

Proper Function and the Conditions for Warrant

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“PROPER FUNCTION AND THE CONDITIONS FOR WARRANT: WHAT PLANTINGA’S NOTION OF WARRANT SHOWS ABOUT DIFFERENT KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE”¹

What is the task of analytic epistemology? I want to call attention to two possible responses to this question. One response assumes that justification through reason is the major (or only) ingredient that makes the difference between mere true belief and knowledge, and that the task of epistemology is to lay out rules for how a knower can achieve this justification. Descartes, Locke, Roderick Chisholm, and Laurence Bonjour are just a few of the adherents to this view. The other response challenges the claim that justification is the main thing that stands between mere true belief and knowledge, and suggests that the primary task of epistemology is simply to give an account of the quality that does. Alvin Plantinga is currently the foremost representative of this view. These rival conceptions of epistemology inform rival perspectives on religious epistemology. Two religious epistemologies are particularly noteworthy for their relationship to these views on the task of epistemology. The natural theology tradition, which is informed by the former view, seeks to discover knowledge of God without any help from special revelation and, accordingly, relies on reasoning, and especially on arguments for the existence of God which provide justification for a belief in God. “Reformed epistemology,” informed by the latter view, considers such arguments unnecessary.

My concern in this article is: Does Plantinga describe conditions necessary and sufficient for the difference between mere true belief and knowledge? I think he does, but not for all instances of knowledge. There are different kinds of knowledge, and the things we know are

¹ I am grateful to Stuart Rosenbaum and to the Graduate Colloquium of Baylor University’s Philosophy Department for commenting on early versions of this article. A version was also read at the Evangelical Philosophical Society’s Annual Meeting in San Francisco in November 2011. Finally, I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for *Philosophia Christi* for a number of insightful comments.

warranted in different ways. Some beliefs require only the conditions Plantinga describes, but others require justification. Accordingly, both of the aforementioned responses regarding the task of epistemology have a place, and, thus, so do both natural theology and Reformed epistemology.

I will first look at three notable, and distinct, definitions of the word *warrant* from *Warrant and Proper Function*; following that, I will describe Plantinga's arguments concerning warrant in *Warrant: The Current Debate*.² Next, I will describe Laurence Bonjour's arguments against the sufficiency of Plantinga's idea of warrant in his article "Plantinga on Knowledge and Proper Function." Then I will suggest a modification of Plantinga's notion of warrant that allows for a fuller description of the necessary and sufficient conditions for warrant, a definition which accounts for different kinds of knowledge. I will explain two advantages of this expanded definition of warrant: that it successfully counters Bonjour's arguments and that it explains several seemingly contradictory remarks of Plantinga. Finally, I will apply this expanded definition of warrant to the dispute between natural theology and Reformed epistemology. I will show that my expanded definition of warrant satisfies some of the concerns of, or is anticipated by, some of Plantinga's other critics, including John Greco, Duncan Pritchard, Michael Czapkay Suddoth, and John Zeis. And I will suggest that, based on Plantinga's own definitions of warrant, natural theology has an important role within the contours of a Plantingian epistemology.

I. DEFINITIONS OF WARRANT IN *WARRANT AND PROPER FUNCTION*

² Both volumes are by Alvin Plantinga (New York: Oxford UP, 1993); hereafter abbreviated in notes as *WCD* and *WPF*.

Let us consider three definitions of warrant offered by Plantinga. The most general of the three comes in the Preface to *Warrant and Proper Function*, where warrant is described as that “quality or quantity enough of which, together with truth and belief, is sufficient for knowledge.”³

Throughout *Warrant and Proper Function* Plantinga describes warrant in terms of the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties. The first chapter of the volume, appropriately entitled “Warrant: A First Approximation,” describes warrant in these terms:

. . . we may say that a belief *B* has warrant for *S* if and only if the relevant segments [of the design plan] (the segments involved in the production of *B*) are functioning properly in a cognitive environment sufficiently similar to that for which *S*’s faculties are designed; and the modules of the design plan governing the production of *B* are (1) aimed at truth, and (2) such that there is a high objective probability that a belief formed in accordance with those modules (in that sort of cognitive environment) is true; and the more firmly *S* believes *B* the more warrant *B* has for *S*.⁴

Here we are told that these conditions describing the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties are necessary and sufficient for warrant. After several “Objections and Refinements” in the second chapter of *Warrant and Proper Function*, we are given this description of warrant:

