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A COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLACE OF FAITH IN THE
EPISTEMOLOGY OF J.A. KOMENSKÝ

Disertační práce
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Annotation: In the first part of this paper I shall present a description and analysis of the place of faith in Komenský's epistemology. Once the nature of Komenský's view on faith has been established I shall move on to a comparison of faith in Komenský's epistemology, in both its definition and its relationship with reason, to concepts of faith in the works of other philosophers from various points in history, specifically Plato, Pierre Bayle, Kant, Kierkegaard and Alvin Plantinga, then critically analyse Komenský's view of faith in order to determine whether or not it is a view that is worth adopting for our own epistemology. The purpose of the comparative section of this paper is to see if there are any concepts in the works of these philosophers that may be used to alter the definition and role of faith in Komenský's epistemology in a way that makes it more coherent and more acceptable, the ways in which the ideas of these philosophers might be used to alter Komenský's epistemology will be discussed in the last part of this paper. The purpose of this last part will be to present a critical analysis of Komenský's concept of faith to establish whether or not faith as defined by Komenský can be considered a sufficiently grounded belief and to find possible ways to ground Komenský's concept of faith in the reasoning of the thinkers mentioned in the previous part of the paper.

Annotace: V první části této práce představuji popis a analýzu role víry v epistemologii J.A. Komenského. Po vysvětlení Komenského definice víry následuje komparace mezi Komenského koncepcí víry a koncepcemi víry v dílech jiných filozofů, konkrétně Platona, Pierre Bayla, Kanta, Kierkegaard a Alvina Plantingy, za níž pokračuje kritická analýza Komenského koncepcí víry s účelem zjistit, zda by taková koncepcí víry měla hodnotu pro naši vlastní epistemologii. Cílem komparativní části této práce je posouzení, zda se v dílech těchto filozofů nachází koncepty, které by mohli sloužit k revizi Komenského epistemologie, a to způsobem, jež by ji učinil více koherentní a přijatelnou. Cesty, jak by mohly být využity myšlenky těchto filozofů pro revizi Komenského koncepcí víry, budou probrány v poslední části této práce. Účelem této poslední části bude prezentovat kritickou analýzu Komenského koncepcí víry s cílem jednak zjistit, zda se víra, tak jak ji popisuje Komenský, dá považovat za dostatečně zdůvodněná a jednak nalézt možné způsoby, jak zdůvodnit Komenského pojetí víry s pomocí filosofických koncepcí zmíněných v předchozí části.

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Introduction:

It is generally accepted that both sense perception and reason are faculties that can lead to knowledge. However, when Comenius set out to reform philosophy, he chose to add a third principle to these, that principle being faith or “scripture”. Without all of these three principles working in concert, according to Comenius, it is impossible to build an accurate picture of reality, as he explains:

“for the first we make three principles of Philosophy, with Campanella, and his happy Interpreter Tobie Adams, Sense, Reason and Scripture: But so joyntly, that whosoever would not be left in ignorāce or doubt, should rest on no one of these without the others, otherwise it wil be a most ready precipice into errors. For Sense, though it make an immediate impression upon us of the truth imprinted upon things: yet because it is very often confounded, either by reason of the multitude of things in a manner infinite, and the strange complications of formes: or else wearied and tired, sometimes with the distance of the objects, and so consequently dazeled and deceived. Reason must of necessity be employed, which may conclude alike of like things, and contrarily of contrary things, by observing their proportion, and so supply the defect of sense, and correct its errors.

But then because many things are remote both from sense and reason (which we cannot in any sort attain unto by sense, nor yet by reason firmly enough) we are indebted to the grace of God, that he hath by his Word revealed unto us even some secrets which concern us to know. Therefore if any one desire the true knowledg of things, these three principles of knowing must of force be conjoynd.”¹

Here Comenius explains the flaws of the principle of sense, claiming that direct acquaintance with an object through sense perception can lead to true conclusions about the object and its properties, but there are many possible cases where sense perception alone cannot teach the perceiver the whole truth about the properties of a perceived object, and many more cases where sense perception may actually lead a perceiver into error about its

¹Comenius, J. A. (1651), *Naturall Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light: Or, a Synopsis of Physicks: by JA Comenius: Exposed to the Censure of Those that are Lovers of Learning, and Desire to be Taught of God. Being a View of the World in Generall, and of the Particular Creatures Therein Contained; Grounded Upon Scripture Principles. With a Briefe Appendix Touching the Diseases of the Body, Mind, and Soul; with Their Generall Remedies. By the Same Author.* London: Robert and William Leybourn. Page unnumbered Cf. Comenius, J. A. (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, ed. by M. Kyrálová, S. Sousedík, and M. Steiner, *Johannis Amos Comenii Opera Omnia*, Vol. 12, Praha: Academia, p. 13.

object. An example of sense perception leading a perceiver into error would be if a perceiver sees two cubes that appear identical and concludes that they are identical and that they are both cubes, even though one of them is very slightly narrower and is therefore not a cube, but the difference between the two solids is too slight to be seen, in order for the perceiver to notice the difference the perceiver would have to employ his faculty of reason by measuring them both and calculating their dimensions. This is a good example of how reason might “*supply the defect of sense, and correct its errors*” and of what Comenius means when he talks about the senses being confused by “*the multitude of things in a manner infinite*”. The ways in which things can resemble or differ from each other are truly infinite and not all of these similarities and differences can be detected by the senses alone, as is the case in the aforementioned example. When Comenius speaks about “*the strange complications of formes*” he is referring to the many objects in the world whose shape is too complex to be understood using the senses alone, an example of this would be a centagon where it is impossible to tell that it has exactly 100 sides just by looking at it, and once again reason is needed to make up for the deficit of the senses by counting the sides of the centagon. Comenius’ last mention of how the senses might be confused or lead into error is his mention of how the senses might be “*wearied and tired, sometimes with the distance of the objects*”, referring to the way that sights or sounds are less clear to the perceiver when they are perceived from a great distance. Having established that reason is needed to make up for the shortcomings of the senses we may now examine what shortcomings reason might have that, according to Comenius, must be corrected by faith. Comenius says that the purview of faith is things that are “*remote both from sense and reason*” the truth about which can only be found in revealed scripture. According to Comenius the only place that faith has in correcting reason is in these transcendent matters which are out of the reach of reason as he explains later in the text: “*when Reason hath gathered any thing falsely of things invisible, it is amended by divine Revelation.*”² Comenius does not give a detailed explanation of what can be established by reason and what must be established by faith in revelation, but it is not too difficult to figure out what belongs in each of these two categories from what Comenius does say. In the aforementioned part of the text Comenius refers to the objects of faith as “*things invisible*”, and he is not referring to things that are merely invisible to the human eye, but he is using the word in the same way as it is used in the bible “*For the invisible things of him (God) from the creation of*

² Ibid.

*the world are clearly seen*³ and the beginning of the Nicene creed *“I believe in God the father almighty creator of heaven and earth and all that is visible and invisible”* in the first of these two quotes St. Paul is referring to the qualities of God which cannot be perceived by the senses nor can they be fully understood by reason since the finite human mind cannot fully comprehend Gods triune nature i.e. how a single God can exist in three distinct persons or Gods infinite qualities i.e. omnipotence omniscience and omnibenevolence. In the other quote, the creed mentions supernatural entities that God created such as angels and demons. These beings are also out of the reach of the senses, since they are incorporeal, and they cannot be fully understood through reason since we cannot know how a being without sense organs can perceive nor can the mechanics behind the supernatural works of these beings be understood through reason. It is clear then that, according to Comenius, the object of faith are propositions regarding supernatural things such as the existence of angels or the doctrine of the trinity, since the truth of these propositions cannot be established by the senses or by reason but is supported by scripture. There is nothing particularly unique about Komenský’s definition of faith since it is the presupposition that the bible is the revealed word of God, a common assumption not only amongst the thinkers of Komenský’s time but also among his predecessors, going all the way back to St. Augustine of Hippo, what is remarkable is the way that faith relates to reason in Komenský’s epistemology, since Komenský states that the realm of faith is solely immaterial things whose existence cannot be established by the senses or by reason and that faith can never teach anything that is contrary to reason, claiming that:

*“when Reason hath gathered any thing falsely of things invisible, it is amended by divine Revelation. Yet that emendation is not violent, and with the destruction of the precedent principle: but gentle, so that that very thing which is corrected, acknowledgeth, and admits it of its own accord, and with joy, and soon brings something of its own, whereby the same corrected truth may become more apparent.”*⁴

Here Comenius makes it clear that faith never requires man to disregard his faculty of reason in favour of faith, but when faith corrects reason it does so in a way that is acceptable to reason. The specifics of how this happens

³ Taken from Romans 1:20 of the King James bible: “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”.

⁴ Comenius, J. A. (1651), *Naturall Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light: Or, a Synopsis of Physicks*, page unnumbered. Comenius, J. A. (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, p. 13.

are important to understanding Komenský's view and they will be examined later on in this paper, since there is much to say on this subject.

My objective in this paper is to first compare faith in Komenský's epistemology, in both its definition and its relationship with reason, to concepts of faith in the works of other philosophers from various points in history, specifically Plato, Pierre Bayle, Kant, Kierkegaard and Alvin Plantinga, then critically analyse Komenský's view of faith in order to determine whether or not it is a view that is worth adopting for our own epistemology. The purpose of the comparative section of this paper is to see if there are any concepts in the works of these philosophers that may be used to alter the definition and role of faith in Komenský's epistemology in a way that makes it more coherent and more acceptable, the ways in which the ideas of these philosophers might be used to alter Komenský's epistemology will be discussed in the last part of this paper.

What is relevant in the philosophy of Plato, whose ideas will be the first to be compared with Komenský, are his ideas on the nature of knowledge found in *The Republic* and *the Thaetetus*, in particular what he says about knowledge by acquaintance in the *Meno* and the implications that this has for trust (or faith) in testimony and the two separate definitions of knowledge laid out in the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic*, with the one laid out in the *Republic* claiming that knowledge is fundamentally different from belief and can in no way be defined in terms of belief and the one laid out in the *Theaetetus* defining knowledge as true belief accompanied by an account, thereby defining knowledge as a form of belief. Since it is impossible to define principles that lead to knowledge without first establishing what knowledge itself is I shall examine each definition of knowledge given by Plato in order to determine which definition should be accepted, as well as examining the differences between the knowledge of something and a belief in something. Once it is decided which one of these two definitions of knowledge is the more rational one I shall examine what role faith⁵ might have in leading us to knowledge. This part of the paper will not only concern itself with a comparison of the ideas of Plato and Komenský but will also examine whether faith can lead to knowledge or if it cannot provide the sort of account required for a belief to be considered knowledge.

⁵ It is important to note that Plato never mentions faith in any of the aforementioned writings, he does however have a lot to say about knowledge by acquaintance (direct experience) in *the Republic*, which has some important implications for faith as an epistemological principle.

Pierre Bayle is a philosopher who spoke at length about faith, reason, epistemology and religion, was a contemporary of Komenský and even wrote a critique of him. He will be the next thinker whose epistemology will be compared with that of Komenský. Bayle's views expressed in his "éclaircissements" appear to be a perfect example of what Komenský describes as faith correcting reason "*to the destruction of the previous principle*", with him declaring that the more repugnant faith is to reason, the more valuable it is⁶, when explaining to the Walloon church how he can defend reasoned arguments that seem to lead to atheism while simultaneously remaining a faithful Christian. Bayle even goes so far as to say that his view is the only one that avoids the heresy of Pelagianism. Another important point of comparison is Bayle's apparent scepticism⁷ which goes hand in hand with the earlier described fideism and seems to stand in opposition to Komenský's view of the relationship between faith and the other two principles, where Komenský sees reason as entirely reliable within its own domain Bayle often casts doubt on its reliability, which seems congruent with the fact that, according to Bayle, faith needs to make such significant corrections of its findings.

⁶ It is debated whether Bayle's statements are sincere or if they are attempts at dissimulation on Bayle's part in order to avoid censorship by the authorities for spreading his agnostic or atheistic views, since Bayle did admit that these beliefs are contrary to reason and he was a great influence on Non-theistic enlightenment philosophers like David Hume, however, the evidence for his statements being sincere is at least as strong since he asserts his faith repeatedly and was even willing to suffer for it. I will not engage in the debate over Bayle's views here and instead assume that his statements were sincere in order to determine how such an epistemology would compare to that of Komenský and what justifications there might be for adopting such an epistemology over the one presented by Komenský, and what specific responses might be made in favour of Komenský's epistemology.

⁷ Like the nature of his opinion on religion, the precise nature of Bayle's scepticism is unclear, though it is generally accepted that he was some form of sceptic, the two views most likely to represent Bayle's thoughts accurately i.e. Pyrrhonism, which was attributed to him by Pierre Jurieu, and academic scepticism, which he himself professed, will both be mentioned here since they have implications for Bayle's view on faith and how it might be justified. I will not be addressing the question of which of these two views represents Bayle's position most accurately, I will instead focus on how each of these forms of scepticism might serve to justify Bayle's view of faith, how each of these two blends of scepticism and radical fideism compare to Komenský's views on faith and reason and what objections each of these forms of scepticism might raise against Komenský's epistemology.

Kant, in his *Critique of practical reason* offers an understanding of faith that is not explicitly religious⁸, unlike that of the aforementioned Pierre Bayle or that of Komenský himself. According to Kant *Glauben* (faith) is the epistemic status of what he calls “postulates of practical reason”, theoretical beliefs which are accepted, not because there is sufficient evidence for them, but because it is impossible for practical (moral) reason to function without them. According to Kant it must be possible to achieve the highest good, a world where the virtuous are happy and their level of happiness is directly proportional to their virtue, in order for morality to be rational and for practical reason to have any place in epistemology, therefore, any belief according to which the highest good is unattainable makes practical reason useless and the belief must therefore be rejected. Following the same principle, practical reason requires theoretical reason to accept any proposition that must be true in order for the highest good to be attainable. The purpose of practical reason is to establish how one should act, or what is moral and what is immoral, not to establish theoretical beliefs. It is the purpose of theoretical reason is to establish what is and what is not, and since postulates of practical reason are instances where practical reason does the work of theoretical reason but theoretical reason can never do the work of practical reason Kant concludes that practical reason must have “primacy” over theoretical reason. The unique thing about Kant’s concept of faith is that it is not an epistemological principle but the epistemic status of propositions that are the product of a kind of reason, rather than being something that is distinct from and not connected to reason. Also, Kant detaches faith from knowledge, since knowledge (*Wissen*) is an epistemic status that is distinct from faith (*Glauben*) in Kant’s work. This difference between *wissen* and *glauben* is a very important point of comparison between Kant’s view of faith and that of Komenský since Komenský describes faith as a principle that leads to knowledge, and therefore the beliefs that faith leads to can be described knowledge, and for Kant a belief that can be described as faith cannot also be called knowledge. Komenský, on the other hand, distinguishes between faith and reason whereas Kant sees faith as something that is arrived at through a form of reason.

Of all the philosophers mentioned here Kierkegaard is the only one whose views of faith may be his most well-known contribution to philosophy. Similarly to Kant, Kierkegaard sees faith as a belief that is accepted on

⁸ Kant does use the idea of postulates of practical reason as the grounds for his moral argument for God and immortality, however, many propositions that are unrelated to religion can also be postulates of practical reason e.g. the proposition that human beings have libertarian free will.

“subjective and practical grounds rather than on objective grounds by relying on knowledge”⁹. However, unlike the faith described by Kant, the beliefs that Kant calls “faith” and “postulates” are exclusively religious beliefs. There is an important existential aspect in Kierkegaard’s view of faith, since Kierkegaard defends religious faith as the only way to defend oneself from despair, a despair that arises from the consistent failures of the ethical man in his struggle to lead a moral life and the realisation that the natural abilities of man are entirely incapable of fulfilling the demands of the moral law. The person who finds himself in such a state of despair will, according to Kierkegaard, only find an escape in the Christian religion, which promises that the grace of God will wipe away all personal sins, and thus offers supernatural assistance where our natural abilities fail. This chapter will discuss why despair might be a sufficient condition for accepting a belief and comparing how Kierkegaard’s more subjective argument for accepting Christian faith compares with Komenský’s view which places faith in the same category as principles which are concerned purely with objective facts, namely reason and sense perception, as well as comparing the way that each one of these thinkers sees the relationship between faith and reason, since Kierkegaard states that the claims of faith can be repugnant to reason whereas Komenský claims that faith must not be.

Alvin Plantinga is the most recent philosopher in the comparative part of this paper, and he provides what is perhaps the most detailed account of faith as an epistemological principle to date. Plantinga introduced the idea of a properly basic belief which he defines as “*a natural non inferential belief that is immediately produced by a cognitive faculty*”¹⁰. Both the basic beliefs themselves and the principle that leads to them could accurately be described as faith since the principle that leads to these beliefs is distinct from both the senses and reason and does not rely on either of these principles to form beliefs. The defining trait of a basic belief is the fact that it is not based on any other beliefs, meaning that it does not come from reason, since the premises that reason uses to come to a conclusion are beliefs and although there are some basic beliefs which come from the senses for example the belief that it is hot, which is based on my immediate

⁹ Fremstedal, R. (2014), *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 122.

