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## REASON AND FAITH IN GOD

The familiar topic of “faith and reason” ranks among the most confusing in all of philosophy and theology. A large part of the problem results from widespread use of an unclear notion of faith, and the corresponding notion of reason likewise suffers from lack of clarity. So, we are often left wondering what the key issue is in the longstanding philosophical controversy over “faith and reason.” This paper offers an approach that illuminates the relation between faith and reason, and explains how faith in God can be well-grounded in reason as evidence, even when reason as an argument does not apply.

### 1. FAITH IN GOD

A serious problem arises when one identifies faith with belief and then characterizes belief as belief that something is the case. In this intellectualist perspective, faith in God is the same as belief that God exists. This approach to faith is misguided, because it omits a role in faith in God for *trust in God*. One can believe that God exists without trusting in God at all. To trust in God is to *count on God* for something, but belief that God exists does not require one’s counting on God for anything. So, the idea of faith in God cannot be reduced to the idea of belief that God exists.

Trusting in God is episodic in that it is something one *does*, that is, it is acting toward God in a certain way. It includes one’s committing oneself to

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God with regard to something, typically God's goodness (of some kind) in one's life. Faith in God, in contrast, is not episodic in the way that trust in God is, even though it includes as a base trusting in God at some past or present time. Instead, faith in God is a disposition-oriented state rather than an action. It includes one's *tending* to trust in God under relevant circumstances as a result of one's trusting or having trusted in God. (It is no easy task to specify all of the relevant circumstances, and we need not digress to that matter.) So, I can have faith in God when I am asleep, doing nothing at all.

The trust required by faith in God is *self-entrustment* to God whereby one commits oneself to God, fully in an ideal situation, and does not commit just one's thoughts, feelings, or experiences. A God worthy of worship (and hence characterized by moral perfection) would require such full personal commitment for the good of the person who has faith in God. This truth is reflected in the "primary love command" identified by Jesus on the basis of the Hebrew Bible: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5). We shall return to the relation between faith and love.

Because faith in God includes trust in God as self-entrustment to God, we can identify a responsive human component in such faith. This component includes an agreeable human response to something presented to a human. In the case of faith in God, the response is to God; otherwise, it would not be faith in *God*. In particular, the response would include an agreeable response to an intervention of God in one's awareness or experience. Otherwise, one would lack a more or less determinate divine object (as subject) to which to respond. Of course, one could respond to a merely apparent divine object in experience, but that would not be a response to God and hence would not qualify as faith in God. We shall return to the epistemological matter of how one is to distinguish between the two kinds of objects of response in human experience.

The role of human response in faith in God includes a role for human *decision* in faith in God. Three options for decision are: (a) a *positive* response whereby one commits to cooperate with God's self-manifestation in one's experience, in keeping with God's will; (b) a *negative* response whereby one commits to rejecting cooperation with God's self-manifestation; and (c) an *indifferent* response whereby one withholds commitment to cooperate with God's self-manifestation, neither committing to cooperate nor committing to reject cooperation. These options are *roughly* analogous to the options of

theism, atheism, and agnosticism, but there is a key difference. Options (a)–(c) can be *de re* in the following sense: A person can satisfy one of those options without having *de dicto* content regarding God, that is, without having conceptual or propositional information regarding God. In particular, a person would not have to believe that God exists, to satisfy one of those options.

One's response can be *de re* in that one responds to the goodness self-manifested by God in one's experience without conceptualizing either God or the goodness as being from God. From a conceptual standpoint, one's commitment could be non-theological, but from a *de re* standpoint, it still could be a commitment to God. Here we find a major difference between faith *in* God and faith *that* God exists (at least in the taxonomy I recommend). The suggested *de re* approach has important benefits for religious diversity, because people across varying religious belief-systems, and even people without a religious belief-system, can have faith in God. This would be in keeping with a morally perfect God, who would not block people from relating to God solely on the basis of their lack of *de dicto* commitments regarding God. Otherwise, God would be morally superficial and morally defective.

The human response included in faith in God, being *de re*, is not a response merely to conceptual or propositional content; otherwise, it would be *de dicto*. Instead, it is a response to a distinctive *power* or *energy* characteristic of a morally perfect God: namely, divine *agapē*. We may think of *agapē* as unselfish, compassionate love that seeks what is best, all things considered, for others, even for one's enemies. God's *agapē* would be an agent-based power or energy, because it would include the empowered willing of God, and not just divine reflection or ideas. It thus would have motivational influence, but it would not coerce humans against their own wills regarding God. A morally perfect God would not coerce in a way that eliminates genuine human agency regarding God, because God would not want to exclude humans as genuine participants in relationships of *agapē*.

