

THE COMPATIBILITY OF RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVISM
AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

By

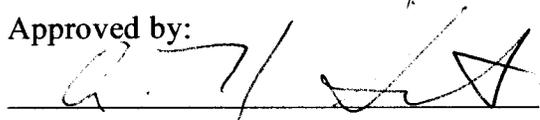
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Abstract

What are we to make of the religious diversity present in our world? There are two main views in the face of such diversity. The religious exclusivist (RE) holds that the truth claims of only his or her tradition are the correct claims. Alternatively, the religious pluralist (RP) asserts that the truth claims of all traditions are correct in some sense. In this paper I explore several philosophical arguments in favor of each view including: Alvin Plantinga, William P. Alston, and John Hick. I argue that the distinction between the RE and the RP is actually based in different domains. The RE is posing a solution in the domain of the individual practitioner, while the religious pluralist is offering a solution in the global domain. These two views are distinguished by the distinct set of concerns defining each domain. The main concern defining the individual practitioner domain relates to the genuine belief of the practitioner, and the global domain defining concern is the problem of epistemic peers. Finally, I argue that it is possible to consistently be a RE in one domain and a RP in another, so long as the agent can successfully navigate the differences between domains.

The Compatibility of Religious Exclusivism and Religious Pluralism

What are we to make of the religious diversity present in our world? With the advent of modern technology we are more aware of the diversity of these traditions than in any other point in history. Some believers violently retaliate against religious views different than their own, while others assert the necessity of treating other traditions with compassion. There are two main schools of thought in the face of such diversity. The religious exclusivist (RE) holds that the truth claims of only their tradition are the correct claims. The claims associated with other traditions are mistaken for one reason or another. Alternatively, the religious pluralist (RP) asserts that the truth claims of all traditions are correct in some sense. The sense in which they are all correct varies depending on which flavor of religious pluralism being discussed. In this paper I will explore two philosophers often associated with religious exclusivism, Alvin Plantinga and William P. Alston, and three religious pluralists, William Cantwell Smith, John Hick, and finally S. Mark Heim. After this brief overview of the various formulations of these two views, I will turn to David Basinger's essay "Hick's Religious Pluralism and 'Reformed Epistemology': A Middle Ground."¹

In this essay, I will be aligning myself with several of the above mentioned philosophers in different ways. The philosopher associated with exclusivism I am most akin to is William Alston. In Alston's recognition of the significance of the question of religious diversity, he has begun to point to the very tension I am seeking to resolve in this essay. Although Alston recognizes that religious diversity is quite puzzling and not something to be overlooked, he does

¹ Quinn, Philip L., and Kevin Meeker. 2000. *The philosophical challenge of religious diversity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 161-171.

not think it is grounds for an individual within a given tradition to be less justified in holding their view as correct. This is one of my main motivations for holding that one can be a religious exclusivist in the individual practitioner domain.

The religious pluralist I am most akin to is John Hick. It seems reasonable to explain religious diversity in terms of various human responses to one underlying phenomena. However, I also identify with S. Mark Heim's criticism of Hick. It seems that in Hick's explanation, the differences between the religious traditions are not sufficiently respected. The various religious traditions seem to have important differences which our explanation needs to respect. Heim's solution to this difficulty is that each individual within their tradition ought to be religious exclusivists within that tradition. He introduces his pluralism by redefining the aim of religion as various types of fulfillment. This is where Heim and I disagree. Religions seem to be doing more than offering various means to achieve fulfillment. Religious traditions seem to be making much stronger claims about the nature of reality. For this reason I prefer Hick's explanation as far as each religious tradition is a response to the real.

Finally, David Basinger's work is similar to mine in that we both recognize there are some important differences between the view of the religious exclusivist and the religious pluralist. Basinger focuses his work on identifying the questions of focus between the views, but I am taking this a bit further. In this essay I will use Basinger's spirit of distinction while discussing the possibility of holding both the RE and RP views consistently.

I will argue that the distinction between the RE and the RP is one of scope which ultimately allows for one to consistently be a religious exclusivist in one domain and a religious pluralist in another. I will argue that the religious exclusivist is addressing the narrower domain of the individual practitioner, while the religious pluralist is addressing the global domain. I will

argue this in the following way: I will explore different formulations of both views and explain in some depth the view of David Basinger. I will explain my view that these two schools are distinguished, not only by the nature of their question of focus, but by the scope of the domain in which they are speaking to. Finally I will argue that it is possible to consistently be a religious exclusivist in one domain and a religious pluralist in another. I will also explain why one would choose to hold both of these views, why one might choose to subscribe to only one view, or none of these views.

Religious Exclusivism

Religious exclusivism in its most simple formulation is the view that one's religious view is the only correct view and all other views are false. This sort of thinking is often associated with religious fundamentalists and extremists. However, this view does not necessarily entail any sort of fanaticism. Several philosophers have spent considerable effort to show that religious exclusivism does not entail any moral problems.² These sorts of moral questions are beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, we will focus on the philosophers commonly associated with the religious exclusivist view. In particular we will look at Alvin Plantinga's view of *basic beliefs*, and then William P. Alston's view on forming beliefs based on experience.

It is important to note, before we embark on detailed discussions of these two philosopher's work, that it is not precisely clear where these two fall in the exclusivist camp. It seems that Alvin Plantinga would be comfortable labeling himself as an exclusivist; his essays "In Defense of Religious Exclusivism"³ suggest as much, but William Alston seems less easy to pin down. Alston's theory focuses on how an individual may be justified in holding their

² Some of these philosophers include Plantinga and Joseph Kim.

³ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 172.

particular religious beliefs as true. Because Alston's work focuses on only this, he seems to belong in the exclusivist camp. However, Alston seems hesitant to commit to exclusivism in the way Plantinga does. None-the-less whether Plantinga or Alston strictly commit to being exclusivists or not, we will see how their views would be well suited to the RE.

Plantinga's work which best suits the classic RE is his discussion of *basic beliefs*. Basic beliefs are a special type of belief which doesn't necessarily need propositional warrant, as is traditionally thought of beliefs, in order to be considered justified. Propositional warrant includes statements which help support beliefs. Traditionally it is thought that for one to rationally hold a belief to be true, one needs to also hold other beliefs (in the form of propositions) which support the truth of the original belief. This is the concept of propositional warrant. It is thought that to be rational one must have propositional warrant for the belief in question. Any belief held without this warrant can be described as being unjustified.

However, Plantinga denies the need of these supporting beliefs, or propositional warrant, in the case of *basic beliefs*. Basic beliefs are a special type of belief which do not need any propositional warrant. A basic belief does not need any propositional evidence in order to be rationally held. For example, the Theist can rationally hold God exists as one of his or her basic beliefs. This poses a question of how to identify the conditions under which we can determine a belief to be the sort which does not require propositional evidence. In other words, we must ask how to know which beliefs are *basic beliefs* and which are not.