. . . a belief has warrant for me only if (1) it has been produced in me by cognitive faculties that are working properly (functioning as they ought to, subject to no cognitive dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for my kinds of cognitive faculties, (2) the segment of the design plan governing the production of that belief is

³ *WPF*, v. *WCD* defines warrant as “that, whatever precisely it is, which together with truth makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief;” *WCD*, 3. The definitions are subtly different. “Warrant” may, as in *WPF*, be defined as that enough of which makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief. Or, as in *WCD*, “warrant” may denote the same quality when there is enough of it to make the difference between knowledge and mere true belief. The former definition is the more general sense of “warrant, the latter the more specific. “Warrant” in the first sense comes in degrees; when the degree is high enough to make the difference between knowledge and mere true belief, “warrant” in the second sense is present.

⁴ *WPF*, 19.

aimed at the production of true beliefs, and (3) there is a high statistical probability that a belief produced under those conditions will be true.⁵

Three conditions, then, are necessary for warrant. There is the condition that my cognitive faculties be functioning properly in the right environment, the condition that they be aimed at producing true beliefs,⁶ and the condition that beliefs formed by said faculties in said environment are usually true. For simplicity's sake I will refer to these three conditions taken together simply as *proper function*. Accordingly, I will refer to the failure to obtain of just one of these conditions as *improper function*.

Since it is the refined definition, I take it that the third definition of warrant supersedes the second.⁷ While the “first approximation” describes several conditions of warrant in terms of necessity and sufficiency (“if and only if”), the refined definition simply describes several

⁵ Ibid., 46-47.

⁶ As opposed to the faculty that provides the “optimistic overrider,” for a discussion of which see *WPF*, 42.

⁷ In this I disagree with Richard Feldman, Peter J. Markie, and Michael Czapkay Suddoth, who take the definition of warrant given on page 19 of *WPF* as primary. Feldman, “Plantinga, Gettier, and Warrant” in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 209; Markie, “Degrees of Warrant” in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 222; Suddoth, “The Internalist Character and Evidentialist Implications of Plantingian Defeaters” in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 45 (1999), 167. In addition to pages 19 and 46-7 of *WPF*, Markie references page ix of the Preface, in which Plantinga speaks of “the conditions necessary and sufficient for the central paradigmatic core of our conception of warrant.” Markie also notes that the language of “the central core of our concept of warrant” appears again on page 47 of *WPF*. Suddoth does not reference page 19 but presumably has it in mind in saying that, according to Plantinga, “a belief has warrant, roughly, just if” it is produced by proper function. The titles of the first two chapters of *WPF* are my main reason for disagreeing with Markie, Feldman, and Suddoth, but not my only reason, as I will explain in the next section. I will return to the issue of “the central core” of the concept of warrant in Section IV.

conditions in terms of necessity (“only if”). Since warrant is described the final time in terms of necessity but not in terms of sufficiency, we infer that the description of warrant does not give necessary and sufficient conditions for warrant in *all* cases of knowledge. There may be cases in which these conditions are necessary but not sufficient for the difference between knowledge and mere true belief. This suggests that justification may be necessary for warrant in some cases.

II. PROPER FUNCTION DESCRIBED AS ALWAYS NECESSARY AND SOMETIMES SUFFICIENT IN *WARRANT: THE CURRENT DEBATE*

This is corroborated by a careful reading of *Warrant: The Current Debate*, in which Plantinga invariably describes other notions of warrant as insufficient for the difference between knowledge and mere true belief; each time he does so, an example of improper function is provided to demonstrate the insufficiency of the other alleged conditions for warrant. Furthermore, it is said of several of the other epistemological views that they do not even describe conditions necessary for warrant; in these situations, an example reminiscent of Thomas Reid's principles of commonsense is typically used as an example.⁸ The effect of Plantinga's arguments here is to support the thesis that proper function is always necessary for warrant, and sufficient in at least some cases.

- Classical Chisholmian internalism (chapter 2) is *insufficient* for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.⁹ From this we are meant to infer that proper function is at least *necessary* for warrant; and the same is true of every other instance in which Plantinga describes another epistemological view as describing conditions insufficient for warrant. Furthermore, Plantinga believes that classical Chisholmian internalism is not even *necessary* for warrant because we can imagine a situation in which a person by obsessing over justification comes to doubt his self-presenting beliefs.¹⁰ Without justification there would have been warrant, so justification is not necessary for warrant.