¹⁰ Clark, K. J. (2010), “Reformed epistemology and the cognitive science of religion”, In: Stewart, M. Y. (ed.), *Science and Religion in Dialogue*, 500-513, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. Cf. Clark, K. J. and Barrett, Justin L. (2010), “Reformed Epistemology and the Cognitive Science of Religion,” *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 27, 2: 174-189.

sense experience of heat and nothing else, there are other basic beliefs which are not based on sense experience, and it is Plantinga's defence of these beliefs and the principle that leads to them that will be compared with Komenský's own view of faith. Plantinga's most significant example of a properly basic belief is the belief that God exists, an idea which mirrors John Calvin's idea of the *sensus divinitatis*, an innate awareness of God's existence which all people possess, and it is from the reformed tradition started by John Calvin that Plantinga's epistemology gets its name i.e. reformed epistemology. Plantinga's arguments may provide a good example of a way that faith might be "*acceptable to reason*" as Komenský states, since Plantinga presents reasoned arguments for the existence of properly basic beliefs and for the rationality of accepting these beliefs as true, he also shares Komenský's conviction that faith should not be repugnant to reason since he states that basic beliefs should be held, even if there is no rational argument or empirical evidence for them, until evidence contradicting them is found, whether this evidence comes from reason or from the senses. An important part of this chapter will be examining how Plantinga's arguments for the rationality of accepting properly basic beliefs might be used to defend Komenský's concept of faith even though Komenský's faith could accurately be defined as trust in authority, specifically the authority of God expressed in his revealed word, this trust cannot exist if its object, God, does not exist, it is likely that Komenský, should he be asked to defend his belief in God, would appeal to something like the *sensus divinitatis* since he comes from the same post reformation tradition as John Calvin, and this *sensus divinitatis* is precisely what Plantinga tries to defend when he defends reformed epistemology.

The idea of faith being a principle in epistemology, rather than a principle that is unique to religion, may seem odd to a modern audience, and the idea that faith is a principle that leads to knowledge may even seem self-contradictory, since philosophers today define knowledge as justified true belief, and faith is by definition unjustified, or at least not justified in a way that meets the demands of knowledge. However, the discussion of faith as an epistemological principle dates back to antiquity and is not unheard of even in the most recent epistemological research.¹¹ The objective of this

¹¹ Jonathan Ichikawa wrote the following paper: Ichikawa, J. J. (2018), "*Faith and epistemology*", *Episteme*: 1-20, where he argues in favour of what he calls "virtuous faith", claiming that this is something that is universal to all people and has a place in every epistemology claiming that: "A rational agent will manifest faith in their perceptual abilities, in determining which experts and testifiers to trust, in their a priori reasoning, and in the epistemic capacities that are specific to their social environment. To ignore faith is to ignore

paper is not only to shed more light on Komenský's views on faith and how these views relate to the views of other philosophers but to give an account of the role that faith, not necessarily religious faith but also faith in testimony, in our own, senses, intuitions and cognitive faculties and in the authority of experts, has always had in epistemology and to see if the relationship between sense perception, reason and faith presented by Komenský can be shown to be an acceptable idea for modern epistemology and if the role that Komenský gives to faith i.e a principle that can lead us to the knowledge of things that are outside of the reach of reason is something that can be included in a modern non-religious epistemology. Although some might be opposed to any attempt at including faith in epistemology alongside sense perception and reason, the fact is that no epistemology can function without some amount of faith since all epistemology that is not explicitly anti rationalist or some form of philosophical scepticism, requires first principles from which reason constructs arguments and forms beliefs, if there are no first principles from which to reason to conclusions then reason cannot function, and these first principles are not arrived at by reason or sense perception, they are believed on trust (faith) in our cognitive faculties, our senses or our intuitions or are simply assumed for practical reasons, like that not believing in this first principle would make it impossible to consistently live our lives or simply the fact that assent to a particular first principle is necessary for reason to function, a good example of this is the universal assumption that the future will resemble the past, an assumption that is usually justified by appeal to a trust in our memory, our experience and testimony i.e. the fact that throughout our lives and according to all historical testimony the future always resembles the past in important ways (gravity continues to work in the same way, steel was, is and continues to be harder than cloth etc.) or it is more commonly justified by practical reasons, since the previously given reasons beg the question¹², such as the fact that if one was to accept that the future need not resemble the past then we would

a crucial element of our social and individualistic epistemic lives." Showing that faith as an epistemological principle is not just an antiquated religious addition to the field of epistemology but is, rather, something that is "a crucial element of our social and individualistic epistemic lives" and is therefore something that is necessarily a part of every person's epistemology whether they admit it or not.

¹² Appeals to memory and history are appeals to the past, and because of this such appeals are essentially saying the future will resemble the past because in the past, later points in time have always resembled earlier points in time, and this principle will carry on into the future. The conclusion that the future will resemble the past is assumed since the claim is that the future will resemble the past in that a principle that applied in the past will continue to apply in the future, therefore the future will resemble the past.

lose all ability to know the world around us and we would have no consistent idea of how to live our lives, for example, no one is going to turn the handle of their door without the assumption that it will not explode in their hand, something that has never happened in the past. Everyone lives their life with the assumption that the future will resemble the past and it is a necessary assumption since without it we lose every notion of how to interact with the world around us. Note the similarity between these practical justifications of the assumption that the future will resemble the past and the practical justifications for faith given by two of the aforementioned philosophers, specifically Kierkegaard and Kant. These same justifications might serve to justify Komenský's idea of faith as a principle which can lead us to knowledge about that which is outside of the reach of reason.

Regardless of what might be said about Komenský's idea that what is written in the Christian scriptures should be used to draw conclusions about the aspects of reality that are inaccessible to reason, his idea that some form of faith should answer the questions that cannot be answered by sense perception or reason, but must nevertheless be answered, is an important one and may even be necessary for any epistemology that wishes to preserve reason and sense perception and seeks to preserve our ability to live our lives consistently.

One more important thing to point out is the way that many of these philosophers connect faith with ethics, the clearest examples being Kierkegaard and Kant but Komenský makes this connection as well as Jan Čížek explains "(according to Komenský) our desire for goodness gives rise to religion (religio)... and faith is focused on piety (and thus corresponds to religion)." ¹³ This connection between the epistemological principle of faith and ethics will be an important theme in this paper since moral epistemology is used to justify faith (as in Kierkegaard and Kant) and faith is used as the source of moral epistemology (as in Komenský). This relationship between moral epistemology and the epistemological principle of faith will be one of the things that I will try to shed light on in this paper, particularly in the comparative chapters on Kierkegaard and Kant, alongside Komenský's own view of the role of faith in answering theoretical questions.

By the end of this paper, I hope to answer not only the question of how Komenský saw faith and how it compares to the views of other thinkers, but also to show what the place of faith is in epistemology, what is its relationship with theoretical and moral reason, if what Komenský says on

¹³ Čížek, J. (2016), *The conception of man in the works of John Amos Comenius*, Peter Lang Edition.

this subject is correct, and if the words of the other philosophers might be used to modify Komenský's view of the place of faith in epistemology in order to make it more acceptable.

Part 1: An examination of Komenský's epistemology

The three principles that lead to knowledge are the foundation of Komenský's epistemology. Each one of these principles is meant to acquire knowledge from a different source. The senses draw from the material world, reason draws from the human mind and faith draws from the bible. Komenský calls these sources "the three perfect books of God"¹⁴. The senses read the book of the material world by observing how various objects in the world look, sound, smell, feel and taste. Reason examines the book of the human mind by reasoning to conclusions from concepts that are innate to the human mind or as Komenský refers to them "innate truths, desires and powers". Where Komenský speaks of faith he specifically talks about scripture, describing scripture both as a principle that leads to knowledge and as one of the three books of God¹⁵, and he makes it clear that the domain of scripture is the realm of the supernatural, of things that cannot be perceived by the senses nor understood by reason. Having already explained the domain of faith and how and when faith ought to, according to Komenský, correct reason, the two other principles should be more closely examined to find out what they reveal about the place of faith in Komenský's epistemology, not only that of faith in scripture, but of other forms of faith which Komenský does not name as such.

Before discussing the other two principles of Komenský's epistemology, it is important to offer a general definition of faith, or, to establish some property that distinguishes faith from other forms of belief or knowledge, a property that is shared between all definitions of faith, whether Kant's or Komenský's or Kierkegaard's or any other definition. The purpose of this is to provide a clear notion of what faith is so that when I point out instances of faith in Komenský's epistemology that Komenský does not call faith, there is

¹⁴ Comenius, J. A. (1966), *De Rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica : editio princeps. Tomus II, Pampaediam, panglottiam panorthosiam, pannuthesiam necnon Lexicon reale pansophicum continens*, ed. by J. Červenka and V. T. Miškovská-Kozáková, Prague: Academia, p. 281, cf. Czech translation Komenský, J. A. (1992), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, Praha: Svoboda, p. 281.

¹⁵ References to Scripture as a principle that leads to knowledge can be found in Comenius J.A *Naturall Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light: Or, a Synopsis of Physicks*: in the chapter titled *To the truly studious of wisdom, from Christ the fountain of wisdom, greetings*, p. 3. Cf. Comenius (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, p. 75: "Verae Sapientiae studiosis a Christo, Sapientiae fonte, salute" References to scripture as one of the three books of God can be found in Komenský, *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, Chapter 11 paragraphs 8. and 9 of *Panorthosia*, p. 333. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, pp. 281-283.

a criterion by which it is possible to judge whether this is truly an example of faith and not, for example, an odd or fallacious form of reason.

One shared property that all of these definitions of faith have is that they all describe beliefs that are not underpinned by evidence or by reasoned arguments however this is not, by itself, a good criterion for determining which beliefs are an example of faith. The reason for this is that using this as the only criterion would equate beliefs that stem from the epistemological principle of faith with beliefs that have no justification at all or beliefs which are the result of certain forms of fallacious reasoning, such as wishful thinking. A man who believes something simply because he wants it to be true has no evidence or argument for his belief, he may even be aware of this fact, but he sees his desire to believe as a sufficient justification for his belief. A man who is deluded and believes that he is Napoleon, with no reason he can give for his belief, clearly has no evidence or argument that he can provide, but this on its own should not place the beliefs of these men into the same category as Kant's postulates of practical reason. It is therefore important to establish a criterion that distinguishes the various forms of the epistemological principle of faith from the mental processes and logical fallacies that lead to such beliefs, while also distinguishing it from reason. What may be helpful here is the distinction that Alvin Plantinga makes between evidence for a belief and grounds for a belief. Plantinga creates this distinction specifically to differentiate properly basic beliefs from irrational beliefs, according to Plantinga "the reason why theistic belief is properly basic and therefore rational and belief in the Great pumpkin is not properly basic and therefore irrational is that it is *not groundless*"¹⁶. The difference between evidence and grounds "is that evidence consists of beliefs on the basis of which other, nonbasic beliefs are held (and thereby justified), whereas grounds are not beliefs at all, but conditions or circumstances that occasion properly basic beliefs, and thereby justify them without being formulated as beliefs."¹⁷ Plantinga goes on to list various conditions and circumstances that cause belief in God to arise, thanks to a "God faculty"¹⁸ that exists in all people and naturally and immediately produces belief in God in these conditions and circumstances. Since this definition of grounds is

¹⁶ Hoitenga, D. J. (1991). *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga: An introduction to reformed epistemology*, Albany: SUNY Press, 175.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The circumstances and conditions that Plantinga lists are "guilt, gratitude, danger, a sense of God's presence, a sense that he speaks [for example, on hearing the Bible read], perception of the various parts of the universe." Hoitenga, D. J. (1991). *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, p. 189.

underpinned by ideas that are unique to Plantinga¹⁹ and are absent from other epistemologies mentioned here, It cannot serve as our criterion for which beliefs are the product of some version of the epistemological principle of faith and which ones are simply irrational or unfounded, however there is a general principle here that exists in all of the other epistemologies I have mentioned, and which can serve as our criterion. This principle can be seen in the fact that Plantinga's idea that conditions and circumstances that occasion a belief are a sufficient justification for holding that belief hinges on his trust in the cognitive faculty that produces the belief, and Plantinga spends a great deal of time justifying this trust through argument.

What distinguishes these various forms of faith from unjustified beliefs and beliefs that are arrived at through fallacious reasoning is the fact that the acceptance of the epistemological principle by which we arrive at these beliefs is justified by reasoned argument, while the beliefs themselves are not. What unites the various definitions of faith is the fact that they are all founded on a trust in a person, a faculty, or a source of information and this trust is justified through reasoned argument, even if the beliefs themselves are not. For example, there is no evidence or argument we can provide that our senses or our reason reliably produce true beliefs without begging the question since any attempt to gather evidence or form an argument is dependent on our senses and reason, so we must presuppose their reliability before we even start trying to do so. In this case, the rational argument for our trust in the intuition that our senses and reason are reliable is the argument that if we do not trust this particular intuition then we can never claim that any belief is rational or evidence based, making it extremely difficult to make decisions about anything and thereby making it impossible to live life consistently, and it is clearly more rational to be consistent than to be inconsistent. In this way, our trust is justified by a rational argument, even if the belief that stems from that trust cannot be. This can be seen in all of the versions of faith mentioned here, Kant argues that we have to trust that God will make the highest good an achievable goal, presenting arguments for both his claim that the highest good must be an achievable goal, and his claim that only God can make it achievable, and since it makes no sense to trust in something that does not exist he concludes by saying that we must hold to a belief in Gods existence despite the lack of objective evidence. Kierkegaard places his trust in the Christian faith, claiming that only the

¹⁹ Specifically, the idea that beliefs that can be rationally held without evidence or argument are necessarily basic beliefs, i.e. that they are not founded on any other beliefs, as well as the idea these beliefs are the immediate and natural product of a cognitive faculty.

Christian faith can defend the ethical man from despair and presents arguments for his claim that the need to defend oneself from despair is a valid justification for accepting beliefs, even if those beliefs lack evidence. Plantinga trusts in the God faculty, presenting arguments in favour of his trust in this faculty and Pierre Bayle trusts in the bible. All of these philosophers provide rational arguments for their trust, with the possible exception of Pierre Bayle, but his fideism is justified by his scepticism, for which he does provide rational arguments.

Now that a general definition of faith has been established, it is possible to identify forms of faith that Komenský does not name as such in what he writes about the other two principles of his epistemology, namely sense perception and reason. As stated before, the purpose of the senses, and of reason, is to acquire knowledge from two of the books of God, the material world and the human mind. The material world is studied both by the senses and by reason, with the senses gathering information about objects and reason analysing that information in order to come to accurate conclusions about the properties and nature of the perceived objects. Reason draws on the “innate truths, powers and desires” present in the human mind to come to conclusions. The innate truths of the human mind include ideas such as unity, duality, equality, inequality and shape properties as well as other ideas from which it is possible for reason to construct logical and mathematical laws. Studying the desires and capabilities that are innate to the human mind allows reason to come to conclusions about human nature and thereby to know the demands of natural law.²⁰ Komenský offers a way that the laws and ideas the reason constructs should be tested, to see which ones ought to be accepted and which ones discarded, he writes “they are deluded, those who believe that common dialectics can find useful thoughts or prove something to be true or bring proper order to the confused. We must look for these things elsewhere; in the things in the world itself which have been imprinted

²⁰ Komenský speaks in *Panorthosia* about gathering information about the natures of things and people for the purpose of discovering how people and things ought to be treated. This implies a belief in Aristotelian natural law. The desires and powers of people can be studied to reveal truths about human nature from which we can learn the ways in which we ought, and ought not behave and treat people. For example, learning where the limits of human abilities are lets us know that we ought not hold people morally responsible for not exceeding these limits while doing good or preventing evil. Learning the nature of human desires allows us to learn the ends or purposes of these desires so that we might know that we ought not seek to satisfy these desires in ways that deliberately frustrate these ends, and that we ought not assist others in doing so. Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, p. 284. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 281.

by God with prints of his wisdom (numbers, measures, weights) and from the voices of our own mind, if we apply them successfully to things”.²¹ Komenský dismisses the idea that dialectics (logic) alone can tell us which of our thoughts are true, which ones are useful and which ones can “bring proper order” i.e. make things the way that they ought to be when they are in some disordered state. The only way to find out which of our thoughts we ought to accept and which ones we ought to discard is to apply them to the world, to show that they can accurately describe the things in the world or the behaviour of these things. For example, Pythagoras’ theorem can be tested by finding a thing in the world that is in the shape of a right-angled triangle, measuring its sides, and doing the calculations to show that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the two adjacent sides. What is noteworthy is the fact that Komenský refers to the material world and the human mind as “books of God” he does this specifically to differentiate the books of God from the works of human authorities such as Plato and Aristotle whose claims were given a great amount of credence in Komenský’s time, even in the face of evidence that contradicted them. Komenský claims that “human books are nothing more than copies of the books of God, copies that twist the original to a great extent”²². As Petr Pavlas points out “Komenský creates the dichotomy of copies (*apographa*) – originals (*autographa*)”,²³ the purpose of this dichotomy is to separate the books of God themselves, which are the works of an infallible divine author, and human books which are copies of the books of God, in that they draw some of their information from these books but due to the fact that they have a flawed human author, what they say about the three books of God is often flawed in some way. These flaws might be the result of the author studying the books of God, but only selecting those pieces of information that confirm a conclusion he already holds while ignoring information that contradicts that conclusion, an unfortunate consequence of the human desire to confirm our pre-existing beliefs. They might also be the result of the author not studying the books of God with sufficient Rigour, a consequence of the human vice of laziness. There is no danger of finding such flawed information when studying the books of God directly, since their author is omniscient and perfect. Komenský explains his reasoning for rejecting

²¹ Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, p. 284. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 282

²² Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, tomus 2, p. 282. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 283.