Faith in God goes beyond trust in God to the human appropriation of the power of divine *agapē*. This is human appropriation *from* a direct acquaintance, an I–Thou encounter, with God, and *to* the human with faith in God. If an instance of faith is not a response to, and ultimately empowered by, divine *agapē*, it is not faith *in* God, because it is not suitably related to God's distinctive moral character of perfect love. God would be morally imperfect, and hence not be God, in the absence of such a moral character. This moral

character, in other words, would be inherent to being God, and one's encountering God would include one's encountering this moral character. A suitable approach to faith in God must accommodate this widely neglected lesson.

The divine *agapē* central to faith in God would not be reducible to a discrete event or episode in human experience. Instead, it would be a key component of a *relationship* of divine-human fellowship or *koinōnia* sought by God. Such a relationship would be redemptive and corrective for humans in thought, feeling, and action, and hence would be promoted by a morally perfect God. Faith in God includes one's entering in to a *koinōnia* relationship with God empowered by divine *agapē*. Such entering can arise from one's deciding to cooperate with the goodness, including the *agapē*, presented to one by God. As suggested, this deciding can be *de re* in a way that allows one to be innocent of a concept of God. It is a positive decision toward a morally relevant *reality* presented to one by God, even if one lacks corresponding conceptual resources about God. (On the notion of *koinōnia*, see GEORGE 1953, and LEHMANN 1963.)

We now can approach the question of why a perfectly good God would promote human faith in God, rather than, say, just knowledge that God exists. The apostle Paul suggests a noteworthy answer: "For this reason [God's promise of redemption] depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all [of Abraham's] descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us)" (Romans 4:16, NRSV, here and in subsequent Biblical translations). The key idea is that God aims to relate to humans ultimately by a divine *gift* of "grace" (*charis*) rather than by human earning or meriting relative to God. This divine motive fits with what would be the redemptive reality given a morally perfect God: that is, the ultimate power of redemption, including lasting good life, would come from God rather than humans.

Paul assumes the lesson at hand in the following remark: "We have this treasure [of redemption] in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Paul is referring to the divine power to which faith in God is related, in a way that mere factual knowledge (that something is true) is not. Faith in God serves as the way to receive, cooperatively and without merit, God's power on offer, particularly the power of righteous love (see Philipians 3:8–9).

Christian faith in God is closely related to hope in God, at least in its orientation toward goodness being realized in the future, and the apostle Paul

affirms this. For instance, in Romans 5, Paul begins with talk of faith in God and moves straightaway to talk of hope in God. His key remark is: “Hope [in God] does not disappoint us, because God’s love [*agapē*] has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). Paul would say the same of faith in God, and he has in mind something offered to humans as a gift of grace, and not as a human earning from God. (On Paul’s notion of grace, see BARCLAY 2015.) The thing being offered is (a relationship of) divine *agapē*, to be received by faith and hope in God, and it reflects the center of God’s character as morally perfect and worthy of worship. Faith in God is a cooperative response by a human to this offer from God, and it includes human self-entrustment *de re* to God. We shall see how this approach fits with a distinctive kind of reason or evidence for faith in God, and thus avoids fideism about faith in God.

## 2. REASON

The term “reason” is as ambiguous as the term “faith,” and this factor has hindered inquiry about the relation between reason and faith in God. A prominent definition of “reason” offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., is: “A statement of some fact (real or alleged) used to justify or condemn an action, or to prove or disprove some assertion, idea, or belief.” If a reason is a “statement used to justify” a claim or an action, then a reason has a crucial role in an argument. As a result the *OED* offers the following subsidiary definition of “reason”: “A premise of an argument.” This is a widespread use of “reason,” but it is too narrow for how we typically think of reasons, inside and outside of philosophy and theology. An experience is not a “statement” of any kind, let alone a statement used as a premise in an argument. Nonetheless, we typically think of an experience, including a perceptual experience, as capable of being a reason or evidence for a belief. For instance, my experience of an apparent computer screen can be a reason or evidence for my belief that there is a computer screen before me, even in the absence of my using a statement to justify a belief in an argument.