⁸ For a list of twelve such types of beliefs, see Thomas Reid, "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man," Essay 6, Chapter 5 in *Epistemology: The Classic Readings*, ed. David E. Cooper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 151-163.

⁹ *WCD*, 42-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

From this we infer that proper function is *sufficient* for warrant in at least some cases.

The cases given as examples are sensory beliefs, one of Reid's genres of naturally trustworthy commonsense beliefs.

- Post-classical Chisholmian internalism (*Warrant: The Current Debate*, chapter 3) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹¹ There is no objection that it is not necessary for warrant.
- Coherentism (chapter 4) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹² Given such beliefs as memory beliefs (another Reidian case), coherence is unnecessary for at least some degree of warrant in at least some cases.¹³
- BonJourian coherentism (chapter 5) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹⁴ It is not even necessary for some degree of warrant in several cases, including sensory and memory beliefs.¹⁵
- Bayesian coherentism (chapter 6) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹⁶ It is not necessary for some degree of warrant in cases such as the truths of reason and my belief about my spatial location (at least one of which, the truths of reason, is certainly a Reidian counterexample).¹⁷

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63-5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 80-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 82-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110-2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128-9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

- Pollockian quasi-internalism (chapter 8) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹⁸ I find no charge that it is not even necessary for warrant.
- Alstonian justification (chapter 9, section I) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.¹⁹ Alston himself never claims that it is necessary.²⁰
- Dretsikian reliabilism (chapter 9, section II) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.²¹ Plantinga does not say that it is not so much as necessary for warrant (this might be expected, as we are dealing with a form of externalism, and so are a little bit closer to Plantinga's own view).
- The old Goldman's reliabilism (chapter 9, section III.A) is insufficient for warrant because of the possibility of improper function.²² The new Goldman's reliabilism (chapter 9 section III.B) is insufficient for warrant for the same reason.²³ Plantinga does not say that either the new or the old Goldman's reliabilism is not so much as necessary for warrant (again, this might be expected from his encounter with a form of externalism).

Here, then, is the final tally: Ten out of ten views are charged with *insufficiency* because of the possibility of improper function; from this we infer that proper function is at least *necessary* for warrant. Four times Plantinga argues that the notions of warrant in question are

¹⁸ Ibid., 167-8.

¹⁹ Ibid., 190-2.

²⁰ Ibid., 190.

²¹ Ibid., 197.

²² Ibid., 199.

²³ Ibid., 205-8.

not even necessary for warrant; the cases given as evidence are reminiscent of Reid's principles of commonsense. From this we infer that proper function is *sufficient* for warrant in at least some cases.

With this in mind, we may take Plantinga as being confident that proper function is always necessary for warrant as well as sufficient for at least a degree of warrant in at least some cases.

III. BONJOUR *CONTRA* PLANTINGA

I now turn to Laurence Bonjour's contribution to the Plantinga literature. Bonjour's main concern in "Plantinga on Knowledge and Proper Function"²⁴ is whether proper function is sufficient for warrant. First, Bonjour argues that, although it is plausible that the conditions in Plantinga's proper functionalist account are necessary for knowledge, they may not be sufficient.²⁵ Second, he argues that Plantinga's account leads to skepticism.

²⁴ Laurence Bonjour, "Plantinga on Knowledge and Proper Function" in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 47-71.

²⁵ Bonjour also describes situations that suggest proper function is not always necessary for what we intuitively think of as knowledge. A mutant who is the first of his kind to possess a mutation conferring on the species a reliable faculty for the production of true beliefs cannot be said to have proper function in the full Plantingian sense, since prior to the activity of natural selection there is no "design" and hence no "design plan." See Bonjour, 61-2. Counterexamples of this sort do not call for justification; as a rigorous role for justification is the main thrust of Bonjour's argument, I have consigned this issue to a footnote. But I provide below two possible responses to Bonjour's intriguing counterexample.