²³ Pavlas, P. (2015), *Trinus liber Dei: Komenského místo v dějinách metaforiky knihy*, Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, p. 108.

human authorities in favour of the books of God as follows “The author himself can provide the best interpretation of his words. If we accept that this is true for man, why not also for God? That means for his hand, his inspiration and his mouth. Let us listen to him from all sides, surely he shall not lead us astray.”²⁴ Notice how, in all of this, Komenský presupposes that all three of the books of God are, in fact, the works of God and that God “shall not lead us astray”, since it is impossible for him to be in error, since he is omniscient, and would never deceive us since he is morally perfect. The presupposition that underpins his faith in the bible is also his justification for the claim that knowledge is to be found in the material world and in the human mind through the senses and reason.

This presupposition does not only underpin the basics of Komenský’s epistemology (that knowledge is acquired from the three books of God) but also some of its other aspects) for example, Komenský’s aforementioned method of testing the worth of ideas by applying them to the material world, and his rejection of the idea that determining the value of ideas through dialectics done purely in the human mind, is also underpinned by this presupposition. Although the mind is listed as one of the three books of God, it is only the truths, powers and desires innate to the mind can be said to be of divine origin. Other ideas that enter the human mind either come from the other books of God or from fallible human sources. These fallible human ideas will no doubt influence any dialectics that are done in the mind to test the value of some idea, and since human beings are prone to error, logic influenced by human ideas will also be prone to error. This is particularly true if the thinker has an emotional preference for some ideas over others. The die-hard Aristotelian will use logic, and may even use it well, but his preference for Aristotle means that he will defend the logical system laid down by Aristotle as entirely perfect even when it would be better to alter or add to it. Komenský’s reason for presenting the material world as his standard for judging the value of ideas is that it is the work of a divine creator, stating that it contains “prints of God’s wisdom”. Since the material world is the product of a perfect creator it is an objective and infallible standard that leaves no room for human error and that testing the value of our thoughts against such a standard yield results that are free from any subjective preference for certain ideas over others. It is therefore clear that

²⁴ Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. I, p. 208-209.
Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 282.

Komenský's method for judging the worth of ideas is founded on his faith that the Material world is the work of a divine author.

Another example can be seen in Komenský's claim that the conclusions of his philosophy are apodictic i.e. certain and beyond dispute. In the 17th paragraph of the 11th chapter of the *Panorthosia* Komenský writes "learn, all of you, to abandon the confusing of yourselves and others through various probabilities, learning to stand only on foundations that are certain, what is the most certain, however, is that which is apodictic, that which is evidently demonstrable...from this day forward let everyone know that they know only as much as they can demonstrate."²⁵ In this paragraph he does not explicitly state what these foundations are or what it means to demonstrate something but given the fact that, in the 8th paragraph he says " the foundation of the new philosophy is the nature of things studied 1. By the senses 2. By the participation of the light of reason 3. By the completing and correcting revelation of God... the three foundational books of God are the ocean of all knowledge from which the rivers of all wisdom flow."²⁶ And in the 9th paragraph he says "these three books are the principal foundation of our philosophy".²⁷ It is clear that this "certain" foundation is made up of the three books of God and the three principles. What Komenský sees as the way by which something is demonstrated is also established in earlier parts of the 11th chapter. Notice how in the aforementioned quote from the 8th paragraph Komenský identifies the three books of God as the "ocean" or source of all knowledge from which all wisdom originates. If all knowledge is to be found in the books of God, and the way by which one can come to know that something is true is by demonstrating that it is true, then it follows that to demonstrate something means to show how it can be found in the books of God. The method for demonstrating something to be true is also specified, it is done by studying things through the senses and reason with divine revelation completing and correcting our knowledge. It is clear, therefore, that to demonstrate something means to show that it can be found in one of the books of God through the correct use of the three principles. Komenský never explicitly states why he believes that studying the three books of God leads to conclusions that can be held with certainty, but the reason for this belief can be found in what Komenský says about the author of these books. Komenský's statement that "[God] shall surely not

²⁵ Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, p. 335. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 283.

²⁶ Komenský, J. A. (1990), *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských*, sv. III, p. 333. Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 281.

²⁷ Ibid.

lead us astray” says a great deal. It shows Komenský’s firm belief that any information that comes from God cannot be false, since God neither lies nor makes mistakes and the fact that he says this in the context of explaining why we should look for knowledge in the Books of God (and not in the works of human authorities) shows that he not only sees these books as the creations of God but he also sees them as being just as infallible as their creator. The material world and the innate truths of the human mind were not corrupted by the fall of Adam in a way that might result in them giving us false information. They are the word of God no less than the bible, and if one accepts that they are the word of an infallible God who never lies, then it makes no sense to doubt them, since it is impossible to doubt them without accepting the possibility that God made them in a way that conveys false information, either by mistake or as a deliberate attempt to deceive mankind.

The role of faith in Komenský’s epistemology is not only to underpin his belief in the inerrancy of scripture. As has been shown, the same presupposition of divine authorship underpins Komenský’s belief that truth should be sought in the world and the mind; his chosen method for testing the worth of ideas and his belief that one can hold with certainty any conclusions arrived at through the methods he presents. The question now is whether or not this form of faith is justifiable and can be distinguished from irrational or unfounded beliefs. Returning to the criterion I established earlier, there are two parts to this criterion that must both be met for a form of faith to be distinct from irrational and unfounded beliefs 1. Faith is trust in a person, faculty or source of information 2. This trust must be justified through rational argument even if the beliefs which stem from this trust are not. Komenský’s particular form of faith clearly meets the first part of this criterion, since Komenský trusts the world, the mind and the bible as sources of information and his trust in the inerrancy of these sources is underpinned by his trust in God, specifically in God’s infallibility and moral perfection. Showing that Komenský’s faith meets the second part of this criterion is more difficult, since Komenský never provides any arguments in favour of his presupposition that the world, the mind and the bible have an omniscient and morally perfect creator, however, this does not mean that such an argument cannot be formed. Such an argument should be that it is rational to trust in the infallibility and moral perfection of the author of the world, the mind and the bible and, ideally, that it is irrational not to do so. It is far simpler to form such an argument for the first two of these, since the idea that we ought to trust the information acquired from the world and the mind through the senses and reason is almost universally accepted, which is not

the case for the bible. In the case of these two “books of God” the best way to show that Komenský’s form of faith is rational is would be to show that the trust we have in the world and in the mind can be maintained if, and only if, these two books have an infallible and morally perfect author. In order to do this, it would serve us well to borrow from an argument with very similar intentions, that being C.S. Lewis’ argument from reason.

Victor Reppert formulates the argument from reason as follows:

1. No belief is rationally inferred if it can be explained in terms of non-rational causes
2. If materialism is true then all beliefs can be explained in terms of non-rational causes
3. Therefore, if materialism is true then no belief is rationally inferred
4. If any belief entails the conclusion that no belief is rationally inferred, then it should be rejected and its denial accepted.
5. Therefore materialism should be rejected and its denial accepted.²⁸

This argument is founded on the idea that, if materialism is true, all of our beliefs are the product of non rational causes, specifically the interactions of matter in the brain, and since the causes that produce our beliefs are not rational then our beliefs themselves cannot be rational. On materialism, the laws that govern the interactions of matter in the brain do not have a purpose and because of this it cannot be said that the cerebral matter that is used to reason to conclusions has the purpose of producing true beliefs rather than false beliefs, since it operates in accordance with laws that have no purpose, and that have no regard for whether or not they govern our cerebral matter in a way that produces true beliefs rather than false beliefs. If it is the case that our faculty of reason can be identified with cerebral matter that operates entirely in accordance with laws in no way favour true beliefs over false beliefs, then we not only have no reason to believe that our faculty of reason consistently produces true beliefs rather than false beliefs, in fact it follows from this that we ought reject the idea that our faculty of reason consistently produces true beliefs rather than false beliefs, since all of its operations are governed by laws that have no regard for whether they produce true beliefs or false beliefs. If our faculty of reason cannot be said to consistently produce true beliefs rather than false beliefs then we have good reason to not hold to any belief arrived at through the use of reason,

²⁸ Reppert, V. (2003). *CS Lewis's dangerous idea: a philosophical defense of Lewis's argument from reason*. InterVarsity Press, p. 72-86 The argument comes from C.S. Lewis’ book *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*, first published in 1947, revised 1960.

including the belief that materialism is true, since reason is just as likely to produce false beliefs as it is to produce true beliefs. The fact that our reason tells us that some belief is supported by many sound arguments does not give us justification to accept that belief if the same belief requires us to accept that the faculty that was used to assess the soundness of these arguments is unreliable in forming true beliefs about the validity of arguments and the truth or falsehood of their premisses. The argument, therefore, reveals an internal contradiction in materialism. The materialist arrives at his belief in materialism through the use of reason but his belief in materialism requires him to also believe that the faculty he used to arrive at the conclusion that materialism is true does not reliably produce true beliefs and one ought not hold to any belief produced by it. This means that the proposition “we ought to hold materialism to be true” entails the proposition “we ought not to hold materialism to be true” which in turn means that materialism is a self contradictory belief, and since self contradictory beliefs ought to be discarded, materialism ought to be discarded.

Just as the argument from reason presents the case that materialism must be false in order for the faculty of reason to be reliable, a case can be presented that the world and the mind must have an infallible and morally perfect creator in order for the information that is gathered from these two “books” ,through the senses and reason, to be reliable. The argument for this proposition looks very much like the argument from reason and employs much of the same logic, it goes as follows:

1. No belief can be rationally inferred if information from the world and the mind is not reliable.
2. If the world and the mind do not have an infallible and morally perfect creator then information from the world and the mind is not reliable.
3. Conclusion 1: Therefore, If the world and the mind do not have an infallible and morally perfect creator, no belief can be rationally inferred.
4. If any belief entails the conclusion that no belief can be rationally inferred then it should be rejected and its denial accepted.
5. Conclusion 2: Therefore the belief that the world and the mind do not have a morally perfect creator should be rejected and its denial accepted.

We now have an argument for accepting, at least in part, Komenský’s form of faith, but the argument cannot show that we ought to accept Komenský’s form of faith if there are no arguments for the truth of it’s premisses. Before

examining the premises of this argument, it is necessary for me to explain what I mean when I speak about information from the world and the mind being reliable or unreliable. In the case of the world, we can say that the world provides us with reliable information when the way that things in the world appear to our senses corresponds, at least in large part, to their true nature. If the appearance of things corresponds to their true nature then it may be said that information acquired about material objects through the senses can be used to reason to true conclusions about these objects and is therefore reliable. If it does not, then information acquired through the senses about the way that material objects appear cannot be used to reason to true conclusions about these objects and is therefore unreliable. In the case of the mind, the information of the mind is reliable if the “innate truths” of the mind are truths and not falsehoods, and therefore can be used by reason to reach true conclusions through valid arguments. It is important to note that the information from the world and the mind is not either completely reliable or completely unreliable. It is possible to imagine that the appearance of objects tells us something about their true natures but not everything, or that some objects can have their true nature revealed by the senses and others cannot or that some of the “innate truths” of the human mind are truths and others are falsehoods. Any attempt to make this argument work will have to be accompanied by an articulation of the belief about the reliability or unreliability of the world and the mind which would have to be accepted for it to be accurate to say that no belief can be rationally inferred from the information of the world and the mind and an account for why it is specifically this belief that makes rational inference impossible. If this is not done then the first premise of the argument is left making a very unclear statement, as it will be impossible to tell what is meant by the words “not reliable” in this premise.

The first premise seems to be proven by the fact that all of the information we use to make rational inferences comes either from the material world or from the mind. Even if it is accepted that our senses and reason are completely reliable, in the sense that the senses do give us accurate information about the appearance of things and that reason has the ability to form valid arguments which, if the premises are true, lead to true conclusions, neither of them can lead us to true conclusions if the way that things appear to our senses does not tell us anything about the true nature of those things and the innate truths of the human mind, which are the foundation of all of the conclusions of reason, are in fact innate falsehoods. Even if the senses tell us everything about the appearance of objects and our reason can form valid arguments which can lead to true conclusions, it

cannot be said that we can rationally infer any conclusions about the nature of things in the world if the appearance of those things to our senses tells us little to nothing about the nature of those things. The information that reason uses to reach conclusions about material objects is sensory information and if this information does not correspond to the natures of perceived objects then any conclusion that reason reaches about the nature of these objects will be false. Similarly, if the innate truths of the mind are not truths but falsehoods then any argument formed by reason to reach a conclusion about abstract concepts will have premises that are formed from, or founded on, false information and will therefore be unsound. Though all of this may be true, it is not necessary for us to have reason to believe in the complete unreliability of all of the innate truths of the human mind, and all of the information gathered from the world by the senses for it to be reasonable to say that the information of the world and the mind is not reliable, and therefore that rational inference is impossible, only a less extreme version of this belief would have to be accepted in order for this to be the case. This less extreme version is the belief that we have as much reason to believe that information from the world and the mind is reliable as we have to believe that it is unreliable. To accept this belief is to say that any belief that is formed by reason from the information of the world and the mind is as likely to be false as it is to be true, since the premises in any argument for such a belief are as likely to be true as they are to be false. Since any belief that is rationally inferred is formed by reason from the information of the world and the mind, any belief that is rationally inferred is as likely to be true as it is to be false. If any belief that is rationally inferred is as likely to be true as it is to be false then rational inference becomes no different to taking a blind guess about the truth or falsehood of a proposition that has no evidence or arguments in its favour but also has no evidence or arguments against it. If this is the case, then rational inference ceases to be rational inference, since it is not rational to hold to the beliefs which are arrived at through inference, and it becomes no more than a labourious way of making blind guesses. Before moving on to the second premise there is something that should be mentioned regarding the possibility of the innate truths of the mind being unreliable. Since the innate truths of the mind include things like our concepts of unity, duality, equality and inequality which amount to no more than truisms such as one object is one object and two objects are two objects, it could be said that it is incoherent to say that these innate truths are falsehoods since it is impossible to deny the truth of these statements without contradicting oneself, potentially removing the possibility of the mind being unreliable and thereby making it impossible to

argue that the world and the mind are reliable if and only if they have an infallible and morally perfect creator since it is impossible for the mind to not be reliable whether or not such a creator exists. While it is true that it is incoherent to say that such truisms are false, such truisms are not the only “innate truths” of the mind. The innate truths of the mind also include our intuition that our senses and reason are reliable. This intuition is innate, in that it is an intuition that all people have regardless of education or upbringing and it is considered a truth since it is almost universally accepted as a first principle. From this fact, two conclusions can be drawn: first, even if we accept the fact that it makes no sense to say that it is possible for the aforementioned truisms to be false it is still true that no belief can be rationally inferred if we have no reason to believe that the innate truths of the mind are reliable, since it cannot be said that we are rational in holding to beliefs that we have inferred if we simultaneously claim that there is no reason to believe that the faculty of reason, which was used to infer that belief, is reliable. Second, although up to this point I have been assuming, for the sake of argument, that we can have confidence in the reliability of our senses and of reason even if we accept that the information of the world and the mind are unreliable, it is in fact irrational to believe that our senses and reason are reliable if we do not also believe that the innate truths of the mind are reliable, since the belief that we have no reason to believe that the innate truths of the mind are reliable entails the conclusion that our we have no reason to trust the intuition that our reason is reliable, and therefore that we have no reason to believe that reason is reliable.