The *OED* offers, in addition to the previous definition, the following definition of “reason”: “The intellectual . . . capacity for rational thought . . . . The power of the mind to think and form valid judgements by a process of logic; the mental faculty which is used in adapting thought or action to some

end.” Here, too, the definition omits the important role of experience as a reason or evidence for beliefs. Instead, it focuses on a mind’s ability “to form valid judgements by a process of logic.” If the terms “valid” and “logic” concern inference, as is suggested, we again have a characterization of reason in terms of its role in an argument. Even if this is a prominent use of “reason,” it does not exhaust our typical use of the term “reason,” because it omits the important role of experience as a reason or evidence for belief. We gain nothing by omitting experience from the category of reason; in fact, we gain more explanatory benefit from the category by including it.

One important explanatory benefit concerns the longstanding issue of whether faith in God is somehow at odds with reason or evidence. A related issue concerns how such faith can be supported by reason, if it can be so supported. If divine *agapē* presented to a human is divine self-manifestation to that human, it can be evidence of God’s reality and moral character for that human. It can be such evidence, because it *indicates* the reality of God to a human by presenting the center of God’s unique moral character in *agapē* to that human.

If God is *sui generis* at least in moral character, as monotheists typically hold, God’s self-manifestation of the divine moral character to humans would be the most direct way to convey God’s reality and goodness to humans. Everything else would fall short of directly indicating the real article, or, better, the real agent. As a result, some of the Biblical writers portray God as ratifying divine authority and reality by a divine appeal to God himself. For instance: “When God made a promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself” (Hebrews 6:13). This fits with the idea of God as having a unique perfect moral character and as needing to invoke it for direct authentication of divine reality and goodness. It also fits with the idea that God would want the ultimate object of authentication of divine reality to be a personal agent with a perfect moral character, and not something inferior.

Some philosophers assume that a (good) reason for belief in God must involve an argument that would be compelling for all rational inquirers. This is a mistake. The first consideration is that one’s reason for belief in God can be evidence that does not involve one’s having an argument at all for God’s existence. Arguments for God’s existence are much more intellectually complex than basic experiential evidence for God’s existence. By analogy, there is a clear distinction between my basic experiential evidence of a black object before me and a much more intellectually complex argument for the ex-

istence of that object. I could have the former without the latter, and the former could be a reason for me for belief.

The second consideration is that a reason or evidence for belief in God can be had from a first-person perspective that is not shared by others, and hence an argument that generalizes on the evidence to apply to rational belief for others may fail, owing to a failure to capture the evidence of others. By analogy, some perceptual or sensory experiences vary among humans, and hence do not yield or serve an argument that generalizes on the evidence to rational belief for all inquirers. Arguments that fail to capture a person's evidence will fall short of rational cogency for that person, even if they capture the evidence of another person.

We can coherently imagine that God wants to anchor all of divine self-revelation to humans in a first-person human perspective that includes a *de re* encounter with God. We seem not to be in a position to exclude this live option, and it is not clear why one would want to exclude it, given that it would be the most direct way to represent God's moral character and reality to humans. Many Christian philosophers and apologists exclude it uncritically in their reasoning practices in favor of theism, when they assume that reasonable belief in God must be based on a supporting argument. Even so, we cannot exclude that *God* rightly would want to be the ultimate convincer or persuader of people believing in God, by means of the self-manifestation of God's unique moral character to them, and not by means of an argument. The approach to reason and faith in God offered here allows for this divine option, and this lends credibility to the approach. It removes the pretensions of those approaches to Christian apologetics presuming that human uses of arguments are crucial to reasonable belief in God. As a result, the present approach recommends apologetic modesty in this connection.

Exaggeration of the importance of reasons as arguments for faith in God stems in part from a failure to distinguish between one's *having* reasons and one's *showing* or *presenting* reasons for such faith. One can have (good) reasons for faith in God without one's showing one's reasons to others or oneself in an argument, and even without one's being able to show one's reasons to others or oneself in an argument. The intellectually complex process of showing one's reasons to others, such as in using an argument, is not required for one's having (good) reasons for faith in God.