One response is to disassociate the notion of a design plan from raw natural selection; in the later chapters of *WPF* Plantinga does in fact argue that the notion of a design plan works best when associated with theism. An alternative response is to disassociate the notion of proper function from the notion of a design plan; this approach could take inspiration from the second of Ernest Sosa's contributions to *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*,

The better part of BonJour's article is spent in objecting to Plantinga's contention that warrant is sufficient for knowledge. His attack is two-pronged, dealing first with Plantinga's relation to Edmund Gettier and second with the sort of knowledge that is uniquely human. To begin with, BonJour notes that epistemologists have long known of four necessary conditions for knowledge. There are belief, truth, and a third *something* that is often described as "justification"; what Edmund Gettier showed is that the third condition is not always sufficient.²⁶ So a fourth condition is needed, one "intended to exclude" Gettier cases; BonJour adapts from Peter Unger a description of the fourth condition, "that it not be an *accident* in relation to whatever satisfies the third condition that the belief is true."²⁷ BonJour notes Plantinga's recurrent attempts to use examples of improper function to show that the various internalist views are insufficient for warrant.²⁸ While this may show that the conditions pointed to by internalists are insufficient, it does not show that they are not at least necessary; it is possible that proper function describes that annoying little fourth condition Gettier showed we were missing; it is possible that Plantinga's typical improper function counterexample "is just a Gettier case."²⁹ Thus proper function may be necessary but, by itself, insufficient for warrant.

BonJour's strategy of examining proper function in light of Gettier is appropriate. Plantinga believes that externalist epistemologies escape the Gettier problems that plague

"Proper Function and Virtue Epistemology," in which Sosa argues that the notion of proper function makes sense without teleological implications (253-71).

²⁶ BonJour, 49.

²⁷ Ibid., 49-50.

²⁸ Ibid., 50.

²⁹ Ibid., 51.

internalism.³⁰ After convincing an internalist that proper function is at least necessary for knowledge, an externalist might ask why, if we have proper function, we should even need anything else to satisfy the gap between mere true belief and knowledge. In BonJour's words, "this in turn might seem to make the internalist third condition merely idle, with the fourth condition, which is after all fundamentally externalist in character, doing all the real work."³¹

Yet this does not show that there is no condition for knowledge such as the internalists point to:

. . . even if some such argument succeeds in the end in showing that the third condition of knowledge must itself have an externalist ingredient of some sort, it still does not show . . . that a *purely* externalist third condition, one according to which the possessor of a 'warranted' belief need not have even a subjective reason for thinking it to be true, is acceptable.³²

Even if externalist factors are necessary, this would not entail that they are sufficient;

accordingly, BonJour believes that a significant role remains for internalist justification.

Moving on to the second prong of the same theme, BonJour believes that we cannot be confident that proper function is "clear and unequivocal enough to be very strongly relied on," for there may be more than one sort of knowledge.³³ Merely animal knowledge could be gained by proper function of the sort described by Plantinga, but the rational knowledge that is uniquely human may require some sort of justification.³⁴ Uniquely human knowledge seems to require more than just proper function; therefore, proper function is not sufficient for specifically human knowledge.

³⁰ *WPF*, 31-7, esp. 36-7.

³¹ BonJour, 53.

³² *Ibid.*, 55.

³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

On to BonJour's contention that Plantinga's epistemology leads to skepticism.³⁵ To quote BonJour, "do we, on Plantinga's view, have any good (non-question-begging) reasons of any sort for thinking either (1) that most or even any of our beliefs in the area in question are true, or (2) that Plantinga's conditions for warrant are satisfied for most or even any of those beliefs?"³⁶ How would we know a belief formed by proper function from a belief formed by improper function? What other than some form of internalist justification can answer this probing question? More than an appeal to proper function is required if we are to have confidence in our beliefs.

IV. REFINING PLANTINGA'S NOTION OF WARRANT

In this section I will briefly respond to his objection that proper function is not sufficient for warrant. Then I will offer an expanded definition of warrant that accounts for different sorts of knowledge. Next, I will comment on some implications of the expanded definition, including how it can handle BonJour's charge that Plantinga's epistemology implies skepticism and how it explains several puzzling remarks of Plantinga. In the final section of this article, I will show how this expanded definition of warrant serves to mediate the conflict between Reformed epistemology and natural theology, and will show that it satisfies the concerns of others among his critics, or is anticipated by their arguments.

BonJour is compelling when he says that the mere necessity of proper function would not demonstrate its sufficiency for warrant; so I agree with the first prong of his attack. Furthermore, since we humans have a capacity for reason beyond that of animals, it would seem good to

³⁵ I think that veterans of the Plantingianly epistemology will notice here a resemblance of BonJour's charge to the famous Great Pumpkin objection leveled against Reformed epistemology back in the 1980s.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

describe a necessary role for reason to play in lending warrant to at least some of our beliefs; thus I lend my support to the second prong.