Plantinga appeals to the way in which we form our beliefs to answer this question. He claims that a *basic belief* of the kind in question is a belief we will find formed in ourselves. We do not make a conscious decision to hold this belief. Here we should note that Plantinga is a self-

identified Christian. He offers an explanation of these basic beliefs from this perspective. Plantinga claims that when our faculties, which God created, are operating appropriately, we will find the basic belief that God exists to be with us. The mechanism which forms these basic beliefs is called the *Sensus Divinitatus*.⁴ Plantinga does think we must “seriously consider potential defeaters”⁵ to this belief we’ve discovered formed in us. In order to do this we need only work to refute potential propositional evidence opposed to our beliefs. We do not need to positively produce evidence to support our basic belief. Plantinga claims that most of the Theist’s beliefs can be considered properly basic.

This concept of basic beliefs allows the Theist to justifiably hold the beliefs which are discovered to be formed in them as true without providing any supporting propositions. When one considers two individuals from different religious traditions meeting, it is easy to see how the two will simply stick to their basic beliefs. Plantinga does include that these individuals ought to consider potential defeaters to their basic beliefs; however, the requirement of refuting propositional evidence will be met with relative ease. So long as the holder of the basic belief can give some refutation to the challenger from the other tradition, it seems that there is no serious threat to the correctness of the basic belief. Due to the nature of basic beliefs, it seems that if we have any basic beliefs we will most often stick to the fact that they are the correct beliefs.

The result of these basic beliefs is that the individual practitioner of the religion will assert that their religion of choice is the only right view. And, if Plantinga is right, this is a perfectly rational thing to do. The religious exclusivist will assert that his or her views are correct

⁴ Plantinga, Alvin. 2000. *Warranted Christian belief*. New York: Oxford University Press. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10212174>, 200-210.

⁵ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 165.

due to the fact that the foundational views of the religion are properly basic beliefs. In other words, the reason one individual adheres to the views of only one religious tradition is a result of the individual discovering the fundamental beliefs of the tradition formulated within them. It is not a process of critical evaluation and weighing one's choices. It is just a function of what beliefs one finds formulated in oneself.

Given that basic beliefs are the foundation of one holding a particular religion to be correct, Plantinga claims the religious believer ought to maintain that only one religion is correct. The correctness of the tradition stems from the fact that the basic beliefs associated with that tradition are formed within us through the *sensus divinitatus*. When the *sensus* is working properly, the beliefs of the correct religion will be formed within the individual. When the *sensus* is not working correctly, sometimes attributed to the sinful nature of that individual, the basic beliefs formed within the individual will not be the basic beliefs associated with the correct tradition.⁶

Now that we have explored Plantinga's theory of *basic beliefs* and how a religious exclusivist may make use of the theory, we will turn to William P. Alston. In "Religious Diversity and Perceptual Knowledge of God" Alston proposes to understand religious beliefs in terms of experiences which justifies the agent's belief. Alston begins by asserting that "my discussion presupposes a realist theory of truth and its applicability to religious belief".⁷ By this he means that there is an objective truth or falsity to religious claims. With this comment he has already set himself apart from pluralists like Wilfred Cantwell Smith. The main thesis Alston wishes to defend is "The experience (or as I prefer to say, the 'perception') of God provides

⁶ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 200-210.

⁷ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 194.

prima facie epistemic justification for beliefs about what God is doing or how God is 'situated' vis-a-vis one at the moment ('M-beliefs,' 'M' for 'manifestation'...)."8 In other words, Alston is claiming that the very experience of the divine, in his case the Christian God, justifies the beliefs about the divine. He goes on to explain his epistemological framework from which he tries to defend his thesis.

Alston begins by pointing out that human beings engage in a multitude of practices by which we form our beliefs. He terms these practices "doxastic practices" or DP.⁹ Some examples of these DP are "memory, introspection, and non-deductive reasoning."¹⁰ In particular, he is interested in the sense perceptual practice, or SP. He defines SP as having; "functions that are harder to describe, each of which goes from some characteristic pattern of sensory experience to a belief about the physical environment."¹¹

He then explains that each DP is accompanied by "a set of checks and tests for the beliefs so formed, in other terms, a series of possible 'overrides'."¹² For an SP this is explained "a particular perceptual belief may be overridden by sufficient independent reasons to think the belief false, or sufficient reasons to suppose that one's perceptual faculties were not working properly."¹³ In other words, the overrider for SPs include some evidence which suggests that the belief the perception produced is false, or the individual's perceptual faculties were malfunctioning. This will play an important role in perceptual experiences justifying beliefs about the divine.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 195.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Alston then turns to the question of evaluating the reliability of DPs. Alston emphasizes that the effectiveness of the DP ought to be closely related to producing correct beliefs. He puts the point, “a practice will yield mostly justified beliefs only if it is reliable, only if it is such that the input-output mechanisms it involves are, by and large, reliable ones.”¹⁴ As we can see, the evaluation of DP has now become a question of reliability.

Ideally, to determine the reliability of a DP we would compare the beliefs it produces with the facts. However, with some DPs, SP in particular, it is not possible to access the “facts” in the needed way. Because of this difficulty with these types of DPs, it appears we have essentially two choices. We either use this challenge as grounds to dismiss all of these types of DPs or we must accept that all of these DPs are equally reliable. It doesn’t seem viable to go with either of these extremes; therefore, Alston claims, “the only rational alternative open to us is to accord prima facie acceptance to all basic socially established practices (regard them as prima facie reliable), pending a demonstration of unreliability, or the invocation of any other disqualifying consideration.”¹⁵ In other words, we ought to accept the reliability of these DPs unless we have evidence to suppose that they are not reliable.

Alston then goes on to consider “the practice of forming M-beliefs about God on the basis of experience one takes to be direct experiential presentations of God.”¹⁶ He appeals to the phenomenology of religious experience claiming it shows that the type of input is distinctive. Because the input is distinctive, the process of turning input into beliefs is also distinctive. With these distinct belief forming processes, or DPs, come distinct systems of checks and tests is used to evaluate said belief. Alston claims that these situations are different than the SP situation: “unlike the SP situation, there is not one unique DP of forming M-beliefs about God, much less

¹⁴ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 196.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

one unique DP of forming M-beliefs about Ultimate Reality.”¹⁷ He points to the fact that the overrider systems associated with M-beliefs will depend importantly on the religious tradition of the individual. This is primarily because the main criteria for “M-beliefs is that they do not conflict with that authoritative picture of the situation.”¹⁸ Any beliefs which do conflict with that authoritative picture should be rejected by the individual. Obviously the authoritative picture may vary dramatically from one religious tradition to the next. Because of this close relationship between the overrider system and the larger authoritative picture, it is impossible to separate the epistemology of the M-belief from the wider system.

Here Alston begins to consider the challenge of religious diversity. The main challenge lies in the multitude of DPs presented by various religious traditions. Our main concern with DPs is their reliability. As I stated earlier, Alston thinks that we ought to accept DPs as reliable unless we have evidence to suppose otherwise. But, it seems that the diversity of religious DPs are just that sort of evidence. These various DPs produce radically different beliefs; however, only one of them can be ultimately correct. So, the most reasonable thing to do is “suppose that none of the competing practices is reliable.”¹⁹ Alston goes on, “if one of the practices were reliable, that would show itself to us in such a way as to distinguish it from the rest. But no such distinguishing marks are evident... [so] none of them can be considered sufficiently reliable for rational acceptance.”²⁰ However, Alston claims this line of thought is misguided because there is no reason to suppose that there would be any such distinguishing mark on the correct DP. After all, the DP only has a system of checks *within* the given DP. There are no external indicators.