God could build up to intersubjective evidence of divine reality for humans on the basis of evidence in a first-person human perspective. In particular, people could have in common a *de re* encounter with God, and this

could yield intersubjective evidence underlying mutuality in reasons for belief in God. Such evidence would be a kind of (limited) public evidence, in virtue of being shared, but it would not necessarily be had by all rational inquirers. As a result, its cogency would have limits, being relative to the people who have that actual evidence. So, we should not expect the ultimate evidence or reasons for faith in God to be a source of persuasion for all people. We shall see next how this bears on *de dicto* faith that God exists.

### 3. FAITH *DE DICTO*

Faith that God exists is *de dicto* in virtue of its propositional content, namely: that God exists. Its content is interpretive when coupled with faith in God, because this content interprets or classifies the *de re* component as the divine object (as a divine subject) of the encounter with God. That is, the interpretation characterizes the encounter as including the *reality of God*. In doing so, it affirms that something is factual, or real, thereby implying that a claim is made true, with the relevant fact being the truth-maker.

An interpretation of a human experience can be wrong or incorrect (at least typically), and therefore we can ask whether *de dicto* faith that God exists is correct in its interpretation. Correctness here would entail the kind of fact-based truth identified by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, Book IV: To say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true. A correct or true interpretation, in other words, must match the relevant facts. The consequences of departing from such a realist approach to truth are philosophically devastating (see MOSER 1989, chapter 1), and nobody has improved on Aristotle's basic characterization of truth. Faith that God exists cannot be properly understood apart from the question of whether it is true that God exists. Responsibly answering the latter question, however, need not be, and is not, quick and easy.

The most promising approach to the question of whether faith that God exists is correct or true is a variation on a broader approach to epistemic reasonableness, the kind of reasonableness suited to factual knowledge. This approach invokes *abduction*, an inference to a best available explanation of the relevant evidence for a person, as a key factor in epistemically reasonable belief (for details, see MOSER 1989, 2008). The main idea is not that a person must always draw an inference to a best available explanation to have epistemically reasonable belief. Instead, it is that the epistemic reasonableness

of a belief for a person depends on there being available an inference to a best available explanation from the person's evidence to the belief in question.

The foundational evidence will be the person's overall base of experience, and the non-foundational evidence will be the person's beliefs made epistemically reasonable (for that person) on the basis of the foundational evidence. The epistemic connection between the two tiers is an available inference to a best available explanation. A person's believing that God exists will be fully grounded when it is suitably based on the evidence in question and on the epistemic connection between the evidence and the belief. Even so, the proposition that God exists could be epistemically supported for a person, on the basis of experience, although that person does not base a belief that God exists on the supporting evidence or epistemic connection.

My abductive approach to epistemic reasonableness gives a central role to explanation-seeking why-questions about foundational evidence found in one's experience. A typical question of that sort is: Why am I now having *this* experience, rather than none at all or some other experience? This question calls for an answer, and there are better and worse answers relative to a person's overall experience and evidence. For instance, my current experience of an apparent computer screen prompts the question of why I am now having this experience rather than none at all or some other experience. A bad answer, from an abductive point of view, would be: I am now perceiving a brown cat. The latter claim would not explain why I am having the experience in question. That claim's content does not correspond to or elucidate my experience. I am not now having an experience of a brown cat.

We can extend the abductive lesson to skeptical worries. A skeptic may suggest that my present experience could be but a dream or an illusion, and therefore recommend that I withhold judgment on the matter. If "could" connotes logical possibility, we have no reason to dissent, because neither epistemic reasonableness nor knowledge rules out the *logical* possibility of being mistaken. Knowledge, given its truth condition, does rule out the actuality of being mistaken, but that leave the logical possibility of error intact. Epistemic reasonableness does not have a truth condition, as there can be epistemically reasonable belief that is false. So, any skeptic using a modal notion of "possible mistake" owes us clarification of the relevant domain of modality.

The key point is that my evidence does not give me any indication that I am now undergoing a dream or an illusion. I have had dreams and illusory experiences, and, so far as my evidence goes, they always have been accom-

panied by indicators of being dreams or illusory experiences. So, I do not find myself wondering now, in genuine doubt, whether any of my experiences is a dream or an illusion. I am able to tell, so far as my evidence goes, which experiences of mine were dreams or illusions, because dreams and illusions have telltale indicators. Some of the familiar indicators are: inconstancy, abruptness, indistinctness, and incongruity. We all have been aware of such indicators in connection with (what we know to be) dreams and illusions.