But we have different kinds of knowledge, and the beliefs involved receive warrant in different ways. In light of the foregoing considerations I offer this expanded definition of warrant, that enough of which makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief:

A belief has warrant for me if and only if:

(1) The cognitive faculties involved in producing the belief are (a) working properly (functioning as they ought to, subject to no cognitive dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for my kinds of cognitive faculties, (b) the segment of the design plan governing the production of that belief is aimed at the production of true beliefs, and (c) there is a high statistical probability that a belief produced under those conditions will be true,

AND

(2) the belief is either (d) efficiently produced by these faculties, OR (e) justified.

Condition 1 recaps Plantinga's three conditions for the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties. All faculties involved in the production of a belief have to be aimed at the truth and functioning properly in the right environment in order for that belief to have warrant. If the faculties are sufficient to produce that belief (2d), then that belief is warranted. If the faculties are insufficient to produce that belief, then some form of justification will be necessary (2e) for providing warrant. Even in these latter cases, note that proper function (1) is still necessary because cognitive faculties are involved in the production of all our beliefs. For reason itself is a faculty that must be functioning properly in an appropriate environment in order for a person to believe something on the basis of justification.

This definition describes the conditions for warrant as they apply to different kinds of knowledge. First, there are beliefs for which proper function is insufficient to confer any degree of warrant, and for which justification is therefore necessary for warrant. Such beliefs include

anything I believe solely on the basis of argument. We need more than proper function for some beliefs to be warranted. (Again, proper function is still necessary for the warrant of these beliefs, since reason is a faculty.) Second, there are beliefs for which justification is not necessary for at least a degree of warrant. Readily available examples are Reidian beliefs such as sensory beliefs and memory beliefs. Proper function is all we need for such beliefs to be warranted.

This latter category can be further broken down into two subcategories. There are those beliefs for which proper function provides a degree of warrant sufficient to make the difference between knowledge and mere true belief, and those for which proper function provides a degree of warrant insufficient for this.³⁷ Beliefs in the latter subcategory require justification for a person to really *know* them. Beliefs in the former subcategory are properly basic, such that they can be responsibly believed without supporting evidence; they can be *known* without justification.

So some beliefs which possess a degree of warrant via proper function alone require a higher degree of warrant via justification before they can really be *known*. Furthermore, nothing prevents justification from providing even properly basic beliefs with a higher degree of warrant than proper function alone can provide. There are beliefs for which we can get a good measure of warrant by proper function, but for which additional warrant through justification doesn't hurt—and frequently helps.

In short, the “OR” in my expanded definition of warrant is inclusive. Some beliefs are described by both 2d and 2e. Although there are some beliefs warranted through justification which cannot also be warranted by proper function alone, there is a large region of overlap. A

³⁷ Or, those beliefs which are warranted according to *WCD*, page 3, and those which are only warranted according to *WPF*, page v. See above, footnote 3.

belief can be warranted by proper function alone, yet be *more* warranted through justification. Indeed, most, if not all, beliefs warranted by proper function alone could receive a higher degree of warrant through justification. This is sometimes helpful for knowers of beliefs in the first subcategory described by 2d. It is *essential* that beliefs in the second subcategory be warranted through justification if they are to be known at all.

In this way my expanded definition of warrant answers BonJour's charge that skepticism follows from an appeal to proper function. Plantinga answers that charge by pointing out that "there is nothing in my account of warrant to suggest" that there is no room for fact-checking of beliefs.³⁸ He is right, but we can take this further than fact-checking. The warrant of beliefs by proper function need not preclude additional warrant for those same beliefs through justification. Indeed, Plantinga acknowledges that justification may be a necessary condition for some kinds of knowledge,³⁹ and that natural theology "might increase the degree of warrant," perhaps quite significantly, for the belief in God.⁴⁰

This distinction between categories of knowledge helps to explain some other, more puzzling remarks of Plantinga. On the one hand, he says he intends "to give necessary and

³⁸ Alvin Plantinga, "Respondeo" in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 340-1.

³⁹ Plantinga says, "I don't think (epistemic) justification construed deontologically is either necessary or sufficient for *warrant*; a person can fulfill all relevant intellectual duties but fail to know, and a person can know (so I am inclined to think, anyway) even when flouting intellectual duties." But then he adds, "there may be certain *kinds* of knowledge such that satisfaction of intellectual duty is a necessary condition of possessing knowledge of *those* kinds, even if it is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowledge in general." "Reliabilism, Analyses, and Defeaters," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55.2 (June 1995), 447.