Having examined the first premise, the second premise should now be examined. The second premise is the one most likely to be criticised, and also the hardest to prove. This fact, combined with the fact that the first and fourth premises of the argument are relatively uncontroversial statements makes this the lynchpin of the whole argument. This premise can be supported by the fact that, if we believe that the world and the mind have an infallible and morally perfect creator we have every reason to believe that they are reliable, if they do not, then we may have no reason to believe that they are reliable. If the world and the mind do not have a conscious creator, then it can be said with certainty that whatever forces caused the world and the mind to come into existence do not care about the truth or falsehood of our beliefs and therefore do not care if the beliefs that are innate to the human mind and the conclusions we reach on the basis of information from the world, are false. To say that the world and the mind are the product of such forces and that they are also reliable, is to say that the world and the mind are reliable by sheer coincidence. This is extremely unlikely given the

fact that there is an almost infinite number of possible versions of the world and the mind which are unreliable, but only one possible version of the world is reliable and the same is true for the mind. To give an example, a steel fork in front of me appears to my senses as having four prongs and all the qualities of steel, it is hard, has a metallic colour and makes a particular sound when dropped. In a possible world in which the information of the material world is reliable, all of these percepts must reflect the way that the fork exists in reality. However, in a possible world where this information is unreliable, the fork appears to have four prongs but in reality has two, in another it has three and in another five. In other possible worlds it might appear to have the properties of steel but in reality has the properties of cotton or wood or of any other material that might possibly exist. Then, there are the various degrees of reliability or unreliability that the material world might have in various possible worlds, in some of these worlds the material world is reliable but the mind is not, in others it is the other way around, in some worlds the appearance of thirty percent of objects matches their true nature in others it is fifty. So far I have only given examples of the different ways in which the information of the material world might be unreliable without giving any examples of how this might be the case for the innate truths of the mind, and since I have only presented one innate truth which even has the possibility of being false, specifically the intuition that reason is reliable, it seems unlikely that there will be many different possible worlds in which this intuition will be false in different ways, it seems that reason leads to true conclusions or it leads to false conclusions or it leads to true conclusions in some cases and false conclusions in others. However, there are many different ways in which reason might be unreliable, it might lead to useful or convenient conclusions, or any other sorts of conclusions, rather than true ones or its reliability might vary from person to person rather than being a faculty universal to all people that, when employed, leads to true conclusions regardless of who uses it. In short, there are innumerable many unreliable versions of the material world and as many versions of the mind, that indifferent forces might have produced, but only one entirely reliable version of the world and one entirely reliable version of the mind. To say that the world is the product of indifferent forces is to say that it is far more likely that the world and the mind are unreliable than it is that they are reliable, meaning that we not only have no reason to believe that the world and the mind are reliable, but we have good reason to believe that the world and the mind are unreliable. There are many possible objections to this defense of the second premise. I will quickly present some of them here:

1. There is the objection that there is a similarly large number of possible worlds where the world and the mind have some degree of reliability, that is to say they provide us with true information more than half of the time, and it is therefore just as likely that the actual world is one of the possible worlds where the material world and the mind ought to be given credence as it is that the actual world is one of the possible worlds where they ought not to be given credence.
2. There is the objection from evolutionary theory, stating that true beliefs are conducive to survival and reproduction and we have therefore evolved faculties that lead us to true beliefs about the world. The material world was not adapted to our senses and reason before we even existed, so that the conclusions we reach might be true. Our senses and reason adapted to the world through natural selection so that they would produce true beliefs. Regardless of what sort of world the indifferent forces produced, the cognitive faculties of the lifeforms in that world would evolve in such a way as to reliably produce true beliefs. Since the minds of these lifeforms also evolved, they would be shaped by natural selection to produce innate beliefs which are true and which can serve as the foundation from which other true beliefs can be inferred. Therefore, we can trust in our ability to form true beliefs from the information of the world and the mind, regardless of which possible world we are in.
3. It could also be argued that there is not necessarily a strict dichotomy of Abrahamic theism-atheism. Faith in a creator/creators who is/are good and wise, rather than completely infallible and morally perfect, could give us sufficient faith in the world and the mind, since a world and mind with good and wise creators could be trusted to be reliable in most, and possibly even all cases.

I will not be examining these objections here, but I will examine them, as well as other objections, in the critical part of this paper. For now, my objective is not to say definitively that Komenský's form of faith ought or ought not to be accepted, but simply to say that there is a reasoned argument that can be made in its favor and that it is therefore a serious epistemological principle worth considering, and not simply an irrational belief.

If the first and second premises are true then Conclusion one is also true. The fourth premise is true for reasons I laid out during my explanation of the argument from reason. In short, to reject this premise is to say that self contradiction ought not to be rejected, since claiming that one ought to hold a

belief that entails the conclusion that no belief is rationally inferred is to say that one ought to hold a belief while simultaneously claiming that one ought not hold to the same belief. If all premises are true, then the argument is sound.

The question now arises, what is it that makes Komenský's faith a form of faith and not a belief in God based on rational argument. It may seem that the argument that I have put forward aims to prove the existence of God through reason, especially given the similarity of various teleological arguments for the existence of God and my defense of the second premise. However, the purpose of the odd formulation of Conclusion two (Therefore the belief that the world and the mind do not have a morally perfect creator should be rejected and its denial accepted.) is not simply to mirror Reppert's formulation of the conclusion of the argument from reason. Its purpose is to express the fact that the purpose of this argument is not to prove the existence of God, and as such it does not conclude "therefore God exists". The purpose of this argument is to show that, since rejecting the reliability of the world and the mind leads to self-contradiction, we ought to trust in their reliability and we cannot trust in their reliability if we do not first trust in their creator, and since an infallible and morally perfect creator is the only creator that is completely trustworthy, we ought to place our trust in an infallible and morally perfect creator. Since it is absurd to trust in something that does not exist, we ought to believe that God exists. This argument does not draw a line of reasoning to the existence of God, it draws a line of reasoning to the necessity of belief in God. A proponent of this argument could fully admit that there is no evidence or reasoned for the existence of God, but claim that we ought to believe in God regardless, using this argument as justification for this claim. Therefore, what differentiates belief in God held on the basis of this argument is the fact that the argument does not show that God exists, only that we ought to believe in him. Just as rational arguments in favour of the reliability of reason do not (and cannot) show that reason is reliable, they can present the reasons for which we ought to hold to a belief in the reliability of reason as a first principle.

Part 2: A comparative study of the place of faith in Komenský's epistemology.

Chapter 1: Plato

In his works Plato presents two theories of knowledge which Dewey J. Hoitenga names "the *Theaetetus* approach" and "the *Republic* approach" after the dialogues where these two approaches can be found, the former being explained at length in *The Theaetetus* and the later being presented in *The Republic* he explains these two approaches as follows:

"Ever since Plato proposed them, there have been two main theories of knowledge and belief. One of them, presented in his *Republic*, is that knowledge and belief are two different and opposite states of mind, similar in some formal respects, but with knowledge in no way being definable in terms of belief. The second view, suggested already in the *Meno* but explored in detail later in the *Theaetetus*, is that the difference between knowledge and belief is not so absolute, that knowledge is actually a form of belief, so that it must be defined in terms of belief. In this view, knowledge is true belief accompanied by an account, as Plato puts it, or, in the language of contemporary philosophers, knowledge is justified true belief..."²⁹

According to the *Republic* approach, are two distinct mental states. What makes belief and knowledge different from one another is the fact that belief is fallible and knowledge is infallible. Plato reasons from his theory of forms to the conclusion that, although both knowledge and belief both arise from the same sort of relationship between the mind and its object, a relationship where "the mind is in touch with an object; it has contact with it"³⁰, it is the nature of the object that determines whether this relationship will produce belief or knowledge, as Hoitenga explains:

"Plato's view...is that when I am acquainted with a physical object which changes, either slowly or rapidly over a period of time, my mental state about that object (belief) must change just as it changes, with the consequence that there is no fixed truth in my mind; whereas when I am acquainted with an unchanging Form, my mental state (knowledge of that Form) will remain fixed and unchanged in truth, just as that Form remains fixed and unchanged in reality."³¹

There are two important aspects to the *Republic* account that I will examine : The first being the relationship between the mind and its object from which, according to this account, both belief and knowledge arise (Hoitenga uses

²⁹ Hoitenga D.J., *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, p. 1.

³⁰ Ibid. p.2.

³¹ Ibid. p.2.

the term “acquaintance” for this relationship, which is the term I will be using from this point forward) and the third being the claim that one can only have knowledge of objects which are unchanging, while one can only have beliefs about objects that change.

The Relationship of acquaintance through which both belief and knowledge arise is defined by the fact that it is direct and unmediated contact between the senses and their object. If I see some object in front of me, then there is direct and unmediated contact between my senses and said object, and therefore there must be an object in front of me. The *Republic* account states that both knowledge and belief arise from this relationship, belief comes from the mind being acquainted with material objects through the senses and knowledge comes from the mind being acquainted with forms through reason. The problem with this account of how belief and knowledge arise is that it seems to exclude the possibility of belief or knowledge by inference. A detective investigating a murder does not come to beliefs about or knowledge of who committed the murder by acquainting himself with the murderer, he acquaints himself with evidence and based on that evidence he comes to beliefs about who the murderer is. Since, in this case, the object of the mind is the murderer, and beliefs about the object are not arrived at through acquaintance with the object, this method of arriving at beliefs does not fit the model of arriving at beliefs that is presented by the *republic* approach. If the *republic* approach is accepted in its unmodified form, we come to beliefs about things in the material world by acquainting ourselves with them through the senses, and to knowledge about forms by acquainting ourselves with them through reason, we do not form beliefs about things we have not acquainted ourselves with. Not only would this invalidate the methods of detectives and historians (since historians are not acquainted with historical events, only with records of them) it would also invalidate a method by which all people form beliefs in their daily lives.

The idea that one can only have knowledge of unchanging objects and only have beliefs about objects that change seems to be based on the idea that once an object changes, our belief about the properties of that object is rendered false and since knowledge is infallible and therefore cannot be rendered false, the belief we had about the properties of that object cannot be called knowledge. This idea omits the fact that it is not only possible to claim knowledge of the properties of an object, but it is also possible to make claim knowledge of the properties an object has at a particular time, and only at that particular time. For example if I express my knowledge that my pen is blue as “I know that my pen is blue” and I then see it and find out that someone had spilt green paint on it, then my knowledge that my pen is blue

is rendered false and therefore, it seems, it was never knowledge in the first place. However, If I express my belief that my pen is blue as “I know that at 7pm on Saturday my pen was blue” and I see it at 2pm on Sunday covered in green paint then my knowledge that it was blue at 7pm on Saturday is not rendered false, and there is no reason not to call it knowledge. If beliefs about the properties of changing objects at particular times are not rendered false as these objects change and they arise from the same relationship between the mind and its object as knowledge then there is no reason to not consider them knowledge. It follows from this that it is possible to have knowledge of changing objects as well as unchanging ones.

As can be seen the *Republic* approach has problems, but these problems are avoided by the *Theaetetus* approach. According to the *Theaetetus* approach Knowledge is not distinct from belief, it is a form of belief, specifically justified true belief. The primary reason for distinguishing knowledge from belief is that knowledge is infallible and belief is not, therefore belief is an intermediate position between Knowledge and ignorance as Plato points out in book V of his *Republic*³²:

“And will you be so very good as to answer one more question? Would you say that knowledge is a faculty, or in what class would you place it?

Certainly knowledge is a faculty, and the mightiest of all faculties.

And is opinion also a faculty?

Certainly, he said; for opinion is that with which we are able to form an opinion.

And yet you were acknowledging a little while ago that knowledge is not the same as opinion?

Why, yes, he said: how can any reasonable being ever identify that which is infallible with that which errs?

An excellent answer, proving, I said, that we are quite conscious of a distinction between them.”

However, on the *Theaetetus* account, knowledge is still infallible since it is by definition true, and it does not have to be separated from belief in order to be infallible. The most important aspect of this account to consider is the fact that knowledge is justified belief, specifically what it means to justify a belief and why knowledge is justified true belief and not simply true belief. In the

³² Plato (2008). *The Republic* (Vol. 7, p. 493A), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 37.

Theaetetus Plato repeats the same argument he uses in the republic account to justify his distinction between belief and knowledge, though here it is to draw a distinction between sense perception and knowledge “he...argues that knowledge is not to be identified with the appearances of sensation because these, though they are like knowledge in being infallible, are unlike knowledge in always changing”.³³ The dispute over what constitutes a justification of knowledge is evident here. Although most people would say that seeing something is sufficient justification to have knowledge of its existence and its properties, Plato argues from the premise that one can only have knowledge of unchanging things to the conclusion that knowledge cannot be arrived at through sense perception. This leaves two possible ways that belief might be justified, reason and faith. Plato strongly supports the idea that beliefs ought to be justified through reason rather than faith, even beliefs in and about transcendent entities, which contrasts with Komenský’s view that knowledge of transcendent supernatural entities can only be arrived at through faith in the bible. This can be seen in the *The Republic* where Plato writes:

“The man who cannot by reason distinguish the Form of the Good from all others, who does not, as in a battle, survive all refutations, eager to argue according to reality and not according to opinion, and who does not come through all the tests without faltering in reasoned discourse—such a man you will say does not know the Good itself, nor any kind of good.”³⁴

Subchapter 2: does faith lead to knowledge?

In order to answer the question “does faith lead to knowledge?” we must determine whether or not faith beliefs can be justified and therefore meet the criteria for knowledge as justified true belief. At first glance it would seem that faith cannot be justified, since faith beliefs are not supported by rational or empirical justification, so they appear to be unjustified. The question is whether or not a belief can be considered justified if the epistemological principle that leads to it is justified, even if there is no direct justification for the belief itself. An answer to this question might be found in Dewey J. Hoitenga’s attempt to incorporate the idea of knowledge by acquaintance, presented in the Republic approach, into an account of knowledge as justified belief, and in the process, to show that one can arrive at knowledge through the testimony of others in a manner similar to the way that one arrives at knowledge through acquaintance. Hoitenga presents a dichotomy, which he takes from Plato’s *Meno*, between knowledge and true

³³ Hoitenga D.J., *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, p. 4.

³⁴ Plato, *The Republic* 534b-c.

belief. He presents an example that Plato uses in the *Meno* to illustrate this dichotomy, the example is as follows:

“Socrates: A man who knew the way to Larisa, or anywhere else you like, and went there and guided others would surely lead them well and correctly?”

Meno: Certainly.

Socrates: What if someone had a correct opinion about which was the way but had not gone there nor indeed had knowledge of it, would he not also lead correctly?

Meno: Certainly”³⁵

Hoitenga then states, regarding this example,

“The example embodies the Platonic theme that true belief, no less than knowledge, can serve as a reliable guide in human life. Why is this so? The answer, of course, is because true belief, like knowledge, is true. How then, do they differ? We have already seen that, according to Plato, by Knowledge staying fixed in the mind whereas true belief does not, because knowledge is, and true belief by itself is not, accompanied by an account. The function of the account, therefore, is to give the mind control over its true beliefs, so that they will stay fixed and not “run away” when challenged by opposing beliefs.”³⁶

Hoitenga accepts this distinction, but he points to another difference, one that Plato never explicitly points to, but which is illustrated by his example, this difference being that

“the person who knows the way to Larissa has taken the way himself, and so is acquainted with it, whereas the person who believe truly has not taken it and so is not acquainted with what he believes. And so the Meno discussion...suggests by its example that the believer whose belief is true is disconnected from the object of his belief because he is not, like the knower, acquainted with it.”³⁷

He goes on to state that the only way that someone who holds a true belief about the way to Larissa could have acquired that belief is by speaking to someone who had been to Larisa, someone who held the same true belief as them, or by reading a sign or a map. Regardless of the specific way that they came to their true belief, they came to it through the testimony of another

³⁵ Plato (1961), *Meno* (97a), Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 353-384.

³⁶ Hoitenga, D. J. (1991). *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, p. 13.

