Review of John M. DePoe and Tyler Dalton McNabb (Eds.), *Debating Christian Religious Epistemology: An Introduction to Five Views on the Knowledge of God*

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Debating Christian Religious Epistemology is an accessible and concise comparative volume on contemporary religious epistemology. Although focused specifically on the Christian tradition, it provides a neat blueprint for paralleled discussions of religious epistemology in other traditions. Through its five primary chapters—followed by a response from authors holding opposing positions, and a final reply from the original author(s)—it succeeds in applying some of the most relevant and challenging normative epistemological frameworks to classical theological tradition by discussing five distinct epistemological positions that the Christian may seek to adopt. Those positions are as follows: Classical Evidentialism, Phenomenal Conservativism, Proper Functionalism, Covenantal Epistemology, and Tradition-Based Perspectivialism.

Following the Introduction—which provides the reader with a valuable summary of relevant epistemological concepts engaged in religious epistemology—John DePoe's chapter begins by defending a version of classical evidentialism, which, in simple terms, holds that for a belief to be *justified*, it needs to be based upon *evidence*. For DePoe, this is understood as consisting in terms of good reasons or grounds accessible to the subject (16). The particular 'classical' spin on this notion of evidentialism comes through its basis in classical foundationalism, the idea that a properly ordered noetic structure, 'consists of beliefs inferentially supporting other beliefs in a single direction', grounded in properly basic beliefs, which are to be strictly incorrigible (16).

DePoe does suggest that these rather strict evidential demands need not be taken as overtly esoteric for the ordinary theist (21), and although DePoe (2016) has written on this point elsewhere in more depth (invoking the notion of

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nonconceptual awareness), it would have been helpful to have seen him engage this work in greater detail. That being said, DePoe presents the classical evidentialist view convincingly—drawing on the notion of direct acquaintance (17). The problem of this account though, seems to be, its incorrigibility requirement: for one's mere 'direct acquaintance' with an object cannot seem to bridge the gap between that subjective inner-world, and the objective external world, in a way that guarantee's truth-conductivity.

Logan Paul Gage and Blake McAllister in their chapter on phenomenal conservativism (PC), offer a more 'liberal' evidentialism, which seems to me (pardon the pun), far more intuitive. In following the standard definition of PC, they defend the thesis that, 'if it seems to *S* that *p*, then, in the absence of defeaters, *S* thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that *p*' (63). Given this account of justification, PC widens the scope of foundational beliefs far beyond a restrictive set of only incorrigible beliefs. The authors certainly make their case of a plausible and almost 'common-sense' view of justification, but it might not satisfy those who have their eyes on the prize of knowledge. This is where I think Tyler Dalton McNabb's account of proper functionalism is a timely arrival on the scene.

McNabb's chapter is essentially an exposition on Plantingian Reformed epistemology (RE). Following Plantinga, McNabb intertwines the thesis of RE with Plantinga's proper functionalist epistemology, which roughly holds that, a belief is warranted, *iff*, it is produced by cognitive faculties properly functioning and aimed at truth, in environments for which those faculties are designed to apply (109). Notice the focus here is on *warrant* as opposed to justification. This means that McNabb's view can accommodate a view like PC on justification, but, in focusing on warrant, it also accounts for how a sufficient degree of which can appraise one's belief with knowledge. Unlike the previous chapters up to this point, McNabb's epistemology is *externalist*. This of course presents its own unique challenges, but may fare better at getting that tight connection to the truth that epistemologists desire in a post-Gettier world. That being said, McNabb's reliance on the weight of 'intrinsic defeater-deflectors' (118) may strike some as being implausible, or even as encouraging an anti-Socratic 'strong religious Moorean' tendency (cf., Marsh, 2017), which offers the theist too much epistemic comfort.

The final two chapters of the volume strike me as being two of the more ambitious and unique contributions. Although in the one case I see that in a positive light, I cannot say the same for the other. K. Scott Oliphint's defense of Covenantal epistemology is evidently different from other positions in that it takes as its starting point the truth of biblical Christianity (149). Not only do I think that some of the other authors rightly challenge Oliphint's reading of biblical tradition, they also appeared to sense the implausibility and radical circularity of a position that stems from an ambition to place 'theology prior to epistemology' (165). On the other hand, Erik Baldwin's 'tradition-based-perspectivalism' is more interesting—it cleverly weaves together Alasdair MacIntyre's 'traditions of enquiry' with an analytic philosophical approach to contemporary religious epistemology (191). Baldwin's approach is, in essence, a form of virtue-epistemology, but it crucially recognizes that one's

epistemic evaluations are in some vital sense tied to the tradition in which one finds oneself. This seems to be a fascinating perspective, but nonetheless not one that was shown to bear clear fruits in the discourse on religious epistemology (or so it seems to me anyway).

In summary, I think that the volume is a welcome contribution to the field and a vast improvement on a similar work that has gone before (cf., Gundry, 2010). And the practical application of these theoretical perspectives to live issues in the philosophy of religion, like natural theology and religious disagreement, is particularly instructive. One significant implication, which looks like a 'victory' of sorts for the Reformed epistemologist, is that most of the perspectives (even DePoe's—according to his own admission) in some sense have been able to adopt a Reformed epistemological framework. That said, I do think the volume could benefit from the inclusion of a chapter on Wykstra's 'Sensible Evidentialism' (1989)—which might provide an interesting alternative to classical evidentialism. As well, perhaps a more traditional virtue epistemological position, like that of Greco's (1999), could be further developed to provide a fruitful reflection on the aforementioned notion of intrinsic defeater-deflectors.

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