surely becomes a duty when those persons are our benefactors*. We acknowledge people in various ways when we meet them, e.g., by shaking hands or smiling at them, and the way in which we acknowledge their presence reflects our recognition of the sort of individual they are and the kind of relation they have to us.

[Worship] is the proper response of *respect* by man to his creator.

On Swinburne's view, people ought to *respect* and to *acknowledge* other persons, and especially their benefactors. That is, our benefactors are owed our respect to an extent that exceeds the respect we owe people generally, and we are to *express* this respect by acknowledging them. So if God is our benefactor in the sense that we owe him our lives of value, then we owe God a high degree of *respect* given the great value of our lives. Moreover, if we owe God our lives of value then, according to (5), it would not only be inappropriate for us to fail to highly respect God for giving us lives of value but it would also be inappropriate for us to fail to *acknowledge* him for his great beneficence towards us. It's of note that Bayne and Nagasawa don't object to Swinburne's idea that our benefactors are owed our respect and that they should be acknowledged for their beneficence; they only express their skepticism that this can get us all the way to an obligation to worship God. Rather than discuss (5) further, we'll let it stand.

From (5) and (3*) we can reach:

(6) If (5) is true, then we have an obligation *to glorify* God because he has given us lives of value.

The basic idea (6) captures is that (5) implies an obligation to *highly respect* God and to sometimes *express* that respect by acknowledging him as our benefactor. Given the account of what it is to glorify something we developed above (i.e., (3*)) this obligation to respect God and express it amounts to an obligation *to glorify* God. This is because something is

glorified if it is praised from one's high degree of respect. Thus from (5) and (3*) we get (6).

Next, it's intuitive to think that glorifying God entails worshipping God in some relevant sense. That is:

(7) If someone *glorifies* God because he has given one a life of value, then one counts as *worshipping* God because he has given one a life of value.

I'll discuss this premise in just a moment. Next, from (6) and (7) we get:

(8) If (5) is true, then we have an obligation to *worship* God because he has given us lives of value.

And from (8) and (5) it follows that:

(9) So we have an obligation to worship God because he has given us lives of value.

What (9) does is tell us *that* we have an obligation to worship God for something he has done, but what (9) doesn't do is *explain* that obligation.¹⁸ We get an explanation for this obligation from the fact that we derived (9) in part from (5), and (5) offers us an explanation of the obligation to worship. For it locates the source that obligation in the fact God created and sustains our lives of value and the fact that there is a more fundamental obligation to praise and respect our benefactors. So if premise (5) and the other premises involved in this deduction are correct, we have a creation-based explanation of OTW.

This march toward OTW depended the following premises: (3*), (5), and (7). I defended (3*) above, and Swinburne laid out considerations in support of (5). What might be said on behalf of (7)? (7) says that glorifying God is a way of worshipping him. I believe this should strike us as something like an analytic truth. It's hard to tell what it could mean to claim that someone is glorifying God for, say, his generous gift of life, but then go on to claim that the act of glorifying God failed to amount to an act of worship. Acts of glorifying God are, it seems, acts of worshipping God.

Notice that this claim is not out of sync with Bayne and Nagasawa's characterization of worship. Bayne and Nagasawa (2006, 300ff) argue that worship is an agent-directed attitude that has certain broadly affective aspects and certain doxastic aspects. The affective aspects *tend* to include (at least in certain paradigmatic instances) some subset of reverence, *respect*, humility, and admiration toward the object of one's worship; the doxastic aspects *tend* to include (at least in certain paradigmatic instances) some subset of beliefs about the moral superiority of the object of one's worship,

¹⁸ The "because" in (9) does not offer an explanation for the obligation to worship. Rather, it is motivational: one's motivating reason for worshipping God is to be the fact that he's given one a life of value.

the high degree of power of the object of one's worship, the excellence of the object of one's worship, and the holiness or sacredness or specialness of one's object of worship. This is, as they admit, not a crisp conceptual analysis of worship. They take the concept of worship as a kind of cluster concept that has certain affective and doxastic hallmarks that tend to, but need not, accompany every case of worship. If their view of worship is broadly correct, then it seems like there is at least *some* sense in which God is worshiped when he is glorified, even if there are ways of worshipping God that involve more than merely sincerely expressing one's high degree of respect for God. But it's this thinner sense of worship as being glorified which seems to be the target sense of worship that Richard Swinburne (1981, 126) has in mind when he wrote that "Worship is obligatory—it is *the proper response of respect* by man to his creator."

Were Bayne and Nagasawa to object to Swinburne's idea that worship is obligatory on the grounds that there are thicker notions of worship that involve more than a "response of respect," they would be attacking a view that Swinburne doesn't obviously hold. Nor is it a view that Morris or Adams seems to hold. This, I think, sidelines Bayne and Nagasawa's secondary worry that theists should avoid addressing the primary worry by thinning out the notion of worship beyond recognition. The notion of glorifying something is not so thin a notion that it ceases to have any connection to ordinary ideas about worship.

Do the kinds of consideration we used to derive OTW also entail that people have an obligation to worship their parents? Perhaps, assuming one's parents were good parents. But there remains differences between what people might owe their parents and what people might owe a being like God. When it comes to worship, it's not a difference in the *kind of response*; the response is still one of praise and respect. Rather, the differences I suspect would consist in *the degree* to which one is to respect God, *the kinds of things* one is to praise and respect God for doing, and *the range of circumstances* in which one is to praise and respect God. For if God exists and continuously sustains all life, then we would be benefiting from God's continuous care in a way that far outstrips the way in which we've benefited from our parents' care. This would seem to ground the idea that there is some sense in which we ought to worship God to a greater degree and in a greater range of circumstances than our parents, and thus that there remains a significant difference between the worship we would owe God and the worship we owe our parents.

In conclusion, my aim in this paper has been to provide a credible analysis of the concept of glory. In the end, I explained it is misleading to speak of *the* concept of glory. We have at least two related concepts that the term 'glory' is used to express: the normative concept of *being glorious* and the non-normative concept of *being glorified*. Both of them are to be understood in relation to praise, respect, and admiration. When it comes to *being glorious*, I argued that a variety of factors conspire to

make a fitting attitude analysis of what it is to be glorious quite plausible. In the case of *being glorified*, I argued, this notion is basically the notion of being sincerely praised, where the sincerity of the praise has to do with its resulting from respect or admiration. An upshot of the analysis of this later notion was that it could help to dislodge the recent atheological argument of Bayne and Nagasawa.

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Acknowledgments Many people helped me to complete this project. I'm especially grateful for the feedback of Shane Rogerson, Chis Porter, Rémy Chadwick, Andrew Chignell, Andrew Bailey, Mark Schroeder, Alex Arnold, Daniel Fogal, Joseph Corabi, Dustin Crummett, Rebecca Stangl, Mark Murphy, Rebecca Chan, Chris Tucker, Zenen Kristensen, and the referees and editors at *Res Philosophica*.

When writing this I was unaware that Kittel had anti-semitic attitudes and was a Nazi supporter

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