³⁷ Ibid.

person, whether that be the person who told them the way to Larisa or the person that made the map or put up the sign. There is a parallel that can be drawn between faith-beliefs and the true belief that is presented here and differentiated from knowledge. The true belief here is not acquired through acquaintance, or through reason, but it is dependent on the believer's trust in the testimony of someone else, if they did not trust the testimony, they would not hold the belief, and this trust will almost certainly be justified in one way or another. Similarly, faith-beliefs are also based on a justified trust, but they are not based on reason or acquaintance, so they appear to be in the same category as the belief of the man who has never been to Larissa i.e. in the category of belief rather than knowledge. However, if an argument could be made that beliefs held on sufficiently justified trust in someone's testimony can be considered justified, and therefore can be considered knowledge if they are true, then the same argument might be used to demonstrate that faith-beliefs, which are also held on justified trust, can also be considered knowledge, provided that they are true. Such an argument can be found further in Hoitenga's text. Hoitenga first argues that

“we cannot overemphasize the point that all knowledge by acquaintance (as well as by testimony and inference, even when it is not being communicated to others, requires propositions for its conscious realizations...The man who knows the way to Larissa needs to express that knowledge *even to himself*...It is difficult to think that a man who cannot tell himself the way to Larissa, even though he has taken it, knows the way. Even though he could follow the way as a matter of some instinct, like a homing pigeon, but could not articulate the way to us or to himself, we would rightfully doubt whether he really knew what he was doing.”³⁸

The important thing here is that all knowledge must be expressed in the form of propositions, even in one's own mind, and what are propositions if not representations of reality, no less than a map or a sign, even if the basis for these propositions is acquaintance. The man who knows the way to Larissa, having gone to Larissa that way before, has to be able to form a proposition in his mind which represents his experience, but in the moment when he forms this proposition and expresses it to someone else, he is not experiencing acquaintance with the way to Larissa, his mind does not have unmediated contact with the way to Larissa, his mind has unmediated contact with a representation of the way to Larissa which it has formed, in the same way that the mind of a man who reads a map has unmediated

³⁸ Ibid. pp. 24-25.

contact with a representation of the way to Larissa. So the difference between the knowledge of a man who has been to Larissa, and the true belief of a man who has not been to Larissa, but acquired knowledge of the way through testimony, is not the fact that one of them bases their belief on unmediated contact with the object of their belief and the other does not. Neither of these men has unmediated contact with the object of their belief, both of them have access to a representation. Perhaps the difference between the knowledge of the man who has been to Larissa and the belief of the man who has not is infallibility, since knowledge is by definition infallible whereas belief is not. Therefore, the difference here may be that the experience of the man who has been to Larissa is infallible, whereas the belief of a man who has not been to Larissa, and who acquired said belief by reading a map, is not. The question here is what guarantees the infallibility of beliefs based on experience, and I would argue that there is no such guarantee, almost everyone has an experience of misremembering the way to a place they had already been to, and getting lost on the way there. Since there is no reason to say that belief stemming from acquaintance is necessarily infallible, and good reason to say that it is not, we must conclude that the belief of a man who has been to Larissa, regarding the way to Larissa, is not infallible unless it is true, but the belief of a man who learned the way to Larissa through testimony, if it is true, is no less infallible than the belief of a man who acquired his belief through acquaintance. It seems that if true belief that results from acquaintance can be considered knowledge, then the same is true for true belief that comes from testimony. This does not mean that acquaintance and testimony are equal as justifications for belief, the only thing to consider when attempting to determine whether a belief that one holds due to acquaintance is true or false is the possibility that something may have been misremembered, and even if some details about the object of belief were misremembered one may still have confidence that what is in their memory is mostly accurate. In the case of testimony, there are far more things to consider, a witness may be lying, or deluded, a map might be out of date or poorly made etc. But the fact that testimony is, in general, more likely to yield false belief than acquaintance does not mean that there is some fundamental difference between the two ways of coming to beliefs. As has already been demonstrated, they are more similar than they first appear. Nor does it mean that every belief that results from acquaintance is more likely to be true than every belief that is held on the basis of testimony. Consider the following example: A man in his 80's who walked the road to Larissa 60 years ago has beliefs about the way to Larissa that come from his acquaintance with the way to Larissa, but it is very

likely that, should he try to lead anyone there, he would get lost on the way, Whereas a man who reads a well made and up to date map, and has verified that this map really is well made and up to date, is unlikely to get lost on the way to Larissa and is clearly more justified in his belief that he knows the way to Larissa than a man who has been there once 60 years ago.

If there is no fundamental difference between acquaintance and testimony, as far as justifications for belief are concerned, if true beliefs held on testimony are no less infallible than true beliefs held on faith and if testimony can (in some cases) serve as a more reliable justification for a belief than acquaintance, then true belief justified by testimony should (at least in certain cases) be considered knowledge, provided that we accept that true belief justified by acquaintance can be considered knowledge. This still leaves two questions, the first being, in what specific cases does true belief justified by testimony qualify as knowledge? The second question being, what does this mean for faith?

Having demonstrated that a belief must be both true and justified, and that it is possible for a belief that is held on testimony to be knowledge, we must go beyond the theoretical possibility of coming to knowledge through testimony and explain exactly what sort of testimony can justify a true belief to the point where it can be considered knowledge and what sort of testimony ought to be considered insufficient justification for knowledge. There is a number of ways in which testimony may yield false beliefs, in the case of witnesses, the witness may be lying, or may misremember details, or may be delusional. In the case of testimony through a graphic medium, such as a map or a drawing of an event, there is also the possibility that the map or the drawing is incompetently made. In order for a particular testimony to be a sufficient justification for knowledge, all of the above-mentioned potential problems with said testimony would have to, at the very least, be found to be unlikely. It would have to be shown that it is more rational to trust the testimony than to distrust it. When considering the testimony of some witness it must first be shown that the witness has no good reason to lie, so, for example, if they stand to gain a great deal of money should their testimony be accepted, their testimony is suspect and one cannot claim to know anything on the basis of such testimony. It must also be shown that the witness is unlikely to be delusional, this does not simply mean showing that the witness is not suffering from some mental illness, or that they are not under the influence of drugs, but also showing that they are not engaging in wishful thinking or other more common forms of self-delusion, if they are, then one cannot claim to know anything on the basis of their testimony. The possibility that the witness misremembers the details of what they are

testifying about is the most difficult problem to deal with, since there are very few ways of verifying such details short of cross referencing the witness' account with those of other witnesses, and if no other witnesses exist then the possibility of the witness misremembering is unavoidable. However, the mere possibility of a witness misremembering is no reason to entirely disregard testimony as a potential source of knowledge, after all the potential for misremembering details exists even in our own memories, meaning that anyone who claims that testimony cannot lead to knowledge simply because of the ever-present possibility of witnesses misremembering details could not claim to have knowledge of any place or event of which they have memories of, since the same potential for misremembering details exists in their own minds. Even if they know these places or events by acquaintance. In the case of testimony through a graphic medium such as a map, there is the question of whether or not it is competently made, but this is possible to verify. If a particular cartographer has made many maps showing the way to some place, and everyone who has followed those maps has arrived at their destination without issue, then it can be said with near certainty that maps of this route made by this cartographer are competently made, that trust in them is justified, and that a person who has studied these maps and memorised the route can not only be said to have a true belief about the way to the aforementioned place, but can be said to have knowledge of the way to this place. On the other hand, if some other cartographer makes multiple maps, and those following the maps consistently get lost on the way to their destination, then it cannot be said that someone who studies these maps has knowledge of the way to this place. It is possible to conclude from all of this that one can come to knowledge through testimony provided that it is first shown that the one testifying has no reason to lie and is unlikely to be delusional. If the testimony comes in the form of a graphic medium, such as a map or a drawing, one can claim to come to knowledge through such testimony provided that its creator meets the two above criteria, and it can be shown that the medium for his testimony is competently made. Having established this, the one question left to ask is what does all of this mean for faith? What can this tell us about whether or not true faith-beliefs can be considered knowledge?

The form of faith that is the easiest to compare with trust in testimony is faith defined as trust in holy scripture, for example, the form of faith that is proposed by Komenský as the third principle that leads to knowledge. It might even be said that holy scripture is simply one of many forms of testimony, and in order to be accepted as a possible source of knowledge, it

must be shown that its authors are trustworthy, or at the very least not untrustworthy. If scripture is simply considered a form of testimony, then true beliefs based on faith in scripture could be considered knowledge provided that the authors of the given scripture could be shown to meet the criteria outlined above. However, there are problems that arise for the majority of holy texts that do not arise for more mundane forms of testimony, the first being the fact that most of these sacred texts were written so long ago that assessing the credibility of their authors, whether they had reason to lie, whether they were delusional etc. becomes difficult. However, the extent of this issue varies from scripture to scripture depending on the historical data that exists on the lives of the authors, and it is more of a matter for historians than philosophers.

The second potential issue, one that is of far greater importance to the issue of religious faith and its role in epistemology, is an argument that might be made that the supernatural claims made by the authors of sacred texts, are themselves evidence of the fact that the authors of these holy texts are either lying or delusional, and therefore, they should not be trusted, their testimony cannot be a legitimate justification for belief, and therefore no belief can be called knowledge that is supported by nothing besides what is written in these holy texts. This argument, if sound, would not only refute the claim that true faith-beliefs can be considered knowledge, but would stop any discussion of religious faith as an epistemological principle dead in its tracks, since it would make it impossible to justify belief in anything supernatural through trust alone, no matter what that trust might be in or how well that trust may be justified. For this reason it is important to deal with this argument before beginning a discussion of the various ways that various philosophers have used religious faith as an epistemological principle.

Perhaps the simplest formulation of this idea is Carl Sagan's famous declaration "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence".³⁹ The supernatural claims of holy scripture are extraordinary, they are against the way that the natural world has been observed to work which makes them highly improbable. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for people who are delusional to make similar supernatural claims and it is not uncommon for charlatans to attempt to enrich themselves by making such claims. The argument presents us with several options and asks us to weigh the probabilities.

³⁹ Deming, D. (2016). Do extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence? *Philosophia*, 44(4), 1319-1331.

Option 1: The supernatural claims of scripture are true (a highly improbable claim)

Option 2: The authors of scripture are lying (a probable claim, given the number of charlatans that make similar claims)

Option 3: The authors of scripture are delusional (a probable claim, given the number of delusions caused by mental illness that involve supernatural elements)

Given the fact that there are two more probable, and therefore more rational, alternatives to trusting scripture and its supernatural claims, trust in scripture is not a justified or rational trust but is instead an irrational trust. Anyone making supernatural claims should be considered untrustworthy from the start, until they present a sufficient amount of evidence or a sound argument for the truth of their claims. If this argument were to be accepted then faith, justified trust, in scripture cannot exist as an epistemological principle since scripture is untrustworthy by default and is not to be believed until each individual claim in it is proven through evidence or reasoned argument, and even if this could be done then belief in scripture would no longer be faith, but belief justified directly by evidence and argument. This argument hinges on a single claim, that is the claim that supernatural claims are always improbable because they are contrary to the way that nature has been observed to work. In order to determine whether this argument is sound, and establish whether or not such a thing as a justified trust in scripture can exist, we must examine this crucial claim.

The important question to ask with regards to this claim is, why is it that any event which is contrary to the way that nature normally works is necessarily improbable? If there is a high likelihood that some view other than naturalism is true then such events are not improbable, since there is a high likelihood that some person or force capable of producing such events exists. If naturalism is just as likely to be true as it is to be false, then such events are neither probable nor improbable, since there is a 50 percent chance of the existence of persons or forces capable of producing such events. The claim that supernatural events are improbable can only be made if one assumes a priori that naturalism is probably true, and making that assumption without justification results in a circular argument. As it stands, the argument looks like this:

Naturalism is probably true

Therefore

Any supernatural claim is probably untrue and should not be trusted.

Because

Those who make supernatural claims are probably either lying or delusional

Because

Supernatural events or beings are highly improbable

Because

Naturalism is probably true

In order for this argument to work, a separate argument would have to justify the claim that naturalism is probably true, but this argument simply takes it as a given.

There are two variations on this argument that may be put forward in an attempt to escape the circularity of the original formulation. The first borrows from David Hume's argument against miracles which provides a potential justification for the claim that supernatural events are improbable, and the second is not dependent on the claim that supernatural events are necessarily improbable, instead relying on Occam's razor.

In his book *Of miracles* Hume puts forward the argument that it is not possible to have a justified belief that a miracle has happened, claiming that:

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature and as firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined...It is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation."⁴⁰

This logic can very easily be repurposed to argue that one can never have a justified trust in anyone that makes a supernatural claim, for the same reason that one can never have a justified belief that a miracle has occurred. Anything supernatural is, by definition, against the laws of nature which have been established by "firm and unalterable experience" it is above these laws and therefore does not follow them, and the only way that it can be established as supernatural is if it breaks the laws of nature in some way i.e., performs one or more miracles, otherwise it is indistinguishable from just another natural thing. There would, therefore, be "uniform experience" against such a thing, and one would be fully justified in considering such a

⁴⁰ Hume D. (2007), *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 12, ed. by P. Millican, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 83.

thing to be highly improbable since the proof against such a thing is “as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.” The problem here is that this justification does nothing more than make the circle slightly wider. One can only say that supernatural beings or events “have not been observed in any country or age” if one dismisses out of hand all reports and testimonies of such beings or events. Reports and testimonies of supernatural beings and events are at least as old as the written word, if they are taken at face value, it would seem that there is not uniform experience against supernatural beings and events. In order for this leads to the argument assuming its own conclusion that one cannot have a justified trust in any testimony of the supernatural, giving us a chain of reasoning that looks like this:

One cannot have a justified trust in any testimony of supernatural events or beings.

Because

Anyone testifying to the supernatural is probably either lying or delusional.

Because

There is uniform experience against the supernatural

Because

All reports of the supernatural are unreliable, and therefore do not serve as evidence against the idea that there is uniform experience against the supernatural.

Because

One cannot have a justified trust in any testimony of supernatural events or beings.

Although this version of the argument does, at first glance, appear to provide a justification for distrusting all testimony of supernatural events beyond the mere assumption that naturalism is probably true, it turns out to be just as circular as the original version. However, a third version of the argument, somewhat different from the previous two, may yet prove to be sound. This version abandons the key premise of the first two versions i.e., the claim that supernatural events or beings are improbable, but states that even if it is granted that supernatural events or beings are not necessarily improbable, the claim that the witness is lying or delusional, in any case where someone testifies to something supernatural, is more parsimonious than the claim that the witness is telling the truth. Believing testimony of some supernatural event or being requires one to accept the unproven belief

(assumption) that the supernatural exists. However, believing that the witness is either lying or delusional does not require one to accept any new assumptions, since liars and delusional people that make supernatural claims are known to exist. Since Occam's razor states that "Among competing hypotheses, the one with the fewest assumptions should be selected", applying this principle to any testimony of some supernatural event or being leads us to reject such testimony in favour of the apparently more parsimonious hypothesis that the witness is either lying or delusional.

The problem for this argument is the fact that Occam's razor ought only be applied when all else is equal. In other words, even if the argument is accepted as sound, Occam's razor could only be used as a reason to reject testimony of the supernatural, and conclude that the witness is either lying or delusional, in cases where there is as much reason to trust the witness as there is to distrust them, or where nothing at all is known of the witness. For example, in a case where a man testifies to having witnessed a miracle despite being well known for having been an outspoken sceptic of the supernatural his entire life, it can be said that he has no reason to lie, and he has a very good reason not to lie, since in giving his testimony he is recanting something that he has stood for his entire life, and ruining his reputation with his fellow sceptics. If it can also be shown that he does not suffer from a mental illness, and that he has no reason to be deluding himself, then there is no reason to consider his testimony untrustworthy and there are good reasons to consider it trustworthy. In such a case, Occam's razor cannot be used to dismiss out of hand all of the evidence for the case that this witness is trustworthy, simply because trusting the witness requires one additional assumption that is not required if the witness is dismissed as lying or delusional. Unlike the previous two versions, this version of the argument makes it more difficult to justify trust in testimonies of the supernatural, but it does not make it impossible, even if it is sound. The question still remains whether or not it is necessarily less parsimonious to trust testimony of the supernatural than it is to dismiss the witness as either lying or delusional. In this, the argument must be conceded, believing that a witness to some supernatural event or being is telling the truth, and is not simply one of many charlatans, is in fact a less parsimonious, more complex interpretation of the testimony. Trusting a witness to some supernatural event or being requires taking on at least the belief that the supernatural is real, and any real testimony of the supernatural will go beyond that to far more specific claims, requiring those who choose to believe the testimony to take on not one assumption, but many. Dismissing them as lying or delusional requires no assumption at all, simply a continued belief in the existence of people who

make supernatural claims as a result of mental illness or personal interest, a phenomenon that is not only proven to exist, but also fairly common.