⁴⁰ "Prospects for Natural Theology" in *Philosophical Perspectives 5: Philosophy of Religion, 1991*, ed. James E. Tomberlin (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1991), 311-2.

sufficient conditions for warrant.”⁴¹ But, on the other hand, he concedes the possibility of knowledge that requires a degree of justification, saying “perhaps there is also an important variety of knowledge for which explanatory coherence is crucial.”⁴² Again, he says that “at least certain kinds of knowledge demand the sort of coherence of which he [Keith Lehrer] speaks.”⁴³ How can justification via coherence be necessary if proper function, by itself, is necessary and sufficient for knowledge? The answer is that Plantinga thinks proper function is necessary and sufficient for warrant for beliefs that are part of “the central paradigmatic core of knowledge,”⁴⁴ a core which he thinks consists of beliefs described by my condition 2d. But outside the core are other cases of knowledge for which proper function is not sufficient and for which justification is necessary, those described by condition 2e. When it comes to these beliefs, the conception of the task of epistemology as providing rules for a knower to follow in order to achieve justification is surely correct. Accordingly, as I shall now explain, natural theology, which applies this conventional epistemological view to religious epistemology, is also correct when it comes to religious beliefs described by 2e only, as well as to at least some beliefs described by 2d.

V. AN APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

I now turn to religious epistemology. Laying out this fuller description of the necessary and sufficient conditions for warrant has important implications for mediating a significant dispute over the status of religious beliefs. Plantinga believes that, for some religious beliefs to

⁴¹ Footnote 43 to “Respondeo” in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology*, 377.

⁴² “Respondeo,” 332.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 333.

⁴⁴ *WPF*, ix.

have warrant, proper function is sufficient.⁴⁵ Natural theology seeks to justify religious beliefs, but the Reformed epistemologist thinks natural theology and the justification it seeks for religious belief are both unnecessary. Perhaps the debate between Reformed epistemology and natural theology is partly the result of confusion as to whether religious beliefs are the sort of beliefs which properly functioning faculties are able to efficiently produce.

This expanded account of the necessary and sufficient conditions for warrant makes it possible to mediate the dispute, as long as it is possible for at least some religious beliefs to receive a degree of warrant through properly functioning faculties and for some (perhaps the same) religious beliefs to receive a degree of warrant through justification. That is, if some religious beliefs fall into the category described by 2d, then the Reformed epistemologists are right that justification is not necessary for their being conferred some degree of warrant. But natural theology is right to seek justification for religious beliefs described by 2e, for such beliefs are warranted in virtue of being justified.

Moreover, since 2d and 2e are not mutually exclusive, justification can also confer warrant on religious beliefs described by 2d. For example, if the *sensus divinitatis* is a cognitive faculty able to provide warrant for the belief that God exists, then the belief that God exists is described by 2d for those in whom it is functioning properly. But the definition of warrant is indexical to a believer; a belief has warrant “for me” under the right conditions. Thus, for anyone in whom the *sensus divinitatis* is *not* functioning properly, the belief that God exists will not be warranted by the *sensus divinitatis*; but justification can confer warrant on that belief. For

⁴⁵ See Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1967), 271; Part IV of Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God” in *Faith and Rationality*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); and Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000).

such a person, the belief that God exists is described by 2e. For that matter, for a person who is aware of objections to existence of God or of the fact that others do not have the same belief but in whom the *sensus divinitatis* is functioning properly, justification may provide an additional, and welcome, degree of warrant for the belief that God exists; it can help assure this believer that religious pluralism and the various objections waged against the existence of God do not constitute defeaters for religious belief.

The development in Plantingian epistemology I propose accommodates some of the concerns of Plantinga's critics. I will cite four examples. To begin with, John Greco⁴⁶ argues that praiseworthiness in believing is a necessary condition for knowledge, and that coherence among one's beliefs, experiences, and cognitive faculties is a source of praiseworthiness. Moreover, this coherence is a necessary condition for religious knowledge for a theist in "epistemically hostile conditions," and most theists in modern society these days are in such conditions due to the challenge to religious belief posed by evil as well as widespread disbelief in and disagreement with one's own religious beliefs. Though these may trouble a religious believer, natural theology can help by justifying religious belief. This is rather like my analysis of warrant in that, even for the believer whose *sensus divinitatis* is functioning properly, natural theology's project of justifying religious belief can confer a higher degree of warrant than proper function alone.