¹⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 200.

²⁰ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 201.

Let us say CP stands for “the practice of forming M-beliefs within the Christian community, subject to the Christian override system.”²¹ When we consider if CP is the correct DP we have two ways to answer. On the one hand, we can consider CP from *within* the Christian tradition. On this view we have reasons to believe that CP is the correct DP, “CP ‘tells’ me that God has revealed Himself to mankind in the Old and New Testament.”²² On the other hand, we can consider CP’s status from common ground between all DPs. This external view of CP requires us to obtain “some reason for supposing that [CP] puts me in a superior epistemic position for getting the truth about God.”²³ But it looks like we have no common ground answers for this question. Additionally every religious DP is going to suffer from this sort of issue. Ultimately, there is no reason to suppose one DPs internal reasons are superior to another DPs internal reasons. Alston points out that this undermines our consideration of CP as reliable.

Alston goes on to explore some of our reasons for being suspicious of DPs which fail this sort of external test. However, he ultimately claims that these reasons do not apply in the case of religious DPs because there is no common procedure between them to evaluate one another. Alston puts it, “each of the major world religions involves (at least one) distinct DP, with its own way of going from experiential input to beliefs formulated in terms of that scheme, and its own system of overrides, the competitors lack the kind of common procedure for settling disputes that is available to the participants in a shared DP.”²⁴ In cases where individuals are questioning the reliability of a DP while remaining within the same DP, there are some internal sets of checks which the disputants can go through. However, when the disputants are coming from different

²¹ Ibid., 198.

²² Ibid., 201.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 202.

DPs, it is impossible to resolve the issue in this way. In the case of different religious DPs there are no common procedures, so none of us know any way to go about getting the sort of reasons to hold why one is epistemically superior to another. Alston, speaking specifically of CP, states “we have no idea what a non-circular proof of the reliability of CP would look like, *even if it is as reliable as you please*. Hence why should we take the absence of such a proof to nullify, or even sharply diminish, the justification I have for my Christian M-beliefs.”²⁵ Because we can never get an answer to why one DP is superior to another, we should not take the lack of this knowledge as a challenge to the justification for the believer to maintain their DP is correct.

It seems we can't get the sort of information which is needed to see which DP is the correct one, so we are left to “sit tight with the practice of which I am a master and which serves me so well in guiding my activity in the world.”²⁶ We are left to claim our DP is correct because we can do nothing else reasonably. Although Alston seems to end up with an exclusivist view, he does see something very important about the presence of religious diversity. He states, “it is right and proper for one to be worried and perplexed by religious pluralism, epistemically as well as theologically, though not to the extent of denying the rationality of CP.”²⁷

In what follows I will show that Alston is pointing to the tension between what I term the individual practitioner domain and the global domain. Alston has asserted a view in the individual practitioner domain. His view appears to be that of the religious exclusivist. In his terminology this means that the practitioner must stick to their DP as the best because there is no reason to suppose any other DPs are superior. However, in Alston's final comments he is

²⁵ Ibid., 203.

²⁶ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 204.

²⁷ Ibid., 205

struggling with the importance of the presence of religious diversity. He is aware it plays an important role in our understanding of religious beliefs. Here I think Alston is recognizing the need to formulate an answer in the global domain. Alston feels the weight of the problem of epistemic peers and wants to come up with some sort of answer. However, he is left struggling because he has not considered the possibility that one can hold the view of the religious exclusivist and the religious pluralist consistently.

Religious Pluralism

In this section we will look at three different formulations of the religious pluralist hypothesis. First we will look at Wilfred Cantwell Smith's thesis that truth ought to be viewed in a personalistic rather than objective sense. I will frame his work as a more extreme pluralistic hypothesis because his formulation results in denying that there are genuine conflicting truth claims among various religious traditions. Then we will look at John Hick's less extreme formulation of pluralism. Rather than deny the conflicting truth claims, Hick argues that there is ultimately some objective truth. The reason there are conflicting truth claims among religions is a result of various human beings from different times and cultures responding to this objective truth. I will frame Hick as less extreme because he still holds that there are genuine conflicting truth claims, but requires that we alter our understanding of why these conflicts are constructed. Finally, we will examine S. Mark Heim's formulation of pluralism. Heim asserts that both Hick and Cantwell Smith's formulations are inadequate. It is essential for Heim that we maintain that the religious claims of the various traditions are genuine. If we try to make arguments that the religious claims are not real conflicts, we fail to recognize the important differences and therefore the value of the various claims. Heim's pluralism is formulated in such a way to respect the differences between religious claims. I will describe Heim's formulation as the weakest in

the sense that it requires the least modification of our understanding of the conflicting truth claims and why these conflicts were constructed.

We shall begin with the more extreme formulation of religious pluralism. Wilfred Cantwell Smith in *A Human View of Truth*, argues that truth should be viewed in a personalistic sense. Cantwell Smith emphasizes the importance of truth in the context of an individual's life. John Hick describes the main accomplishment of Cantwell Smith's as "[he] reminds us that religion is concerned not primarily with ideas and propositions, but with life itself – with the concrete character and quality of our experience and activity, embodying our faith-response to God."²⁸ In Cantwell Smith's article he argues that this view of truth can be seen in Islamic philosophy, "by calling attention simply to three roots in the Arabic language around which crystallized Muslims' concepts on this central issue."²⁹ He does this in order to show that this view of truth is not unheard of, but rather has fallen out of favor since the Enlightenment.

Cantwell Smith's form of pluralism comes from this view on the nature of truth. Since truth holds in terms of the individual only, there is no "objective" truth which one can compare to. Instead the idea in question *becomes* true for the individual depending on their actions. Here we can see that what is true for one individual cannot really be compared to what is true for another individual. Therefore, we must say that the beliefs of the various religious traditions of the world can all be true in the sense that there are individuals who act in the right sort of relationship to the belief that it is "true". The pluralist hypothesis which Cantwell Smith promotes is that the claims of all religions are true for the individual followers. This is a more

²⁸ Conference on the Philosophy of Religion, and John Hick. 1974. *Truth and dialogue: the relationship between world religions*. London: Sheldon Press., 144.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

extreme version of the pluralistic hypothesis because it requires a radical redefinition of truth which results in denying the existence of truth claims.

John Hick argues that Cantwell Smith's formulation of pluralism is unsatisfactory. In *The Outcome: Dialogue into Truth* Hick claims that although Cantwell Smith's point may shed some light on pluralism, one cannot so easily do away with the problem of conflicting truth claims. Hick states that, "surely 'Christianity' or 'Islam' or 'Hinduism' can only *become* true in the personalistic sense because they are already true in another more universal and objective though less existential sense."³⁰ Hick points to some uncomfortable outcomes of Cantwell Smith's proposal, "To say that the Christian faith is true would then simply be to say that there are sincere people whose faith it is. It would not be to affirm more than that Christianity is believed and lived."³¹ It seems that Cantwell Smith's attempt to redefine truth has left us with some awkward consequences.