Given the problems of all of the versions of the above argument, the supernatural elements of scripture do not make it impossible for one to have a justified trust in scripture. Therefore, if scripture is simply considered another form of testimony and if the case for testimony as a justification for knowledge is sound then we can conclude that it is possible for beliefs justified by faith in scripture (provided that this faith takes the form of justified trust) to be considered knowledge, if they are true. The only apparent problems with claiming scripture as a source of knowledge being the fact that anyone attempting to do this is left with the difficult task of gathering enough information on the authors of their chosen scripture to prove that they are trustworthy witnesses and the fact that it appears that, if there is no evidence of their trustworthiness or if there is as much evidence that they are trustworthy as there is that they are untrustworthy, the authors of scripture ought sooner be dismissed as lying or delusional than be believed. However, none of this means that scripture cannot, at least in theory, serve as a source of knowledge. There are other forms of faith which, while perhaps analogous to faith in testimony, are not simply forms of testimony. It remains to be seen whether or not the argument for testimony as a justification for knowledge can serve to show that true beliefs justified by these forms of faith can be considered knowledge. The specific forms of faith in question here are the faith described by Kant, that described by Kierkegaard and that described by Plantinga, all forms of justified trust but not trust in the testimony of another person. Of the three, the form of faith that is defended by Plantinga is the easiest to compare with testimony, the God faculty described by Plantinga immediately produces belief in God in certain conditions or circumstances, though one may choose to trust the faculty and embrace this belief, or distrust the faculty and suppress the belief. The God faculty can be approached, in a sense, as a witness testifying to God whom one may choose to trust or distrust. There is however, an important distinction between the God faculty and testimony, and that is the fact that beliefs produced by the god faculty do not have a representation of reality as their basis. As was discussed earlier, a testimony is a representation of reality that one can choose whether to accept or reject after considering the reliability of the witness, a belief produced by the God faculty is produced immediately as a response to certain conditions or circumstances, it is formed immediately without any need to consider some representation of reality. Since the original argument for the possibility of knowledge through testimony rests on the fact that testimony is a

representation of reality no different from the representation that is formed in the mind of a person who has knowledge through acquaintance, it seems that the argument on its own is not enough to show that true beliefs produced by the God faculty can be considered knowledge. However, Hoitenga's argument for knowledge through testimony can be repurposed to show that it is possible, at least in theory, for Plantinga's God faculty to produce beliefs that ought to be considered knowledge, provided that they are true. Hoitenga's original argument demonstrated that knowledge through testimony is possible by demonstrating that there is an equivalence between knowledge through acquaintance and knowledge through testimony. A similar equivalence can be shown to exist between knowledge by acquaintance and beliefs produced by the God faculty. Plantinga himself makes the comparison between beliefs produced by the God faculty and one form of acquaintance, specifically perception, stating, "Upon having experience of a certain sort, I believe that I am perceiving a tree. In the typical case I do not hold this belief on the basis of other beliefs; it is nonetheless not groundless...We might say this experience, together, perhaps, with other circumstances is what justifies me in holding it; this is the ground of my justification, and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself...Now similar things may be said about belief in God... God has so created us that we have a tendency or disposition to see his hand in the world about us. More precisely, there is in us a disposition to believe propositions of the sort this flower was created by God or this vast and intricate universe was created by God when we contemplate the flower or behold the starry heavens or think about the vast reaches of the universe...There are therefore many conditions and circumstances that call forth belief in God: guilt, gratitude, danger, a sense of God's presence, a sense that he speaks, perception of various parts of the universe."⁴¹ When an object is perceived, the belief that the object is there appears immediately, there is no reason to consider evidence or arguments or the reliability of some representation of reality, our cognitive faculties produce the belief that the object is there the moment that the object is perceived. The God faculty produces beliefs in a very similar way to the way that perception does, that is to say it produces them immediately and as a response to certain circumstances, this indicates that there may be an equivalence between the two forms of belief and if that is the case then it is undeniable that true beliefs produced by the God faculty are knowledge, no less than beliefs that are justified by acquaintance through perception. However, there are some obstacles to establishing an equivalence between

⁴¹ Plantinga, A. (1981), "Is belief in God properly basic?", *Noûs* 15, 1: 41-51.

these two forms of belief which present a problem for the case that beliefs produced by the God faculty can be knowledge. The first of these is the fact that, while it is undeniable that our perceptive faculties exist, the existence of the God faculty is debatable. In order to show that there is an equivalence between beliefs produced by perception and beliefs produced by the God faculty one would first have to show that the God faculty exists, that the belief in God that is produced in the conditions described by Plantinga is the result of a cognitive faculty that is innate to human beings, and not the result of, for example, wishful thinking or an acquired tendency to see God in the world, stemming from a religious upbringing. The second is the fact that it would have to be shown that there is reason to believe that the God faculty is reliable. One might admit that the God faculty exists but argue that it is not a reliable faculty whose purpose is to produce true beliefs but an evolved faculty whose purpose is to produce beliefs which are conducive to survival. Stewart Eliot Guthrie⁴² makes the case for an evolved and unreliable God faculty when he argues that religious beliefs are the result of a hyperactive agency detection device. In order to show that true beliefs produced by the God faculty ought to be considered knowledge, one would first have to prove that the God faculty exists and that it is reliable, but if both those things were to be proven, then that would make for a strong case for an equivalence between beliefs produced by perception and beliefs produced by the God faculty and would show that this particular form of faith-belief can be knowledge. The faith described by Plantinga may be relatively easy to compare with faith in testimony, but this is not the case with the forms of faith described by Kierkegaard and Kant. The reason for this is that both of these thinkers justify their faith not by arguing for the reliability of some person, account or cognitive faculty but by arguing that their faith is practical, that is to say that it is the only way of achieving something that is of paramount importance. For Kant, faith in God and immortality is the only way to arrive at a worldview in which morality is rational, since morality is not rational in a world in which the highest good is not possible, and the highest good is only possible in a world in which God exists and the soul is immortal. For Kierkegaard faith in the God of Christianity is the only form of defence that human beings have from despair, and the need to avoid despair serves as the justification for holding on to this faith. What complicates things further is that Kant himself did not consider faith-beliefs to be knowledge since he considered knowledge and faith to be two separate

⁴² Guthrie, S. E. (1995), *Faces in the clouds: A new theory of religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 177-205.

categories of belief⁴³, the difference between them being that beliefs categorised as faith have sufficient subjective justification but not sufficient objective justification, beliefs categorised as knowledge have both sufficient subjective justification and sufficient objective justification⁴⁴. It seems unlikely that faith beliefs as defined by Kant could be considered knowledge given the fact that Kant himself does not consider them knowledge, however Kant uses a definition of knowledge that is distinct from the one that I outlined earlier since that definition makes no distinction between subjective and objective justification. The question now is whether or not Kant's faith-beliefs can be considered knowledge on this definition of knowledge, even though Kant places them in a separate category. In order to answer this question we must briefly examine Kant's justification for his two faith-beliefs i.e. the belief in God and the belief in the immortality of the soul. According to Kant morality is rational if and only if, it is possible to achieve the highest good, a state of universal virtue and happiness that is proportional to virtue, if God does not exist and the soul is not immortal then the highest good is impossible to achieve meaning that morality is not rational since moral behaviour has no rationally justifiable goal if happiness proportional to virtue is impossible to achieve. As Kant points out, if virtue does not lead to happiness, then "the moral law, which commands us to promote it, must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false"⁴⁵. Since the highest good is the ultimate goal of moral reasoning, achieving the highest good is a moral obligation, if God does not exist and the soul is not immortal, then this obligation is impossible to fulfil. Since it is absurd to make a moral duty out of an impossible task, God and immortality must be postulated in order to resolve the apparent contradiction between the duty to achieve the highest good and the impossibility of the highest good in a Godless world. At first glance it seems very difficult to argue that Kant's faith-beliefs can be considered knowledge using the reasoning that has been used thus far. There is nothing in Kant's justification that could be compared to testimony, just as there is no mention of anything that might be called a representation of reality in Kant's justifications. However, Kant's reasoning from the moral obligation to pursue the highest good may lead us to a way that this might be done. Let us assume that Kant is correct in saying that morality is rational, that morality is only rational if it is possible to achieve the highest good and that pursuing the highest good is a moral

⁴³ Kant, I. (2002). *Critique of practical reason*. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing, p. 172-174.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 172-174.

⁴⁵ Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good*, p. 128.

obligation. If this is the case then the moral reasoning which leads to these conclusions is sound and the purpose of our ability to engage in moral reasoning is, at least partially, to promote the highest good. If this is the case, then it could be argued that the existence of the human capacity for moral reasoning, which inevitably leads human beings to conceive of and promote the highest good and whose purpose is to promote the highest good, bears witness to the fact that the highest good is an achievable goal. In forming his argument from desire, C. S. Lewis points out that “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists.”⁴⁶, a similar principle applies to the faculties and powers of various creatures. No living thing is born with an ability that has a purpose which is impossible to achieve. The purpose of a leg is walking; therefore, it is possible to walk, the purpose of an eye is to see, therefore seeing is possible, the purpose of moral reasoning is to promote the highest good, therefore the highest good is possible to achieve. However, it is demonstrable that the highest good is not possible to achieve if God does not exist and the soul is mortal, meaning that we must either accept belief in God and immortality or assume that a principle that is true in every other instance of a faculty or ability of living beings, is false in this one case. Here the faculty of moral reasoning serves as a witness, testifying to the fact that the highest good is achievable simply by existing and having the clear purpose of promoting the highest good. The existence of the faculty of moral reasoning creates a representation of reality in the human mind, a vision of reality in which the highest good is an achievable goal. Its reliability is demonstrated by the fact that it can be shown that promoting the highest good is its purpose, and the purpose of a faculty cannot be something impossible. In this case, belief in God and immortality is still a faith-belief, since there is no argument presented that goes directly to the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, there is only an argument for the highest good being achievable, which makes our trust that God will bring about the highest good, a justified trust. If this argument is accepted then it is possible for faith-belief in God and immortality to be considered knowledge, however this form of argumentation deviates a little from Kant’s thinking in that it uses theoretical reasoning rather than moral reasoning to show that the highest good must be achievable. This means that Kant’s faith-beliefs, as originally conceived, cannot be considered knowledge, but it is possible to modify Kant’s ideas somewhat to make it possible for these beliefs to be considered knowledge. The case of Kierkegaard does not differ much from that of Kant. Kierkegaard also puts forwards an argument for faith in God as a practical necessity, the

⁴⁶ Lewis, C. S. (2021). *Mere Christianity*, Berlin: De Gruyter, p. 113.

only form of “self-defence” that human beings have against despair, whether that be the despair that comes from the ethical man’s consistent failure to meet his own moral standard⁴⁷, or existential despair. Any argument which relies on the fact that denying its conclusion leads to despair seems to be easy to dismiss as wishful thinking and no belief that is arrived at through wishful thinking can be considered knowledge. However there is more to Kierkegaard’s reasoning than wishful thinking, as Roe Fremstedal points out

“Kierkegaard (de silentio) argues that we would have to despair if an amoral and purposeless force (*Magt*) lies at the ground of everything, since life would then be “empty and devoid of consolation”. He goes on to conclude that this cannot be the case, because the amoral and purposeless force is reduced *ad absurdum*. The absurdity, however, involves existential despair and not merely a contradiction or antinomy. In order to avoid despair we must disregard the idea of purposelessness as the ground of reality and believe in ...”an eternal consciousness” and “a sacred bond that knits humankind together””⁴⁸

Kierkegaard’s argument for faith in God can, therefore, be considered a form of *reductio ad absurdum*. The absurdity of a Godless worldview lies in the fact that such a worldview entails despair which “involves inconsistency and threatens to undermine moral agency”. The inconsistency comes from the fact that to live one’s life while striving for something, whatever it might be, is to act as though there is a point to striving for something, but a man living in existential despair lives with the belief that there is no point in striving for anything and that his actions have no ultimate meaning. It is a similar case for the despair of the ethical man, who despairs due to the fact that he can never live up to the demands of the moral law, but will continue to attempt to do so. Faith in God is an effective defence against both forms of despair, God gives meaning to the universe and to our striving and offers to wipe away the sins of those who attempt, and fail, to meet the demands of the moral law through his offer of salvation. Without faith in God our only option is to live our lives in a way that is not consistent with what we believe, and since it is clearly more rational to be consistent than it is to be inconsistent, it can be said that faith in God is rational, even if there is no evidence or argument for God. In terms of a comparison between Kierkegaard’s faith and

⁴⁷ Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good*, p. 125: “Kierkegaard argues that human sinfulness and guilt render our natural capabilities completely inadequate for fulfilling the ethical task. We have seen that this has the consequence that nobody can avoid “the despair of necessity” and “the despair of finitude”, types of despair that take the form of an inability to break with an evil past.”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 129.

trust in testimony, the witness in this case is despair itself. Despair is the immediate result of the inconsistency and absurdity that we are trapped once we embrace a Godless worldview, it lets us see as clearly as possible that we cannot live our lives consistently without faith in God, this is the representation of reality that it presents, a vision Godless world where there is no way for us to live our lives consistently. To accept the testimony of despair is to accept the belief that, without faith in God, we are condemned to live our lives in an absurd and inconsistent way, a belief that leads naturally to the realisation that it is not rational to act in such a way, and that, therefore, faith in God ought to be accepted. In this way, despair testifies indirectly to the necessity for faith in God, the only question now is whether or not despair is a reliable witness, whether it is really true that faith in God is the only way to escape despair and the absurdity and inconsistency that comes with it (a question that shall be examined more thoroughly in the chapter on Kierkegaard). If it is true that faith in God is the only effective defence against despair, and if it is true that despair necessarily entails absurdity and inconsistency, then Kierkegaard's form of faith can be considered knowledge. It would appear that all of the aforementioned forms of faith can, in the right circumstances, be considered knowledge. Having established this, it is time to move on to a comparison of Komenský's epistemology with that of Plato.

Subchapter 3: Komenský and Plato

It is clear that Komenský's thought was directly influenced by the works of Plato, this is clearly evident from the mentions of "ideas" in Komenský's *Panorthosia*. However, there are noticeable differences between the epistemologies of Plato and Komenský, both in their form and in how they are justified. For Komenský, the foundation of his epistemology is God. He names the three sources of knowledge "the three books of God" and the reason that he gives for his belief that beliefs arrived at through these three sources are indisputable, that they are truly deserving of the title of knowledge, is the fact that these sources are authored by a perfect God. Plato, on the other hand founds his epistemology on reason and the unchanging nature of ideas. Depending on which of Plato's two accounts of knowledge is accepted, reason serves either to acquaint us with ideas (on the republic account) or to justify our knowledge of ideas, so that it might be distinct from true beliefs that are the result of, for example, a lucky guess. The unchanging nature of ideas guarantees that our knowledge is truly infallible, that what we know will not be true one day and false the next, and since knowledge must be infallible and unchanging, it is only possible to have knowledge of ideas, not material objects. This is the primary difference between the epistemology of Komenský and the epistemology of Plato, it is a crucial difference since it points to the fact that the two philosophers have two very different answers to one of the foundational questions of epistemology, i.e. how can we be confident that we know what we think we know. Komenský might answer this question by saying that we can claim to know things because God reveals his knowledge to us through the three books and God is perfect, he never lies or makes mistakes, so we can say with confidence that we know with certainty anything that is revealed in the three books of God. Plato might answer this question by saying that we can be confident in our knowledge of ideas because reason allows us to give an account for everything that we claim to know and the unchanging nature of ideas guarantees that our knowledge is truly infallible, that it is true now and will always be true. The key difference here is that the foundation of Komenský's epistemology is his faith in a perfect God, while the foundation for Plato's epistemology is his trust in the reliability of reason, his belief that accounts that are arrived at through reason will be good accounts. The second important difference between these two epistemologies is the fact that faith has a prominent place in Komenský's epistemology, but it has no place at all in the epistemology of Plato. For Komenský, faith is the only source we have for supernatural truths that cannot be ascertained through the senses or through reason whereas for Plato the senses are the source of

beliefs about material objects and reason is the source of our knowledge of ideas but there is no mention of faith. Even knowledge of the most transcendent of all entities, the form of the good, is arrived at through reason and not faith. In his emphasis on reason, Plato is in agreement with a view that is commonplace today, the view that faith should be excluded entirely from epistemology in favour of empirical evidence and reasoned argument. However, this particular difference points to a similarity. Plato's view that all knowledge is arrived at through reason points to the fact that both epistemologies present a single faith-belief as the foundation for all knowledge. In Komenský's case this faith-belief is the belief that God exists and is perfect, and that therefore all of the "books" that are authored by God are also perfect. In Plato's case, this faith-belief is the belief in the reliability of reason. Since Plato believes that all knowledge is arrived at through reason then, on Plato's view, any confidence that we might have in our ability to arrive at knowledge rests on our assumption that reason is a reliable way of arriving at true beliefs, an assumption that can be categorised as faith since it is not a belief that can be arrived at through evidence or reasoned argument,⁴⁹ but it is justified trust in our faculty of reason, justified at least on the practical grounds that, if this assumption were not made, then it would be impossible to decide whether any belief that we happen to hold is true or false, making it impossible to live our lives with any consistency. Despite the apparent exclusion of faith from Plato's epistemology, there is at least one faith belief that has a very important role in this epistemology, and similarly to Komenský's epistemology, it is a single faith-belief that underpins our confidence in what we claim to know.

When comparing the epistemologies of these two philosophers, it is important to mention the influence that the works of Plato had on Komenský's epistemology. Plato's influence on Komenský is clear in the 4th paragraph of the 11th chapter of the *Panorthosia* where he states that "We want a new philosophy...so that our wisdom would not be unstable and hanging in the air, but instead anchored to ideas as the eternal foundations of truth, let us have these at hand as the norms for all plans, for finding new thoughts and for judging the ones that we have found."⁵⁰ And in the 5th

⁴⁹ using reason to prove the reliability of reason is impossible without assuming that the conclusion of the argument is true before even beginning to formulate the argument, thereby begging the question.

⁵⁰ Comenius, J.A. (1966), *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p.281: "Novam denique volumus philosophiam tametsi veterem, renovatam, ut sapientia nostra non amplius fit vaga aut volatica sed affixa ideis tamquam veritatis aeternis basimus

paragraph of the same chapter he says “The new philosophy has therefore a new final goal; the resolution of contradictions through finding, establishing, and shedding light on the true ideas of all things, so that through the application of all partial things to these ideas it would immediately be known what concurs and what does not concur, so that we would have a path to concurrence. There is truly a problem in the fact that people, even with a common education, often judge as the blind do of colour, not knowing what, according to truth, ought to be in each thing... they do the same thing as one attempting to count without numbers, measure without measures and weigh without weights.”⁵¹ One thing that is particularly striking here is the fact that Komenský justifies the need to anchor our wisdom to ideas by saying that our wisdom ought to be unmoving and well founded, in other words, that our knowledge should be unchanging. This claim is very reminiscent of Plato’s insistence that one can only have knowledge of ideas, since knowledge is infallible and therefore must be unchanging. Komenský also seems to believe in the importance of our knowledge being unchanging, and also seems to believe that the unchanging nature of Platonic ideas guarantees that our knowledge will be infallible and unchanging, but there is an important difference here, given everything that has been said thus far, Komenský clearly does not believe that one can only have knowledge of ideas. The question now is, what is the precise role that ideas play in Komenský’s epistemology. The answer to this question lies in the fact that Platonic ideas are perfect and unchanging versions of all things in the material world, all material things being imperfect reflections of these ideas. The more that any thing in the material world resembles its idea, the closer it is to perfection. This makes Platonic ideas the perfect point of comparison for determining how material objects (the “partial things” that Komenský speaks about) ought to be and the same is true for objects that we conceive of in our minds, which is why Komenský says that we should have ideas at hand “for finding new thoughts and for judging the ones that we have found”, our knowledge of ideas allows us to determine how close our concepts are to the way that they ought to be. It is therefore safe to say that

quas habeamus tamquam omnium consiliorum inveniendorum deque inventis iudicii normas in parato.”