My present experience of an apparent computer screen does not include any of the telltale indicators. This entails that my present experience does not include any evidence (or indicator) of its being a dream or an illusion. Again, I *logically could* be undergoing a dream or an illusion, but that modal truth is not to the epistemic point. Epistemic reasonableness is determined by actual truth-indicators, and I do not have a truth-indicator in my evidence of a dream or an illusion in the present case. The burden is on the skeptic, then, to provide an actual indicator of a dream or an illusion, and a mere modal claim will not discharge this burden. Without an actual truth-indicator, the skeptic will not be able to discharge the burden. The skeptic then will be neutralized.

We now can identify an important lesson about a foundational reason or evidence for faith that God exists. When I confront a certain kind of *agapē* in my experience, I (at least from an epistemic point of view) should ask: Why am I having this *agapē* experience rather than no experience or a different experience? My answer calls for close attention to my experience, and I may need to put myself in a position to give a responsible answer. For instance, I may need to set aside any bias I have against the value of unselfish love, including such love directed toward me. In addition, I may need to be willing to cooperate with such love in order to comply with what God intends it to do. A perfectly good God would intend such love to inaugurate or sustain a divine–human relationship of *koinōnia* that is in the best interest of a human. If a person is oppositional or indifferent to divine love, God may hide from that person to avoid a kind of rejection that hardens opposition or indifference to God. After all, if God seeks human cooperation with divine love, God’s self-manifestation of such love to a person would not be satisfied with human responses that encourage further alienation from God. (On divine hiding, see MOSER 2013, 2015.)

The phenomenology of general human experience of divine love is complex and subtle, as we should expect. We need not, and should not, assume that humans would experience divine love in exactly the same way. Instead,

we should expect a certain amount of variability, owing to distinctiveness in persons and their circumstances. A key question is whether the relevant experience of divine love includes an experience of *personal* traits suited to a God worthy of worship. Such traits would include the love's being intentional, directed, and nudging (without coercion) toward a recipient's cooperation with it and conformation to it. So, we need to ask whether a superhuman agent manifests such intentionality, directedness, and nudging in any human experience. In particular, is the manifestation of unselfish love in human experience a *personal* disclosure that transcends humans?

The experience of my being presented with and directed toward divine love could be diachronic rather than just synchronic. That is, it could take place over time, and not just at an instant. So, I could assess it over time for its source, without a snap judgment at a moment. In addition, the experience could include my conscience being bothered, and perhaps even convicted, by the standard of experienced love over time, particularly my experienced failure to conform to that standard. In experiencing an attempt to rouse me and lead me away from my selfishness, I could experience my falling short of the love directed toward me. This could create dissonance in my experience (including my conscience) and in my self-understanding. It thus could create a crisis in my life. (For relevant discussion, see FARMER 1935, chapters 1, and 11, and NIEBUHR 1941, vol. 1, chapter 9.)

My experience could show signs of my being *intentionally* challenged to let go of my selfishness for the sake of unselfish love toward others, even my enemies. The apparently intentional challenge could go against my own preferences and intentions, and it could come to me via my conscience without input from another human. So, I could lack any indicator that the love presented to me, including its apparently intentional challenge to me, comes from me or another human. In that case, nothing in my experience would override or undermine that my experience of the challenge of love to me arises from a personal source independent of me and other humans. In this experience, I would seem to be intentionally guided or led, via conscience without coercion, toward unselfish love for others and away from unselfishness. As it happens, this is true of my own experience and conscience, and it indicates the involvement of a personal agent other than a human agent.

Over time I could reasonably decide, on the basis of my overall evidence, that an intervention from a perfectly good God figures in a best available explanation (for me) of the challenging and guiding love that troubles my conscience. I thus could lack the availability of a better or even an equally good

alternative explanation of this love presented to me. Somebody could propose, however, a purely natural explanation as an underminer or defeater of a theological explanation of my experience. For instance, a critic could propose that I myself somehow am creating for myself my experience of the challenging and guiding love in question. We can grant the logical possibility of my creating this, even without our specifying a mechanism, but actual evidence, as we noted, requires an actual truth-indicator, beyond mere possibility. So, a critic needs somehow to base the critical proposal in my actual evidence; otherwise, the proposal will not get *epistemic* traction, at least for me. In particular, without a basis in my evidence, the critical proposal of self-creation will not figure in a best available explanation for me, relative to my actual evidence. It thus will have an inadequate epistemic status for me, given my evidence.