Additionally, Hick claims that Cantwell Smith has not given us any way to explain the *apparent* conflicting truth claims. If truth is really personalistic, and conflicts among truth claims pose no serious problem, we must still have some explanation for why it *appears* that conflicts among truth claims are a serious problem. For these reasons, Hick does not find Cantwell Smith's formulation satisfactory.

In *Problems of Religious Pluralism* John Hick articulates his view of pluralism:

the great world faiths employ different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the major variant cultural ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness is manifestly taking

³⁰ Ibid., 146.

³¹ Ibid., 147-8.

place – and taking place, insofar as human observation can tell, to much the same extent.³²

Let's take a moment to break that down. Hick explains that each world faith, that is each one of the major world religions, have a different perception and conceptualization of the Real. Here Hick claims that there is some objective truth, which he names "the Real or the Ultimate". Each of the different world religions perceives this objective truth in a different way. These different ways of perceiving and conceptualizing the Real can be described as a different response to this objective truth. Hick goes on to point to some of the commonalities between these different responses to the Real. He claims that each response encourages a "transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness."³³ In other words, the tradition promotes a shift from focusing on the self as the ultimate to focusing on Reality as it truly is. The nature of the Reality-centeredness view will be defined by the particular tradition's way of perceiving and conceptualizing the Real. Finally, Hick remarks that this transformation which is present in all the traditions is, as far as human beings can see, happening to the same extent. In other words, this transformational process is present and taking place in all the traditions to the same degree. This is, rather briefly, the formulation of Pluralism Hick articulates.

To make this formulation of pluralism a bit clearer, let's see what else Hick says. He goes on to discuss the analogy of the blind men and the elephant: "each runs his hands over a different part of the animal, and identifies it differently, a leg as a tree, the trunk as a snake, the tail as a rope, and so on."³⁴ While Hick admits there is some truth to this analogy with pluralism, he says that there is a "vantage-point from which one can observe both the divine Reality and the

³²Hick, John. 1985. *Problems of religious pluralism*. London: Macmillan., 36.

³³ Ibid., 37.

³⁴ Ibid.

different limited human standpoints from which Reality is being variously perceived.”³⁵ What the pluralist commits to is recognizing that they are in the position of the blind man and not looking from the vantage point of seeing divine Reality as it truly is.

Unlike Cantwell Smith’s formulation of pluralism, Hick’s view helps us explain the problem of conflicting truth claims. Essentially we are all like the blind man and are unable to switch to the alternative vantage point. We should understand participating in one religion as “participat[ing] in it as an experience of transcendent Reality”³⁶ and not to participate in the religion thinking it is the view-point from which the divine Reality is truly seen. The reason conflicting truth claims pose such a problem is that as human beings we cannot reach that vantage-point and are therefore limited to our somewhat problematic perspectives. I describe Hick’s formulation as less extreme because it does not require denying there are conflicting truth claims, but instead maintains there is an objective truth. Hick then goes on to explain why it is that these conflicting truth claims exist.

S. Mark Heim, however, argues that Hick has not recognized the real weight of these conflicting truth claims. According to Heim, Hick is essentially still promoting one path to salvation. Hick fails to see that there are real substantive differences between the paths to salvation articulated by the various traditions. In other words, Heim claims Hick fails to recognize that “each religion offers ‘distinctive truth or insight available in any one or several of them that is not available elsewhere’ is necessary for proper appreciation of other religions”³⁷.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Peterson, Michael L. 1991. *Reason and religious belief: an introduction to the philosophy of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 302.

According to Heim, people like Hick are dogmatic pluralists, “The dogmatic pluralist believes that the particularities of all religions are insignificant.”³⁸

I will describe Heim’s formulation of pluralism as the weakest formulation. Heim does not require us to deny the conflicting truth claims among religions. In fact he encourages us to full heartedly recognize these conflicts as genuine. Heim works in his pluralism not by denying the conflict between religious claims, but instead claims that each religion offers a distinctive approach to salvation. One of the ways he does this is through speaking about the various traditions in terms of fulfillment, “If different religious practices and beliefs aim at and constitute distinct conditions of human fulfillment, then a very high proportion of what each tradition affirms may be true and valid in very much the terms that the tradition claims.”³⁹ Because the goal of each religion is a particular form of fulfillment, and each religion offers ways to attain the desired fulfillment, every religion can provide fulfillment for their practitioners.

Heim asserts that these distinctive paths can lead to fulfillment; therefore, we should not claim that only our particular religion can lead to fulfillment. Heim explains this point, “If human beings form their ultimate desires freely from among many options, and then through devotion and practice are able to see those desires actually realized, there is no reason to complain about the process but ample room to differ over which end we should seek.”⁴⁰ In this way the discussion surrounding religious diversity should not center on which tradition’s truth claims are correct, but should instead focus on which is the best end to pursue.

³⁸ Heim, “Dreams fulfilled”, 118 (2): 14.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

According to Peterson, “Heim adopts a version of ‘orientational pluralism,’ according to which reality is not multifaceted; only one reality exists.”⁴¹ As human beings attempt to understand that one reality, people adopt various orientations. Heim frames these various orientations in terms of fulfillment. The goal of each particular orientation is some kind of human fulfillment. Religions become different ways to reach a particular type of fulfillment. The fulfillment which is the end for the particular religion is highly valued for that religion. Perhaps for other religions this form of fulfillment, or this end, is not as highly valued. Whichever religion one adheres to, the type of fulfillment which is most valued will be the goal of the tradition.

These orientations can be genuinely incompatible with each other. Here incompatible means that “the same person cannot consistently hold several perspectives.”⁴² Heim asserts that we ought to maintain that the various religious claims are genuinely incompatible, as opposed to a formulation of the same path with differences attributed to culture à la Hick, but equally valid nonetheless.

By claiming they are equally *vaid*, Heim is not asserting that the details of each formulation of the path are ultimately correct. Instead, we ought to recognize that these truly distinct paths of fulfillment can lead to fulfillment *while* maintaining they are distinct. Each of the major world religions “is the fulfillment or culmination of a distinctive approach [to salvation]. In this sense, each religion is properly exclusivist.”⁴³

⁴¹ Peterson, *Reason and religious belief*, 302.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Peterson, *Reason and religious belief*, 301.

David Basinger

Now that we have examined some of the views often associated with both religious exclusivism and religious pluralism, we will turn to one philosopher who distinguishes them from each other in terms of questions of focus. In “Hick’s Religious Pluralism and ‘Reformed Epistemology’: A Middle Ground” Basinger challenges the idea that the religious pluralist and the religious exclusivist are offering opposing answers to the same question. Instead, Basinger states that although these two schools, “appear to be giving us incompatible responses to the same question about the true nature of ‘religious’ reality, they are actually responding to related, but distinct questions...”⁴⁴ He describes the question which the religious exclusivist (RE) is responding to as: “Q1: Under what conditions is an individual within her epistemic rights (is she rational) in affirming one of the many mutually exclusive religious diversity hypotheses?”⁴⁵ Basinger states the distinct but related question the religious pluralist (RP) is considering is: “Q2: Given that an individual can be within her epistemic rights (can be rational) in affirming either exclusivism or pluralism, upon what basis should her actual choice be made.”⁴⁶

Basinger articulates his view as a middle ground between the RE and the RP. He claims that despite the appearance that Hick and Plantinga are opposed to each other, they are really presenting answers to related but different questions. The reformed epistemologist focuses on: “Under what conditions is an individual within her epistemic rights (is she rational) in affirming one of the many mutually exclusive religious diversity hypotheses?”⁴⁷ The Hickian Pluralist focuses on the following question: “Given that an individual can be within her epistemic rights

⁴⁴ Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 161.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

(can be rational) in affirming either exclusivism or pluralism, upon what basis should her actual choice be made?”⁴⁸

Basinger states that the Reformed epistemologist correctly answers her question of focus by arguing that “a person need not grant that her religious hypothesis requires propositional (evidential) warrant. She is within her epistemic rights in maintaining that it is a *basic* belief.”⁴⁹ A consequence of this is: “if Hick is actually arguing that pluralism is the only rational option, then I [Basinger] think he is wrong.”⁵⁰ However, Basinger goes on, Hick never actually argues this.