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 281: “Novae itaque philosophiae novus nobis scopus ultimus, reconciliatio diffensionum per repertas, stabilitas, in luce positas omnium rerum ideas veras: ad quas particularium omnium applicatione quicquid concordat aut discordat, prompte pateat, inque concordiam redeundi via fit. Hic enim revera res haeret, quod plerique mortalium, etiam vulgariter eruditi tanquam caeci de coloribus iudicent impraesci quid ulla in re ex vero esse debeat...facientes prorsus quod faceret qui numerare sine numero, mensurare sine mensura, ponderare sine pondere ad libra attentaret.”

Komenský seems to be proposing here is that Platonic ideas serve as a point of comparison for all “partial things” and any thoughts that we might have, with the merit of anything in the material world or any concept that we might form in our minds being directly proportional to the degree to which it measures up to the perfect Platonic ideas. This is perhaps most clear in Komenský’s statement that those without a knowledge of ideas “judge as the blind do of colour...not knowing what, according to truth, ought to be in each thing” and that “they do the same thing as one attempting to measure without measures or weigh without weights” Our knowledge of ideas allows us to know how each thing ought to be, since the idea of each thing serves as its standard of perfection, the more that any given thing resembles its idea the closer it is to the way that it ought to be. Without this knowledge it is impossible to say that some thing ought to be a particular way, since we have no standard for how things ought to be. The lack of an unchanging standard for how things ought to be creates a situation where no opinion on this subject is better than another and where, as a result of this, our standard for how things ought to be is constantly changing as different opinions become gain and decline in popularity over time. Our wisdom is left “unstable” and “hanging in the air” (without foundation). There are two key differences between Plato’s view of the role of ideas in philosophy, and that of Komenský. First, Komenský views knowledge of ideas as a means to an end, whereas for Plato it is an end in itself. Plato sees the knowledge of ideas as the goal of philosophy, something that is demonstrated in his famous allegory of the cave.⁵² Komenský speaks of ideas almost as though they are a tool, one that is kept “close to hand” so that the final goal of philosophy, “the resolution of contradictions”, might be achieved. The second key difference is that, according to Plato, ideas are the only potential object of knowledge, whereas Komenský believes that one can have knowledge of material objects as well as abstract and supernatural truths. However, this second difference points to a similarity. Komenský may not accept Plato’s conclusion, that one can only have knowledge of ideas, but seems to accept at least some of Plato’s reasoning to this conclusion, given the importance that he gives to knowledge being unchanging, and the fact that he, similarly

⁵² Plato, *The Republic* 514a-520a. In the allegory of the cave, the only distinction between the man (representing the philosopher) who has left the cave and those who remain in the cave is the fact that the man who has left has gained knowledge of the outside world (representing the world of ideas). The goal of philosophy, therefore, is to allow the philosopher to go beyond acquaintance with material objects (represented by the shadows on the wall of the cave, perceived by the cave’s inhabitants) and to gain access to the world of ideas.

to Plato, sees ideas as a guarantor of the infallible and unchanging nature of knowledge.

One more important question regarding ideas in the epistemologies of both Plato and Komenský is the question of how one comes to have a knowledge of ideas in the first place. In *The Republic*, Plato states that one can become acquainted with ideas through reason but does not provide any specific rational arguments that lead us to conclusions about the nature of ideas, as Julia Annas points out

“The republic is often treated as a major source for the theory of forms (ideas) but even here there is no open treatment of what they contribute to the argument. Explicit discussion of them is not very prominent: there are only three passages where we find it through the long figurative passages of Sun, line and cave as well as some casual references, obviously have forms in view.”⁵³

In one of the three passages that Annas mentions, that being the passage containing the allegory of the cave, Plato presents a figurative representation of a philosopher coming to the knowledge of ideas, and he portrays the philosopher as a man emerging from the cave, having up to that point seen only shadows of what exists in the outside world, and perceiving for the first time, the beauty that exists outside the cave. The acquisition of the knowledge of ideas by the philosopher is presented less as the conclusion of some argument and more as an unmediated acquaintance that is comparable to perception. Though Plato never explicitly states that one comes to the knowledge of ideas through an experience that one has as the result of practicing philosophy, rather than said knowledge being the conclusion of an argument, the renaissance Neo-platonists of Komenský’s era were far more explicit in their thoughts on how exactly one comes to the knowledge of ideas. The Renaissance Neoplatonist idea of how one comes to knowledge is described by Daniel Špelda as follows:

“[for Renaissance Neoplatonists] the truth is not a property of judgements but truth is primarily an experience, light (*lux dei aeterna*). Its intensity depends on the state of the soul, which accepts it. This is therefore a moral understanding of knowledge, according to which man must undergo, during the process of acquiring knowledge, somatic and spiritual transformations. He must learn to know himself and change his way of life- and he must also receive God’s grace... the goal of the effort to acquire knowledge was to ascend upwards, to unshackle the soul from the body

⁵³ Annas, J. (1981). *An introduction to Plato's Republic*. Clarendon press. p. 68.

and to ascend through the planetary spheres back to one's creator and true goal and to immerse oneself in contemplation."⁵⁴

The goal of the practice of reason and philosophy is not solely to form sound rational arguments but to improve the state of the soul, making it open to the light of God which is the source of all truth. Experiencing this divine light allows one to contemplate ideas and eventually to return "to one's creator" and contemplate God himself. Komenský never states explicitly that this is the way that one comes to the knowledge of ideas, but given the fact that the place that he gives to ideas in his philosophy shows that he was influenced by the Neoplatonism of his time, and given the fact that the aforementioned passages from the panorthosia state that we ought to have a knowledge of ideas, while providing us with no method for coming by such knowledge, it is safe to assume that Komenský believed in the same method for arriving at the knowledge of ideas as the neo-platonists of his time. If it is the case that both Komenský and Plato believe that the knowledge of ideas is arrived at by the soul when it experiences something that is above the world of the senses, then there is a fairly interesting similarity between the epistemologies of Komenský and Plato, interesting in the fact that what both Komenský and Plato are describing here could be described as faith, specifically the faith of the religious mystic who seeks to know the object of his religion through experience, and arrives at said experience through contemplative practices. However, it may be somewhat unclear whether or not such knowledge ought to be placed in the category of faith-belief, it seems that it both is and is not a product of reason. It is a product of reason since the only way to arrive at such knowledge is to employ reason and to practice philosophy, but it is not a product of reason since it is not the conclusion of any rational argument, it is the result of an experience that happens as the result of one improving the state of his soul by practicing philosophy and forming rational arguments for other conclusions. Despite being, in one sense, a product of reason, this form of belief meets all of the criteria for a faith belief. It is not the conclusion of a reasoned argument nor

⁵⁴ Špelda, D. (2012), "Prisca sapientia v renesančním platonismu". [Prisca sapientia in Renaissance Platonism], *Aithér: Časopis pro studium řecké a latinské filosofické tradice*, 4(7), pp. 145-189. "Pro renesanční platoniky není pravda vlastnost soudů, ale pravda je především zážitek, světlo (lux dei aeterna). Jeho intenzita závisí na stavu duše, která je přijímá. Jedná se tedy o morální pojetí vědění, podle něhož musí člověk procházet v průběhu poznávacího procesu somatickými i duchovními proměnami. Musí poznat sám sebe a změnit svůj způsob života – a ještě se mu musí dostat Boží milosti... Cílem poznávacího úsilí bylo vystoupat vzhůru, odpoutat duši od těla a stoupat přes planetární sféry zpět ke svému původci a skutečnému cíli a pohroužit se do kontemplace."

is it inferred from evidence; reason may play a role in producing this belief, but its role is not to produce a sound argument for this belief but to improve the state of the soul to enable the experience which is the true source of the belief. These beliefs are justified by a trust in the contemplative experiences that one has, a trust which may or may not be well justified. From this we may conclude that another form of faith exists in Komenský's epistemology, one that differs from his presuppositions that God exists, that God is perfect and that God is the author of the world, the mind and the bible, in the fact that it is justified by mystical experience. We can also conclude that this same form of faith may also be present in the epistemology of Plato, despite the fact that he, at first, appears to have an epistemology that is based purely on reason, and that has no room for faith. If we consider the fact that Komenský was influenced by Renaissance Neoplatonism, then it is not surprising that this form of faith exists in the philosophies of both Plato and Komenský. Renaissance Neoplatonist thought was based largely on the works of Plato and some of the beliefs that Renaissance Neoplatonists took from Plato were adopted by Komenský. These beliefs included the theory of ideas, the notion that ideas serve as the guarantor of the unchanging nature of knowledge and the method by which the philosopher is meant to arrive at the knowledge of ideas. Although the Christian aspects of Komenský's epistemology are unsurprisingly absent in the epistemology of Plato, there are more similarities between the two than might at first be expected between an epistemology that gives faith a very prominent place, and one that does not even mention it explicitly.

Chapter 2: Pierre Bayle

Pierre Bayle was a contemporary of Komenský and just like Komenský he examined the subject of the nature of faith and its place in epistemology, though this is where the similarities end. The views of these two philosophers could not be more different, a fact which is perhaps best illustrated by the contrast between Bayle's claim that

“a choice must necessarily be made between philosophy and the gospel: if you do not wish to believe anything except that which is evident and conforms to commonly accepted notions, then accept philosophy and reject Christianity; if you wish to believe the incomprehensible mysteries of religion, accept Christianity and reject philosophy; because having clarity and incomprehensibility together is something that cannot be done, the combination of these two things is no less impossible than the combination of the properties of a square with the properties of a circle. A choice must necessarily be made.”⁵⁵

and Komenský's claim that

“[the senses, reason and faith] must of course work together... when Reason has come to any false conclusion regarding invisible things, it is amended by divine Revelation. Yet that emendation is not violent, and with the destruction of the preceding principle, but gentle, so that the very thing which is corrected, acknowledges, and admits it of its own accord, and with joy, and soon brings something of its own, whereby the same corrected truth may become more apparent.”⁵⁶

It is clear that Komenský sees the relationship between the senses, reason and faith as one of cooperation, he sees the three principles as all working within their own domains towards the same goal, that is, to provide man with all knowledge that it is humanly possible to know. Though he does

⁵⁵ Bayle, P. (2008). III. Éclaircissement. Que ce qui a été dit du pyrrhonisme, dans ce dictionnaire, ne peut point préjudicier à la religion. *Cahiers philosophiques*, (3), 98-112. p.104 “Il faut nécessairement opter entre la philosophie et l'Évangile: si vous ne voulez rien croire que ce qui est évident et conforme aux notions communes, prenez la philosophie et quittez le christianisme ; si vous voulez croire les mystères incompréhensibles de la religion, prenez le christianisme et quittez la philosophie ; car de posséder ensemble l'évidence et l'incompréhensibilité, c'est ce qui ne se peut, la combinaison de ces deux choses n'est guère plus impossible que la combinaison des commoditez de la figure carrée et de la figure ronde.”

⁵⁶ Comenius J.A. (1651), *Naturall philosophie reformed by divine light or, a synopsis of physicks*: Page unnumbered. Cf. Comenius, *Physicae synopsis*, p. 8.

propose that it is sometimes appropriate for faith to correct reason, he explicitly states that this is “not with the destruction of the preceding principle”⁵⁷. To allow reason to be corrected by faith is not to reject reason, but merely to admit that there are certain things which are outside the domain of reason. Admitting this is by no means irrational if one already accepts the existence of the supernatural realm described in the bible, a realm which includes beings such as God, beings which are so far above the human mind as to be incomprehensible. It is perfectly rational, tautological even, to state that reason cannot comprehend that which is incomprehensible. There is therefore, nothing irrational in allowing faith to correct reason when reason steps outside of its domain, it is simply an affirmation of the limits of reason.

Bayle, in contrast, sees the relationship between faith and reason not as one of cooperation but as one of competition. “A choice must necessarily be made” between reason and the gospel. Given the fact that Pierre Bayle was not averse to providing rational arguments to defend his positions⁵⁸ both before and after *Eclaircissements sur les pyrrhoniens* was written, it is clear that Bayle is not claiming that the conflict between faith and reason is absolute, that we must choose to either accept reason and reject faith in its entirety or vice versa, though this may seem to be the case at first glance. If this is not the case, then what exactly is Bayle's view of the nature of the conflict between faith and reason?

Kristen Irwin provides a potential answer to this question, claiming that

“On the level of individual things, individual propositions, a choice must be made between philosophy and the gospel, that is, to decide if a proposition belongs to the natural order or the supernatural order. Each

⁵⁷ Comenius J.A. (1651), *Naturall philosophie reformed by divine light or, a synopsis of physicks*, Page unnumbered. Cf. Comenius, *Physicae synopsis*, p. 13

⁵⁸ Irwin K. (2010), *Le rejet de la position conciliatrice dans les éclaircissements de Pierre Bayle*, in Bost, H. and McKenna, A. (eds.), *Les "Éclaircissements" de Pierre Bayle*, Paris: Honoré Champion, , p. 348. “There is, nevertheless, an undeniable respect for reason to be found in Bayle, and we cannot help but admit that, most of the time, Bayle speaks with the voice of reason- which is to say that he does not hesitate to employ a very philosophical tone, a very precise tone, even a very argumentative tone. He analyses the logical faults in the arguments of his adversaries and constructs extraordinarily sophisticated responses to objections. (Il y a, néanmoins chez Bayle un indéniable respect à l'égard de la raison, et l'on ne peut manquer de constater que, la plupart du temps, Bayle parle avec la voix de la raison- c'est-à-dire qu'il n'hésite pas à employer un ton très philosophique, très précis, même très argumentatif. Il analyse des fautes logiques dans les arguments de ses adversaires et construit des réponses extraordinairement sophistiquées aux objections.)

proposition is either part of the natural order or the supernatural order. It would be incoherent for a proposition to belong to both domains at the same time... Each proposition is therefore either a subject of faith or a subject of philosophy. Clearly it is not a contradiction to say that there are two orders of existence, and Bayle has already said that the two orders are qualitatively different. If there is a fundamental difference between these two domains, this removes the pressure of a direct conflict between them: the choice between philosophy and the gospel always takes place on the level of individual propositions, never on the level of domains.”⁵⁹

What Irwin says here points to a similarity between Komenský and Bayle, namely the fact that both of them believe that the natural world is the domain of reason whereas supernatural truths are solely the domain of faith. Despite this apparent similarity the key difference still remains. Komenský frames the interaction between faith and reason as cooperation, faith completes the pansophia by providing mankind with the supernatural truths that cannot be obtained through the senses or reason. Bayle frames the same interaction as one of conflict, when a question is raised about the supernatural aspects of the Christian religion, faith and reason clash and a choice must be made, one must either accept the conclusions of reason on this subject, and discard Christian faith or accept faith and believe the supernatural claims of Christianity, regardless of how repugnant they may be to reason, deny that reason has any place in examining the supernatural and ignore the fact that our faculty of reason is telling us in no uncertain terms that these claims ought to be rejected.