My experience of the challenging and guiding love presented to me could benefit, epistemically, from well-grounded reports from others. Such reports could come from well-grounded parts of a written religious tradition, such as the Bible, and from well-grounded testimony from my contemporaries. The explanatory coherence of such well-grounded reports adds to the positive epistemic status of the best available explanation for me. In contrast, mere reports or testimonies, like mere beliefs, do not add to positive epistemic status. They are epistemically arbitrary in a way that well-grounded reports are not. Evidential support is the key difference here, and such support can vary among people.

Defeaters are underminers of epistemically reasonable belief for one, and they can come from any relevant aspect or area of one's experience. Likewise, added explanatory coherence for a belief relative to any aspect or area of one's experience can add to the positive epistemic status of that belief for one. My epistemic abductivism is thus evidentially holistic for a person, in terms of positive evidence and defeaters. The ultimate status of evidence for a person depends on *all* of that person's evidence and potential defeaters. Epistemic reasonableness, as suggested, is relative to persons and their evidence in this way, and it thus differs from truth and factuality. Such reasonableness does not entail or otherwise guarantee truth, but it is the responsible, non-arbitrary way to aim at acquiring truth and avoiding error. In particular, it is responsible to one's overall indicators (or evidence) of what is true, even if those indicators are fallible.

Epistemic abductivism accommodates the truth that basic, foundational evidence in experience is not an argument or even a belief. The fact that the

explanatory value of a belief relative to one's experience confers epistemic status on that belief allows that the basic evidence in experience is free of an argument or a belief. So, evidence from divine love in experience need not include an argument or a belief. It can figure in the epistemic reasonableness of a belief that serves in the best available explanation of that experiential evidence for a person. So, one's ultimate evidence for God's existence need not be an argument or a belief. Philosophers and theologians have given inadequate attention to this important lesson, and the discussion of the relation between reason and faith has suffered accordingly.

*De dicto* faith can offer an interpretation of basic experiential evidence (for instance, by specifying what it is), and that interpretation can figure crucially in a best available explanation of one's experience. When it does figure thus, in the absence of defeaters, such faith can be well-grounded and hence epistemically reasonable for a person. Even when offering an interpretation and a best available explanation of experience, however, *de dicto* faith in God will allow for incompleteness, perplexity, and mystery. Indeed, we should expect these when the object of faith is a God who cannot be fully comprehended by humans. After all, the God in question would transcend the created order and any understanding its members enjoy. As a result, we should not expect to have a theodicy that fully explains God's purposes in allowing evil. For such a theodicy, God would need to reveal divine purposes in a way that bears on all cases of allowed evil, but our evidence does not indicate such revealing, and we should not expect it to do so. Even so, the human limitations in question could serve a divine redemptive purpose, because they could encourage a felt need for dependence on God (rather than just on a theory), thereby countering human pride and presumed self-sufficiency. (For elaboration on the relevant values of incompleteness, perplexity, and mystery, see NIEBUHR 1949, and RAHNER 1991.)

In my perspective, a *de re* factor from the divine self-manifestation of *agapē* can give *de dicto* faith the basic evidence it needs. In addition, it can give a person assurance of divine reality and goodness. On the human side, faith in God includes a cooperative commitment to the divine love presented in experience. This commitment would include one's committing to turn away from selfishness for the sake of being committed to cooperate with such love, even if one fails (in action) to love unselfishly at times.

We might wonder why we should not simply replace the role of faith with the role of *agapē*. One consideration is that faith in God, being a disposition-oriented state, can be more constant for humans than (actions of) loving God

and others. Unselfish love toward God and others tends to waver more significantly among humans than does faith in God, at least among humans having faith in God. So, faith in God can serve as a means to loving God and others when such loving is in short supply. When such faith is in place, it is a state rather than an episode, and hence can endure through times of human frailty in action, such as in failing to love. This fits with the consideration that a perfectly good God would seek an ongoing *relationship* with willing humans, beyond mere experiences, thoughts, or feelings. An account of faith in God should accommodate the latter consideration. (I have developed this theme in MOSER 2017.)