Hick’s question of focus is one related to the origins of belief. Most of the world’s dominant religions are exclusivist. Basinger claims Hick is right in pointing out to the Reformed Epistemologist that this exclusivism was “not originally the product of conscious deliberation.”⁵¹ He puts Hick’s challenge to the Reformed epistemologist, “why they [the reformed epistemologist] now believe that their religious belief-forming mechanisms are functioning properly while the analogous mechanisms in all others are faulty.”⁵² Hick is asking why the reformed epistemologist claims that their mechanism produces the correct view while those with another view are blind.

Basinger suggests that the Reformed epistemologist must ultimately fall back on the fact that the beliefs they hold appear to form the most plausible explanatory hypothesis. However, this leaves Hick’s question standing: “when attempting to discover which of the many self-consistent hypotheses that *can* rationally be affirmed is the one that *ought* to be affirmed, a

⁴⁸ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 168.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Quinn, Meeker. *Philosophical challenge of religious diversity*, 169.

person must finally decide which hypothesis she believes best explains the phenomena.”⁵³

Basinger clarifies this further by emphasizing that the Reformed epistemologist need not *prove* their beliefs, but they “must ultimately make a conscious decision whether to retain the religious hypothesis that has been formed in them or choose another”⁵⁴.

Basinger further states that Hick’s religious pluralism is not necessarily the most plausible alternative to religious exclusivism. However, it is still important to pursue the type of comparative project Hick is suggesting. Basinger states this comparative process has two important benefits despite the apparent difficulties in reaching consensus. This process can help the person feel a sense of ownership about the beliefs they hold. Secondly the person will be more inclined to tolerate individuals with different beliefs. Basinger concludes that concentrating too much on the question of focus which the Reformed epistemologist answers may lead to neglecting the importance of the question of focus which Hick offers an answer to.

We have now explored Basinger’s “Middle Ground” between the RE and the RP. In what follows I will continue with Basinger’s spirit of distinction; however, I will articulate the distinction between these two views in terms of distinct domains. In so doing, I will provide the infrastructure needed in order to claim that one can consistently hold the RE and RP views in distinct domains. Now we will turn to the domain in which the RE proposes an answer.

The Individual Practitioner Domain

In *The Wager*, Pascal argues that the individual should act as though he or she held religious beliefs, particularly about the existence of the monotheistic God, because one is

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

probabilistically more likely to benefit acting this way than otherwise.⁵⁵ Pascal does not argue that one should act in religious ways because of the truth value of the religious claims. Instead, the reason one should hold these religious claims is because the cost and benefit of holding these claims as true produces a better outcome independent of their truth value. If it turns out the religious claims are true, then the benefits of acting like a believer are great, notably eternity in heaven, while the costs of not acting like a believer, eternity in hell, are severe. If the religious claims turn out to be false, the costs include some wasted time but little else, and the benefits typically include a life relatively well lived. Therefore, one should act as though they held the religious claims to be true independent of the reality of the claim's truth value.

Many individuals criticized Pascal because the type of belief produced by his argument is not the right type of religious belief needed. The religious believer who genuinely holds the claims of the religion to be true will act in a genuine way. Their worship, prayer, etc. will come from a genuine belief about the truth value of the claims. The critic of Pascal argues that the individual who acts like this genuine believer will not have the same characteristics as the genuine believer. Because Pascal's believer is basing his or her actions on a cost benefit analysis and not on the relationship between the religious claims and the true nature of reality, the Pascal believer will not ultimately reap the same benefits as the genuine believer. It seems that the sort of belief the Pascal believer holds is not the right sort of belief needed to join the genuine believers.

Pascal argues that although initially the believer grounded in the cost benefit analysis may not have the right sort of genuine belief needed, eventually he or she will obtain the genuine belief. Over time the Pascal believer will no longer rely on the cost benefit analysis as a

⁵⁵ Peterson, Michael L. 1996. *Philosophy of religion: selected readings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 101.

motivating factor and will hold the religious claims as true in the same way as the genuine believer. However, Pascal's critic will remain suspicious if this could ever happen. If one begins their practice based on Pascal's cost benefit analysis, then his or her belief can never be genuine in the needed way.

How does this relate to the pluralist/exclusivist debate? The tension that Pascal's critic is pointing to is related to what I call the individual practitioner domain. The individual practitioner domain consists of the set of concerns regarding what the individual needs to correctly practice a given religious tradition. When one is working with this set of concerns, one is operating in the individual practitioner domain. The defining concern for this domain is about the status of the individual practitioner's beliefs. We can articulate this concern: *what is required of the individual practitioner in order to practice the religion in the needed way?* The critic of Pascal is operating in the individual practitioner domain. He or she is claiming that the Pascal believer is not practicing the religion in the needed way. The reason the Pascal believer is unable to do so relates to the criteria for what is needed to practice the religion correctly. The critic is coming from a religious tradition which values the genuine-ness status of the individual practitioner's beliefs. The critic is pressing that the belief the Pascal believer maintains is disingenuous. The belief the Pascal believer holds has not met the criteria for what is needed to practice the religion correctly. A similar criticism can be made of the religious pluralists when pursuing the religious practices of one religion.

The exclusivist's criticism of the pluralist may go like this: To be a religious pluralist is to hold that the truth claims of a particular religion are not necessarily true descriptions of reality, but instead are different responses to the Real. When a pluralist performs the religious practices of any particular religion, they are not holding all of the relevant truth claims of the religion as

true. The type of belief the religious pluralist holds does not meet the genuine-ness criteria; therefore, the religious pluralist is not practicing the particular religious tradition in the needed way. The religious exclusivist will hold the truth claims of the religion as true descriptions of reality, and thereby, succeeds in meeting the genuine-ness criteria for the tradition. The type of belief the religious exclusivist is operating in is more genuine than the religious pluralist; therefore, any individual who wants to pursue religious practices in the needed way should not do so from a pluralist perspective.

The parallel I wish to draw is between the Pascal believer and the religious pluralist as both failing to meet the genuine-ness belief status criteria for practicing the religion in the needed way. Another way to describe this is both the Pascal believer and the religious pluralist lack the needed genuine belief for the given tradition. The critic of Pascal and the religious exclusivist point out that this disingenuous belief is not the type of belief needed to pursue religious practices. Because the type of belief produced by the Pascal believer and the religious pluralist is not the needed type of belief, these theories should be rejected.