⁴⁶ John Greco, "Is Natural Theology Necessary for Theistic Knowledge?" in *Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology*, edited by Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 168-198.

Duncan Pritchard⁴⁷ adopts Keith DeRose's "foundherentist" proposal (itself inspired by Susan Haack): that there are different sorts of beliefs, some of which are properly basic and others of which are only warranted by their coherence with other beliefs. Pritchard develops this model using virtue epistemology, saying that a necessary condition for non-properly basic beliefs to possess "positive epistemic status" is that they be held as a result of the operation of reflective virtues. Thus: "certain sorts of knowledge" only require proper function, "whereas other sorts of knowledge . . . might solely depend upon the reflective virtues. In between one will find the vast majority of knowledge that requires a mixture" of proper function and reflection.⁴⁸ This parallels nicely my description of different kinds of knowledge, some of which require only proper function in addition to true belief, and others of which require a mixture of proper function and some degree of justification. Pritchard's category of beliefs knowing which requires only proper function parallels my first subcategory of beliefs described by 2d, and his category of beliefs knowing which requires a mixture of proper function and reflection parallels my second subcategory. The difference is that my model, treating reason as a faculty which must function properly in order for reflective virtue to take place, treats proper function as always necessary; so Pritchard's category of beliefs whose warrant requires *only* reflection parallels those beliefs which on my model are described by 2e but not by 2d.

Michael Czapkay Suddoth argues that Plantinga's inclusion of a defeater system in his description of the cognitive design plan entails that there are, at least sometimes, internalist requirements for warrant.⁴⁹ Specifically, when a believer has a defeater for a belief, evidence

⁴⁷ Duncan Pritchard, "Reforming Reformed Epistemology," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 43.1 (March 2003), 43-66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 63-4.

⁴⁹ "The Internalist Character and Evidentialist Implications of Plantingian Defeaters."

constituting a defeater for that defeater is necessary for warrant to be present. Suddoth emphasizes the problem of evil as a defeater for theistic belief, and evidence provided by natural theology as defeating that defeater. This is remarkably similar to my development of Plantingian epistemology in that, without downplaying the importance of proper function, it describes the necessity of reason and evidence for some beliefs to be warranted, and concludes that natural theology has a place in Plantingian epistemology.

Finally, John Zeis argues that Plantinga's is not "a complete epistemological theory" because it fails to provide an adequate criterion for distinguishing warranted from non-warranted belief.⁵⁰ There ought to be a way of "establishing or defending warrant claims."⁵¹ The only way to know whether a belief is warranted via proper function is to examine the evidence for it. In other words, *justification* of a belief is the best way of knowing whether it has warrant. As usual, the really interesting cases are religious beliefs. According to Zeis, even if a religious belief is warranted by proper function, natural theology is (along with Scripture, the Church, and the fruits of the Spirit) one of the things that provides evidence *that* it is warranted. Moreover, justification might provide a higher degree of warrant for the belief than proper function alone can provide, or might be necessary for some sorts of knowledge; as Zeis notes, Plantinga himself says as much.⁵² This is consistent with my proposal, in that a religious belief warranted by proper function alone can receive a higher degree of warrant through the justification provided by natural theology.

⁵⁰ John Zeis, "Plantinga's Theory of Warrant," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72.1 (1998), 23-38.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 32

⁵² *Ibid.*, 36-7. The Plantinga remarks to which he refers are "Reliabilism, Analyses, and Defeaters" and "Prospects for Natural Theology." See above, Section IV, for my citation of these articles.

In sum, even if some religious beliefs are warranted through proper function alone, this does not preclude that other religious beliefs require justification for their warrant. Religious beliefs that *can* be warranted through proper function may not *in actuality* be warranted in this way for every believer, but even so nothing prevents them from receiving warrant through justification. Finally, even when these beliefs possess a degree of warrant through proper function alone, they can receive an additional degree of warrant through justification. These considerations suggest that Plantinga's arguments for the importance of proper function for warrant do not preclude that reasoned justification is sometimes necessary, and often helpful even when it is not necessary. Plantinga's critics suggest as much. But, if my analysis is correct, so do Plantinga's own definitions of warrant and arguments for the importance of proper function. Accordingly, the project of natural theology has an important role within a Plantingian epistemology.