#### 4. DEFENDING FAITH IN GOD

It is, as suggested above, one thing to have evidence for faith in God, and it is another thing to have a presentable defense of faith in God. Having the former evidence does not require having the latter defense. It is a serious category mistake to confuse the two. So, we should resist any assumption that adequate evidence for faith in God necessarily includes a public cogent argument for all inquirers. It would be misleading to rely on such an assumption in a defense of faith in God. One consideration is that God may have no reason to supply the kind of public defense in question. It is not clear, in any case, that such a defense would have redemptive value if God seeks cooperation from humans, beyond assent to propositions. In fact, that kind of defense could interfere with a divine challenge to human wills alienated from God's will. For instance, it could reduce the question of God's existence to a merely intellectual question that fails to challenge the direction of human wills in relation to God.

If the experience of divine love varies among humans, with some humans lacking the experience, we should not expect an argument from experienced love to God's reality to be convincing for all inquirers. People lacking the relevant experience will not have the evidence needed to make an argument convincing for their situations. A related lesson bears on universal atheism or agnosticism. An atheist, for instance, can lack crucial foundational evidence from experience of divine love. Such a person thus could lack the needed basis for epistemically reasonable belief that God exists. It would be premature, however, for this kind of atheist to generalize his or her epistemic situation to all people. Other people still could have the needed experience

of divine love, and this experience could figure in their epistemically reasonable belief that God exists. So, generalization of evidence regarding God's existence needs to be sensitive to a person's actual evidence and to the potential variability of relevant evidence among people. Attention to this lesson will put arguments regarding God's existence in their proper place regarding their cogency or lack of cogency among people. It also will save people from exaggerated expectations for a reasoned defense of faith in God.

In the perspective offered here, a defense of faith in God is, *ultimately*, God's *self*-defense; and God's self-defense is, *ultimately*, God's *self*-manifestation via divine *agapē* in human experience. Any non-ultimate defense, such as one relying on arguments, must derive from and point to the aforementioned facts of the ultimate defense. The current lesson, however, is that faith in God admits of a defense, but it is not the kind of defense typically considered by philosophers, theologians, and others. We cannot explore the details of a defense, but we can see the distinctiveness of the kind of defense suggested by this paper's approach to reason and faith in God.

The relevant defense will prompt the question of why some people report an experience of divine love whereas others do not. In doing so, it will raise the issue of whether some people oppose or are indifferent to such an experience for themselves. That issue can invite us to consider whether the matter of having divine evidence has as much to do with a human as with God, owing to a crucial redemptive role for human cooperation with God and divine evidence. A related inquiry would concern the identification of impediments to having divine evidence and alternatives to such impediments. Philosophers of religion would do well to include such concerns in a religious epistemology that considers a God worthy of worship.

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## REASON AND FAITH IN GOD

### Summary

The topic of "reason and faith in God" has challenged philosophers and theologians since the beginning of their disciplines, and it has left many inquirers confused. The key notions of faith and reason are often left unclear, and this complicates inquiry about faith in God. Many inquirers end up puzzled about the significance of the distinction between reason and faith. This paper outlines an approach to reason and faith in God that explains how faith in God can be well-grounded in reason as evidence, even if reason as an argument does not apply in a case. It identifies distinctive roles for experience and defense in an account of faith in God.

## ROZUM I WIARA W BOGA

### Streszczenie

Problem „rozum a wiara w Boga” stanowił wyzwanie dla filozofów i teologów od samego początku istnienia ich dyscyplin, lecz wiele dociekań na ten temat wciąż pozostaje niewyjaśnionych. Nawet kluczowe pojęcia „wiary” i „rozumu” często pozostają niejasne, co komplikuje badanie na temat wiary w Boga. Dla wielu badaczy znaczenie rozróżnienia między rozumem i wiarą ostatecznie okazuje się zagadką. Niniejszy artykuł zarysowuje podejście do zagadnienia rozumu i wiary w Boga, które wyjaśnia, w jaki sposób wiara w Boga może być mocno oparta na rozumie oraz ewidencji przedstawianej przez rozum, nawet jeśli argumentacja rozumowa nie ma zastosowania w danym przypadku dotyczącym wiary w Boga. Artykuł określa również różne role, jakie spełniają doświadczenie oraz argumentacja apologetyczna w wyjaśnianiu wiary w Boga.

**Key words:** faith; reason; evidence; God; argument.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wiara; rozum; ewidencja; Bóg; argument.

*Translated by Roman Majeran*



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