Genuine Belief

As I've described the individual practitioner domain, we can see genuine belief plays an important role. For this reason we must spend some time reflecting on what constitutes genuine belief. Although I think that most, if not all, religious traditions will hold some view on what precisely counts as genuine belief, the details of this requirement will vary depending on the tradition. For this reason it is difficult to discuss genuine belief in generalities. None-the-less, we must explore genuine belief in some capacity for the purposes of this paper. I will adopt an Alstonian view of belief formation in order to describe one view of genuine belief.

To begin, let's briefly review the relevant parts of Alston. According to Alston, each religious tradition has its own way to form beliefs, i.e. a unique doxastic practice or DP. The practitioner will have a particular experience, or input, and then according to the rules of the particular tradition's DP, a particular belief will be produced. Within the DP there is an overrider system which acts as a system of checks and tests which verify the produced output. Alston claims that this overrider system will vary importantly between different DPs because it is intricately tied to the authoritative picture described by the religious tradition.

Alston himself does not consider whether the overrider system can determine degrees of genuine-ness in the beliefs. Instead Alston is mainly concerned with the overrider system being able to determine one produced belief as false or true. However, I want to claim that built into these overrider systems is a detection of the genuine-ness of the produced belief. In other words, when the overrider system is employed to check the truth value of the belief in question, some element of this process will address the issue of genuine-ness.

My claim hinges on Alston's point that the overrider system is intricately tied to the overall authoritative system which the DP is attached to. If this authoritative picture entails that the followers not only follow in action, but must also have genuine belief, the overrider system will reflect this. Perhaps some of the authoritative pictures from the various religious traditions do not place this importance on the believers practicing with genuine belief. If this is the case, I claim that the practitioners of these traditions may choose not to hold a view in the individual practitioner domain. Although I am no expert in world religions, it seems that Buddhism may be one such tradition; however, I am not asserting this is true. I am merely claiming that if a tradition's authoritative picture places no concern on following with genuine belief, the overrider system will correspondingly have no built in genuine-ness detector.

Let's turn to a tradition which does in fact place a high value on the practitioner's genuine-ness. Christianity is one authoritative picture which emphasizes the importance of genuine belief in its practitioners. Throughout the Bible, there is a theme relating to what is in the practitioners' heart. Here I will claim that this is pointing to the importance of not only holding certain things to be true, but to genuinely believe them. For example, in Psalms 40:8, "I delight to do Your will, O my God yea, Your law is within my heart" and again in Psalms 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You."⁵⁶ Here we can see that one must believe in God's word in such a way that it is deep within one's heart. The importance of this can be seen in Christianity when God is described as testing followers' hearts. For example, in Deuteronomy 8:2, "you shall remember all the way which the Lord Yahweh your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not."⁵⁷ Here we can see the authoritative picture which the Christian DP is working with involves a God who is very interested in knowing what is in the practitioner's heart. In other words, the authoritative picture of Christianity places a high value on the level of genuine-ness of the practitioner's belief.

Given that Christianity's authoritative picture values genuine belief, the overrider system associated with the beliefs formed will reflect this fact. Alston does not say a lot about the details of the overrider system associated with Christianity; however, he does claim that it is importantly connected to the overall authoritative picture of the tradition. Although Alston does not give a lot

⁵⁶ *The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament and the New*. 1750. London: Printed by Thomas Baskett; and by the assigns of Robert Baskett.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?c=1&stp=Author&ste=11&af=BN&ae=T081308&tiPG=1&dd=0&dc=flc&docNum=CW121680740&vr>

⁵⁷ *The Holy Bible*

of details on the overrider system, I would like to present one way in which the element of genuine belief may be built into the Christian overrider system.

All overrider systems consist of different checks and tests designed to determine the truth or falsity of a produced belief. For the Christian overrider system, there will be one specific check or test which addresses genuine-ness. Given that the authoritative text for Christians is the Bible; this check is importantly connected to the passages from the Bible which reflect the necessity of belief deep in one's heart. If the produced belief matches the criteria given in the Bible relating to genuine belief, then the belief will pass this element of the overrider system. If the produced belief fails these criteria, the produced belief will result as false. One element of the Christian overrider system is to determine beliefs held disingenuously to be false.

Let's apply this to the Pascalian believer. Suppose the Pascalian believer has had an experience, which has produced the belief that, "Jesus is the son of God." According to the Christian overrider system, this factually checks out with the authoritative picture. However, when the check of genuine belief goes into effect, the way the believer is holding to the belief is not genuine in the needed way. The Pascalian believer is holding this belief for pragmatic reasons, and not deep in one's heart as described in the Bible. Because the belief is held in a disingenuous way according to the criteria described by the authoritative picture, the Pascalian believer's belief will be deemed false. It is not false in the sense that the proposition is incorrect, according to the authoritative picture, but because the believer has not met all the needed criteria in the overrider system.

In this section we have explored what constitutes genuine belief in the Christian tradition. By using Alston's terminology, we have seen how the criterion of genuine belief is importantly

connected to each tradition's authoritative picture. This authoritative picture defines the overrider system for each belief formation system. In traditions which have an authoritative picture that emphasizes genuine belief, this element will be factored into the overrider system. This results in the overrider system determining disingenuous beliefs to be false. As I have pointed out, some religion's authoritative picture may not place a high value on genuine belief. Practitioners of these traditions may have good reason to refrain from holding a view in the individual practitioner level. In other words, people from these traditions may not find weight in the concern of the genuine-ness status of the practitioner's belief.

As we will see later on, the religious exclusivist offers a solution to the set of concerns which defines the individual practitioner domain. At the moment we have simply explored the details of the individual practitioner domain. In the next section we will explore the domain in which the religious pluralist offers a solution. This is known as the global domain.

The Global Domain

The global domain is the set of concerns regarding the problem of our epistemic peers maintaining importantly different religious beliefs. When one is working with this set of concerns, one is operating in the global domain. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on our epistemic peers found believing the major world religions: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

When an individual is operating in the global domain, the defining concern is the problem of epistemic peers. This is not a problem restricted only to religious belief; however, this problem may have important implications on an individual's religious beliefs. When considering the major world religions, the problem is essentially that human beings around the world, with virtually identical reasoning abilities, are fully committed to radically different

religious beliefs. Given that there is no reason to believe that some set of these individuals is somehow privileged, i.e. they have access to information others do not, then how can one rationally claim a particular view to be correct? In other words, how do I know that my religious views are correct, while my epistemic peers differ radically from my view?

Any individual who finds it necessary to answer the above question will want to hold a view in the global domain. For more on this point see the section “Why choose both or one or none” below. The religious pluralist (RP) proposes one such possible view. The Hickian RP proposes that the reason our epistemic peers hold different religious claims is because their respective traditions have responded differently to the Real. Although the claims associated with each tradition vary, they are all responses to the Real. Now the issue of epistemic peers has been resolved. We can consistently explain the differences between religious claims without necessitating one group as being more privileged than another.

In the global domain we are not concerned with the genuine belief needed for the individual practitioner, but rather with what our beliefs mean in light of the beliefs of our epistemic peers. Most commonly the RP rejects the RE on the grounds that the RE has not recognized the important implications of the problem of epistemic peers in terms of our religious beliefs.

The Tension

In the classic formulation of the religious exclusivist and pluralist view, it seems that there is no possibility for compatibility. The RE maintains that only his or her religion is correct while the RP maintains that all religions are correct in some sense of the term. Surely it is not possible for only one tradition to be correct, if all traditions are somehow correct.

As I have framed the views, the RE values the genuine-ness status of the belief of the practitioner. It is necessary that the practitioner hold the beliefs of the religion in a genuine way in order to practice the tradition correctly. As we saw, determining the criteria for the genuine-ness of the belief will depend importantly on the authoritative picture of the tradition. No matter how we define the criteria, the RE will claim that the practitioner must believe the claims of the tradition in a genuine way.

The RP seems to challenge this directly. The RP holds beliefs which seem to undermine the sort of genuine belief the RE is concerned with. The sort of beliefs which the RP maintains do not allow for one to fully commit to the claims of one tradition in the way the RE thinks is necessary for genuine belief. However, because the RP claims the problem of epistemic peers is more important than holding beliefs in the genuine way needed, the RP does not view this as a challenge to the RP position.

In what follows, I will show how this apparent tension is illusory. The tension can be resolved because the RE and the RP are operating in different domains defined by different sets of concerns.

Resolving the Tension

As I've described, the religious exclusivist and religious pluralist are posing answers to questions in different domains. The concern which defines the individual practitioner domain is: *what is required of the individual practitioner in order to practice the religion in the needed way?* This is the domain in which the RE offers an answer. The concern which defines the global domain is *the problem of epistemic peers in terms of religious beliefs*. The RP offers an answer in this domain. In order to clearly resolve the tension between the two views, we must investigate

the possibility of an individual holding both views. Is it possible to be both a religious exclusivist and a religious pluralist?

Let's consider the following situation: Susan, a self-proclaimed Christian, walks into church. At this moment she is practicing her religion of choice with the needed genuine belief. In the individual practitioner domain she holds that this set of religious beliefs are true and other sets of religious beliefs are false. Her heart, body, and mind are unified in such a way as to produce the genuine belief which the religious exclusivist is worried about. Her beliefs will pass the overrider system connected to the authoritative picture of Christianity.

Later that day Susan is talking with her friend Dr. Shoe. Dr. Shoe studies comparative philosophy of religion at the University of Melbourne. Susan and Dr. Shoe begin discussing the diversity of religious claims and the nature of human beings as epistemic peers. Susan explains to Dr. Shoe that the reason behind the diversity of these claims is that all sets of religious claims are different responses to the Real. Dr. Shoe has heard this theory before, but is rather startled that Susan would believe it. Susan is a devout Christian, and it seems that an individual who practices one set of religious claims in such a way would surely hold that this set of claims is the only true set of claims. How else can Susan truly be a genuine believer? Dr. Shoe poses this problem to Susan, but she sees no tension between her genuine belief in the Christian set of religious claims and the fact that when reflecting on sets of religious claims throughout the world, she finds that all of the sets of religious claims are also true. However, she cannot satisfy Dr. Shoe's curiosity on the matter.

Some days later Dr. Shoe is still contemplating Susan's perspective. By now he has several theories to explain how she appears to hold both the religious exclusivist position and the religious pluralist position consistently.

1. Susan is somewhat schizophrenic. She has perhaps compartmentalized herself into two seemingly separate people. When she is considering her individual practice she becomes Susan the exclusivist, and when she is considering religious claims around the globe she becomes Susan the pluralist. However, these two individuals are not unified in any rational way. Instead they are somewhat akin to multiple personalities which exist in relatively distinct chunks.

Dr. Shoe finds this hypothesis somewhat compelling, but is not yet satisfied. Dr. Shoe has known Susan for many years and has never seen any evidence of this sort of compartmentalization. In fact, it seems that Susan is someone who is very well grounded in rationality and strives to have an integrated sense of self. For these reasons, Dr. Shoe moves on to a new theory.

2. Susan has two distinct sets of belief and has a merely practical explanation for holding the two. Perhaps Susan wants to fit in with her Christian friends, so she has psychologically adapted her views in order to fit her needs. Susan also has many scholarly friends who remain somewhat skeptical of religious belief in general often citing the difficulties associated with the diversity of claims throughout the world. In order to retain their respect and friendship, Susan has pragmatically adapted the pluralist view in order to persuade her scholar friends of her acceptability as an intellectual. In other words, Susan changes her view depending on what context she is present in.

Dr. Shoe once again finds this theory to have some promise, but ultimately rejects it. It seems that if 2) were the case Susan may not have the right sort of genuine belief that the religious exclusivist is interested in. Here either Susan isn't really being a religious exclusivist or she isn't really being a religious pluralist. Instead she is simply choosing the theory which best suits her needs at the moment. This speaks little to what she would actually hold to be true at the end of the day.

Additionally, if Susan were a true contextualist, Dr. Shoe would have most likely recognized it previously. Dr. Shoe has discussed various topics with Susan in different contexts and has never noticed her understanding the same sentence in multiple ways depending on which

context they were present in. For all of these reasons, Dr. Shoe does not believe that 2) accurately captures what is going on with Susan.

3. There is some way one can consistently hold the religious exclusivist position and the religious pluralist position.

Dr. Shoe finds this explanation the most interesting and puzzling at the same time. In the next section we will look at what this theory might look like

Consistently Holding Both

As I've described earlier we can think of the religious exclusivist and religious pluralist as proposing solutions in different domains. Intuitively the two views seem full of contradiction; however, this intuition is based on a misunderstanding of the distinct domain each position proposes a solution to. Because the domains are distinct, each view does not impose complications on the other view. It is the distinction between domains that resolves the apparent conflict. Let's look at the case of the musician/music producer to clarify the view.

Suppose Francisco is both a famous ukulele player and music producer. While on stage, Francisco becomes one with his instrument. He is immersed in the world of the man and instrument. During this time, Francisco is exclusively operating in the domain of the musician. He is aware of what set of concerns define this domain and holds a particular solution to these concerns. Although he may not have explicitly thought of it this way, he may still operate in this way unconsciously. Whether he has directly considered what it means to hold a solution in the musician domain is unimportant. What is important is that Francisco knows the concerns of the musician and holds some solution to these concerns. Although my paper is not about the musician domain, I imagine the defining concern of this domain is: *what is required of the musician in order to create music in the needed way?* Francisco has some view of what is

required and how to execute this requirement. While Francisco is playing his ukulele, he must operate in the musician domain. If he were to switch to the music producer domain, he would not be able to do what is necessary for a musician in order to create music in the needed way.

Francisco has now finished his famous Sonata. While he was playing, he operated in the musician domain. Now that he is finished, he can enter the music producer domain. This domain is defined by the set of concerns relating to producing the best final musical product possible. The defining concern of this domain is: *how can one combine all musical elements in such a way as to produce the best product?* Francisco holds a view which poses a solution to this concern. Similar to the musician domain, it is not necessary that Francisco have explicitly thought of his work in this way. It is only necessary that Francisco holds a view to the defining question of the domain. If Francisco were to operate in the musician domain while producing, his final product would not be the best possible. It is necessary for Francisco to operate in the domain appropriate to his task at hand. Otherwise, he will not be able to perform in the needed way.

Now suppose we tap Francisco on the shoulder while he is playing ukulele. We ask him, “Are you a music producer?” Francisco replies, “Yes, I also produce music.” Here we can see while Francisco is operating in one domain, he is conscious of holding a view in another domain. However, to recognize that one holds a view in another domain is not the same as operating in that domain. While one can recognize one’s views in another domain, it is necessary that one only operate in the appropriate domain. The views of another domain are not appropriate to apply when operating in a different distinct domain.

Why do the two roles of musician and producer not conflict? Just like the exclusivist and pluralist views, the domains of the two are distinct. The domain of the musician is the individual

creating music from an instrument. The domain of the producer is the creation of a final polished product. Each of these domains are defined by distinct concerns. However, when Francisco is operating in terms of one of these domains, the view of the other domain is not relevant.

I want to argue that the reason Susan sees no tension between the RE and the RP is directly related to the differences between the domains. Remember as I've described the RE and the RP view, each proposes a solution to the defining concern of the domain. The RE view offers a solution in the individual practitioner domain, and the RP offers a solution in the global domain. Each domain consists of a distinct set of concerns. Because of this, the solution to one domain does not have any consequences to the solution of a different domain. Susan, like Francisco, need only apply the domain and respective view appropriately in order to consistently hold both views. Francisco holds a view in the musician domain and a distinct view in the producer domain, and he applies these views appropriately depending on the situation he finds himself in. Similarly, Susan holds two distinct views in two distinct domains, and applies these views appropriately. When one is in a situation relevant to the concerns of one domain, one needs to apply to corresponding view. If one is in a situation relevant to the concerns of a different domain, one needs to apply that corresponding view as well.

When Susan is worshiping in church, she is operating strictly in the domain of the individual practitioner. The fact that last night at dinner she was operating in her seemingly contradictory view of the global domain holds no importance. Because Susan understands how to appropriately apply the view of the domain she is in, there is no conflict between last night's dinner and her time in church today. One only operates in the currently relevant domain. Similar to Francisco, when in church, Susan is aware of her pluralist position in the global domain, but she cannot function as a genuine believer in church by applying the view in the global domain

inappropriately. Susan can navigate the differences between the different domains and can therefore hold the religious exclusivist and the religious pluralist views consistently.

Why choose both or one or none?

If my work thus far has been successful, you will agree that it is possible for one to consistently and rationally be both a RE in the individual practitioner domain and a RP in the global domain. I would now like to briefly consider under what conditions would one choose this two view option or, choose to hold only one view, or choose to hold neither of the views.

Earlier, I discussed one of the concerns for the RE as illustrated by the Pascal criticism. The heart of this concern lies in the type of belief in the individual practitioner. Here the idea is that the follower of a particular religion needs to have the right sort of belief in order to properly practice the religion. If one thinks it is necessary to have the right sort of belief when practicing a religion, then the RE view will be quite appealing. However, one might not think this worry is very important. For example, one may come from a religious tradition with an authoritative picture which does not value the genuine-ness status of the practitioner's belief. As I stated earlier, the authoritative picture of the religious tradition will define the importance of how an individual holds their beliefs. Some traditions, such as Buddhism, may not consider this element very important. These individuals may choose not to hold a view in the individual practitioner domain. Another reason, one may not hold the RE view in the individual practitioner domain is related to the specifics of the criteria for genuine belief. If one holds that it is impossible to achieve the sort of genuine belief characterized by the authoritative picture of their tradition, one may not hold the RE view in the individual practitioner domain. This are just a few reasons one may not hold the RE view in this domain, or may not hold any view in this domain.

The worry which makes the RP view most appealing is the problem of epistemic peers. Human beings with more or less equal rational capabilities claim radically different religious views to be the correct one. If one finds this a serious concern when contemplating religious views, then the RP view is an appealing solution in the global domain. However, one may not find this worry compelling. For example, one may think it unnecessary to formulate one's beliefs while regarding other individual's views. The individual only needs to focus on their own view independent of other individual's religious views. Someone like this may hold the RE view in the individual practitioner domain and refrain from holding a view in the global domain.

If one, like Susan, finds weight in both of the concerns defining each respective domain, then one is in the optimal position to maintain views in both domains. Because each view poses a solution to a specific and distinct domain, one may hold a view in each. To hold views in both domains requires one to be able to navigate when to apply the view of the appropriate domain. However, this ought to be accomplished by contemplating the distinct concerns defining each domain. So long as one has an in depth understanding of the set of concerns defining the domain, one ought to be able to apply each domain appropriately. In a situation when a concern of a specific domain is relevant, one ought to apply their view in that domain. One should not confuse which concerns belong to which domain after recognizing the distinction between the two. If one thinks the set of concerns defining each domain are important enough to adopt solutions to these concerns, then one may hold distinct views in each distinct domain.

It is important to note that the RE and RP views are not the only possible responses to these two domains. For example, one alternative view in the global domain is that of the inclusivist. Suppose Juan finds that the RE view on genuine belief is correct. In the individual practitioner domain, he is an exclusivist. However, he also finds the concern about our epistemic

peers in terms of religious belief to be quite worrisome. Instead of going the pluralist route, Juan adopts the inclusivist position. The inclusivist view is that all of our epistemic peers are actually practicing the one correct religion; however, it has been altered slightly. Juan denies the apparent differences between religious traditions and holds that at their core all these traditions are practicing the same teachings, i.e. the views of the tradition which he himself practices.

Alternatively one may find neither of the two domains require solutions. If one does not find it necessary to hold a solution to these two distinct sets of concerns, then one may refrain from holding a view in both domains. For example, if one finds that all religious beliefs are just fairy tales, then one may not need to answer any questions relating to either of the two domains. For these individuals, it is not important if an individual practitioner is operating with genuine belief because the authoritative picture upon which this is based is a farce. Because the authoritative picture itself is made-up, there is no need to hold a view in the individual practitioner domain. This individual has grounds to claim that the set of concerns consisting of the individual practitioner domain need no answer. Additionally, this individual will not be interested in the different fairy tales our epistemic peers create. This difference has no serious impact because nothing in any of the traditions speaks to truth. For an individual holding that religious beliefs are elaborate fairy tales, he or she need not hold any particular views in the global or individual practitioner domains.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have shown that the religious exclusivist and the religious pluralist are posing answers in distinct domains. Each domain is defined by a different set of concerns, and the RE and RP views offer solutions to these distinct sets. Because these domains are distinct, it is possible to hold both views consistently. The main requirement for consistently

holding both views is that the individual must be able to appropriately apply the views. This means that one must understand the distinct set of concerns defining each domain, and recognize when one is in a situation related to the concerns of one domain versus another domain.

Whatever concerns are appropriate at that moment, one ought to apply the respective view.

If I have been successful in this paper, many of the conflicts between the religious exclusivists and the religious pluralists are unnecessary. Although on the surface the views look incompatible, by recognizing the distinct domains to which the two offer solutions, one may hold both views consistently. Therefore, there is no need for us to force ourselves to hold only one view at the expense of another which we also find compelling.