The important difference here is that Pierre Bayle sees the supernatural propositions that are the domain of faith as being irrational whereas Komenský does not. For Komenský, these faith-beliefs regarding supernatural things are not irrational in the sense that there are no rational arguments that can be brought against them just as there are no rational arguments that can be put forwards in their favour. To accept the

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 352 “Au niveau des choses particulières, les propositions individuelles, il faut bien opter « entre la philosophie et l'Évangile, c'est-à-dire décider si une proposition appartient à l'ordre naturel ou à l'ordre surnaturel. Chaque proposition fait partie soit de l'ordre naturel, soit de l'ordre surnaturel · il serait incohérent qu'une proposition puisse appartenir aux deux domaines à la fois...Chaque proposition est donc ou un objet de la foi, ou un objet de la philosophie. Évidemment ce n'est pas une contradiction de dire qu'il y a deux ordres d'existence, et Bayle a déjà dit que les deux ordres sont qualitativement différents. S'il y a en effet une différence fondamentale entre ces deux domaines, cela ôte la pression d'un conflit direct entre les deux : le choix entre la philosophie et l'Évangile s'opère toujours au niveau des propositions individuelles, et jamais au niveau des domaines.”

supernatural claims of Christianity does not require one to ignore rational criticisms and accept these beliefs anyway, it simply requires one to trust the word of God and to admit that reason has limits and that there are certain things which it is not possible for us to understand through reason. Accepting faith, is therefore “not with the destruction” of reason and reason can accept the corrections of faith “with joy” and “add something of its own”⁶⁰, the joy may be in knowing exactly where the limits of reason are, and what sorts of questions it is fruitful to rationally examine and reason may add something of its own in defending the place of scripture in epistemology and in defending the rationality of believing in something that one does not understand. Pierre Bayle, on the other hand, sees faith and reason as being in conflict since he believes that there are rational critiques of the supernatural claims of Christianity, even making some of these critiques himself⁶¹, and claims that the Christian must accept the supernatural claims of Christianity on faith, regardless of the fact that he cannot, and can never, answer the perfectly sound rational critiques of these supernatural claims. The odd thing here is that, although his view of the relationship between faith and reason is very different to that of Komenský, his justifications for this view are almost exactly the same as the justifications that Komenský presents for his view. Pierre Bayle claims that there are “two orders” a natural and a supernatural order, that the supernatural order cannot be subject to reason and therefore any proposition that is part of the supernatural order will not follow the laws of reason and will therefore appear irrational, forcing one to make the choice between faith and reason, either rejecting the proposition because of its irrationality or accepting it on faith in spite of its irrationality. Komenský justifies his views on the relationship between faith and reason by claiming that the supernatural is the domain of faith and that supernatural things “cannot be grasped firmly enough by reason”. Both thinkers justify their view on the relationship between faith and reason by arguing that the supernatural is above reason and that it is incomprehensible to reason. How is it possible that two thinkers with such similar lines of reasoning regarding the relationship between faith and reason come to such radically different conclusions on this subject? To answer this question, we must examine the beliefs of each of these thinkers more closely in order to determine how these beliefs influence their views on faith and reason, and how this might explain their differing conclusions.

⁶⁰ Comenius J.A. (1651), *Naturall philosophie reformed by divine light or, a synopsis of physicks* Page unnumbered. Cf. Comenius (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, p. 352.

⁶¹ See the entry on the problem of evil in Pierre Bayle’s *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.

One important characteristic of Komenský's philosophy is the fact that it has the goal of achieving pansophia, a state of "human omniscience" where all knowledge that it is humanly possible to acquire is possessed. Komenský believed that the thorough study of the three books of God would eventually lead mankind to pansophia, and since the three books of God are infallible, man in his pansophic state may be entirely certain every belief that he has arrived at through the study of these books. Komenský's vision is built on a very optimistic view of the epistemic faculties of man and what they can achieve. Not only can they bring us to a state that is comparable to omniscience, but they can provide us with absolute certainty in the beliefs that we hold. It is a vision of absolute order where the correct use of each of the three principles is strictly defined and where perfection is an achievable goal so long as the three principles are used in the correct way, in the correct domain. An important part of this vision is the elimination of all intellectual conflict, the perfect philosophy will be free of all sects (sectae), all existing philosophies will become a single philosophy and philosophers will cease to be Platonists, Aristotelians or Stoics and will simply be philosophers.⁶² Given this strong emphasis on order, perfection and the elimination of conflict, Komenský has a strong incentive to endeavour to present a relationship between faith and reason that is free of conflict, where the two principles work together, each within their own domain, towards the goal of achieving pansophia. This is, at least in part, why Komenský starts with the same basic ideas as Bayle, that the supernatural is above reason and is therefore not the domain of reason but is instead the domain of faith, but contrary to Bayle arrives at a vision of a harmonious relationship between faith and reason.

The epistemological views of Pierre Bayle stand in sharp contrast to those of Komenský, he was a sceptic who would often cast doubt on the "unassailable" foundations of such systems of thought as the one that is proposed by Komenský, as Oscar Kenshur points out

"Bayle's dictionnaire historique et critique is a monument of erudition in an erudite age, as well as one of the supreme achievements of philosophical scepticism...In fact, Bayle's erudition helps to fuel his scepticism, by

⁶² Comenius J.A., *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 272. "Quarta conditio vult sectas omnes, et omnia partium studia tolli. Hoc est, requirit... Ut nulla gens, Lingua, philosophia, Religio, Politia opprimatur aut obscuretur; illustrentur et in harmoniam redigantur, omnes. Id autem sic, ut. Omnes Philosophiae fiant philosophia una, sub uno optimo doctore, Christo, optima. Ita ultima haec quae desideratur, reformatio, revocat a partialitate et sectis omnes, colligitque in universalitatem, hoc est catholicismum verum omnes; ut sublatis factionibus in philosophia, religione, politia omnes incipiamus esse catholici. Hoc est, non platonici, aristotelici, stoici etc. sed philosophi."

providing him with an endless supply of philosophers and theologians whose theories and principles he can throw into doubt. While other philosophers of the age employed sceptical techniques to clear away erroneous or doubtful ideas, so that they could build their systems upon what they supposed would be unassailable first principles, Bayle's scepticism was of a much more thoroughgoing sort... Bayle's sceptical critiques are uncompromisingly thorough.”⁶³

Bayle's sceptical views make it unlikely that he would attempt to build a perfect and conflict-free philosophical system that incorporates faith. It is more likely that he would attempt to dismantle any such system. Therefore, Bayle has no incentive to attempt to harmonise reason and faith in order to fit them into a philosophical system. This is not the only way that Bayle's scepticism might make Bayle more willing to present faith and reason as being in conflict, despite being both a Christian and a philosopher. Bayle's scepticism has been identified by some as pyrrhonism, as Anthony McKenna says:

“There is some common ground which is part of our cultural heritage as far as Pierre Bayle is concerned, and it ought to be examined more closely: from the time when the dictionary was published, Bayle plays the part of a pyrrhonist, even an arch pyrrhonist, who observes the chaos of philosophical disputes with a sardonic smile, content to stay behind the scenes, pointing out the aporias of systems, on all sides, and to take refuge in sceptic doubt”⁶⁴

The defining characteristic of pyrrhonism "is opposing to every proposition an equal proposition"⁶⁵. If one attempts to raise an equal and contradictory proposition to every proposition that one arrives at through reason, then very few of these propositions will be accepted. If every proposition has an equally valid counterproposition, then the most rational thing that one can do is to withhold judgement, which is something that Bayle recognises, saying of Pyrrhonism that it is “the art of disputation concerning all things,

⁶³ Kenshur O. (1988), “Pierre Bayle and the Structures of Doubt”, *Eighteenth-century studies*, 21(3), p. 297.

⁶⁴ McKenna A (2018), “Pierre Bayle : le pyrrhonisme et la foi”, *Archives de philosophie*, 81(4), p. p. 730: « il y a un lieu commun qui fait partie de notre héritage culturel en ce qui concerne Bayle et qui mérite d’être examiné de près : depuis l’ époque de la publication du Dictionnaire , il fait figure de pyrrhonien et même d’archi - pyrrhonien , qui observerait le tohu – bohu des disputes philosophiques avec un sourire sardonique , se contentant de rester en retrait , de pointer les apories des systèmes des uns et des autres et de se réfugier dans le doute sceptique »

⁶⁵ Empiricus S. (1933), *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, I, 3.

without taking any position other than suspending judgment.”⁶⁶ From the way that both Bayle and Empiricus present it, Pyrrhonism seems to view philosophy as a myriad irresolvable conflicts between propositions and counter propositions, which may explain why Bayle might be inclined to present faith and reason as being simply another one of these conflicts. The Christian view of the doctrines of Christianity is a proposition and the rational view of these doctrines is its counter proposition, though withholding judgement is not an option given that one must choose to either be a Christian or not. Furthermore, on pyrrhonism, reason leads to an endless series of propositions and counterpropositions regarding which one may only withhold judgement, but it never leads to a truth that one can claim to know. If one accepts Pyrrhonism, and accepts that reason is not a source of truth or knowledge then, when presented with a conflict between faith and reason and told to choose between them, choosing reason over faith cannot be justified with the claim that reason is an established source of truth and knowledge whereas faith is not, removing the best argument for choosing reason in such a conflict thereby making it far more justifiable to instead choose faith. This explains why Bayle, despite being both a Christian and a philosopher, might choose to present faith and reason as coming into conflict. For someone with Bayle’s way of thinking, choosing to follow faith at the expense of reason is not as foolish as it would appear to someone with a less sceptical way of thinking since, as far as the pyrrhonist is concerned, reason is no more a reliable source of knowledge than faith is.

The idea that Bayle views the relationship between faith and reason from a pyrrhonist perspective would go quite far in explaining Bayles views on faith and reason, and the differences between Bayle’s views and those of Komenský. However, there is some room for doubt regarding the degree to which Bayle was a pyrrhonist, especially given his critiques of pyrrhonism in his *Eclaircissements sur les pyrrhoniens*. In the *Éclaircissements* Bayle writes

„[pyrrhonists] are not content to attack the witness of the senses, the maxims of morality, The rules of logic, the axioms of metaphysics; they also try to refute the demonstrations of geometers and all of the things that mathematicians have most evidently proven...It is a labyrinth where no son of Ariane can offer help. They themselves become lost in their own subtleties and they are glad, since this demonstrates the universality of their hypotheses that everything is uncertain, and they will not even accept arguments that attack uncertainty. Their method goes so far, that

⁶⁶ Bayle P. (1740) *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Vol. 12), p. 99.

those who have followed it to its logical conclusion must say that they do not know if something exists.”⁶⁷

Given these strong critiques of Pyrrhonism and Pyrrhonists, coupled with the apparently contradictory fact that Bayle’s methods of critique and rational analysis seem to be pyrrhonist in nature, it is important to determine what exactly is the nature of Bayle’s scepticism, to what degree this form of scepticism is influenced by pyrrhonism and how Bayle’s form of scepticism might impact his views on faith, reason and the relationship between the two.

In his earlier writings Bayle makes several claims which appear to contradict the central claim of pyrrhonism, namely the claim that the rational stance to take regarding any proposition or rational argument is the suspension of judgement, and that, therefore, reason cannot lead one to knowledge, only to doubt. In his *Comentaire philosophique* Bayle writes that

„I wish to say that, without exception, all of the laws of morality must be subject to this natural idea of equity, which, just as metaphysical light, illuminates all men that come into the world“.⁶⁸

Here Bayle says that all moral laws must be subject to natural moral reason, implying that moral reason can reliably provide us with true beliefs regarding which moral laws ought to be followed. Furthermore, when Bayle says that all moral laws must be subject to natural moral reason, this necessarily includes the moral laws of the bible, and therefore „Holy scripture is divine if and only if it is in accord with natural morality.“⁶⁹ This claim paints a picture of Bayle that is quite distant from the idea of Bayle as a pyrrhonist-fideist

⁶⁷ Bayle P. (2008) *III. Éclaircissement. Que ce qui a été dit du pyrrhonisme, dans ce dictionnaire, ne peut point préjudicier à la religion*, Cahiers philosophiques, p. 2.

« Ils ne se contentent pas de combattre le témoignage des sens, les maximes de la morale, les règles de la logique, les axiomes de la métaphysique ; ils tâchent aussi de renverser les démonstrations des géomètres, et tout ce que les mathématiciens peuvent produire de plus évident... C’est un labyrinthe où aucun fil d’Ariane ne peut donner nul secours. Ils se perdent eux-mêmes dans leurs propres subtilités, et ils en sont ravis, vu que cela sert à montrer plus nettement l’universalité de leurs hypothèses que tout est incertain, de quoi ils n’exceptent pas même les arguments qui attaquent l’incertitude. On va si loin par leur méthode, que ceux qui en ont bien pénétré les conséquences sont contraints de dire, qu’ils ne savent s’il existe quelque chose. »

⁶⁸ Bayle P (2006), *De la tolérance: Commentaire philosophique*, ed. by J. M. Gros, Paris : H. Champion, p. 89 : “Je veux dire que, sans exception, il faut soumettre toutes les lois morales à cette idée naturelle d’ équité, qui, aussi bien que la lumière métaphysique, illumine tout homme venant au monde.”

⁶⁹ McKenna A., *Pierre Bayle : le pyrrhonisme et la foi*, p. 9.

since here, Bayle advocates the idea that, in the field of ethics, reason leads to truth and the moral claims of Christianity must therefore be subject to moral reason. In his *Dictionnaire philosophique et critique* he writes

„We are then exposed to the unwelcome chicanery which the pyrrhonist call „the means of the age“ and, supposing that we cannot reject historical pyrrhonism due to an infinite number of facts, it is certain that there are many more that we can prove to them with complete certainty: so that historical research is not without fruit in this sense, we demonstrate with certainty the falsehood of many things, the uncertainty of many others and the truth of many others.“⁷⁰

Not only does this show that Bayle believes that reason can reliably lead us to truth in the field of history, but Bayle works a critique of pyrrhonism into his defence of the reliability of history. It is clear that, at the time when Bayle made these claims Bayle had a high opinion of reason as a means to truth (in the fields of history and morality at least) and a proportionally low opinion of pyrrhonism. However, even in his earlier texts, Bayle appears to be somewhat sceptical of the ability of reason to arrive at truth in the field of theology. What Bayle calls the „particular“ or „speculative“ truths or „mysteries“ of Christianity are not believed because there is evidence or sound rational arguments for them but are believed due to „education, habit, taste or zeal“. ⁷¹ There are, therefore, two categories of belief, one category being those beliefs that are justified through reason and can be called knowledge, and those beliefs which are either the result of what one has heard from others, or the result of subjective taste or zeal.

It is in Bayle's later writings that we begin to see signs of sceptic fideism, as McKenna points out

⁷⁰ Bayle P. (1692) *Projet et fragments d' un Dictionnaire critique*, Rotterdam, §9 « on est donc délivré des importunes chicaneries que les pyrrhoniens appellent moyens de l' époque et quoyqu' on ne puisse rejeter le pyrrhonisme historique par rapport à une infinité de faits, il est sûr qu' il y en beaucoup d' autres, que l' on peut prouver avec une pleine certitude: de sorte que les recherches historiques ne sont pas sans fruit de ce côté là on montre certainement la fausseté de plusieurs choses, l' incertitude de plusieurs autres, et la vérité de plusieurs autres”

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 10 “Dans le domaine des « vérités particulières » de la doctrine chrétienne en revanche, chacun suivra sa conviction et on peut errer de bonne foi et innocemment: autrement dit, ce sont des adiaphora. Bayle souligne ainsi la nécessaire concordance entre la raison et la foi sur le plan de la morale. Les autres articles de la doctrine sont relégués, pour ainsi dire, au domaine de l' éducation , de l' habitude, du « goût » et du « zèle » : il n' y aucune raison de pencher pour une interprétation plutôt que pour une autre.”

“It is at this time (between 1693 and October 1696) that Bayle edited his article on Pyrrho, and he shows that the Christian religion is incompatible with our fundamental concepts, not only in the field of ontology, (no problem on this point, for what value does our concept of space and time have?) but also in the field of logic (the law of non-contradiction, the excluded middle) and, above all, in the field of morality: It is in the very nature of faith „the folly of the cross“ to contradict our concept of morality.”⁷²

If one excepts the claim that Christianity is fundamentally incompatible with reason then the only options that one has are to either abandon Christianity or to embrace fideism and accept the claims of Christianity on faith regardless of how repugnant they might be to reason. Bayle appears to opt for the latter option, claiming that

„The most necessary barrier for preserving the religion of Jesus Christ is the obligation to submit to the authority of God, and to humbly believe the mysteries that it pleased him to reveal to us, no matter how inconceivable they might be and how impossible they might appear to our reason.”⁷³

Of course, this form of fideism which requires one to reject moral reasoning and even certain logical laws in favour of religious faith plays into the hand of those schools of scepticism that reject the idea that reason is a reliable means for arriving at truth. If reason is unreliable then one might be justified in rejecting its laws and its conclusions. Given the fact that Bayle makes the claim that Christianity is fundamentally incompatible with rational morality, but chooses to accept Christianity anyway, it could be said that Bayle has abandoned the ideas that he expressed in his earlier texts, rejecting the notion that, in the field of ethics, faith must be subject to reason and instead adopting the belief that all of the claims of Christianity, including moral claims, must be accepted on faith even if there are sound logical arguments

⁷² Ibid. p. 12 “or, c’ est à ce moment - là (entre 1693 et octobre 1696) que Bayle rédige l’ article «Pyrrhon» , où il démontre que la religion chrétienne est incompatible avec nos conceptions fondamentales, non seulement dans le domaine de l’ ontologie – pas de problème sur ce point, car que vaut notre conception de l’ espace et du temps? – mais aussi sur le plan de la logique (le principe de non- contradiction , le tiers exclu) et , sur tout , sur le plan de la morale : il est de la nature même de la foi « la folie de la croix » – de ne pas s’ accorder avec notre conception de la morale.”

⁷³ Bayle P. (1702), *Éclaircissement sur les manichéens*, Rotterdam, p. 630 : “La barrière la plus nécessaire à conserver la religion de Jésus Christ est l’ obligation de se soumettre à l’ autorité de Dieu, et a croire humblement les mystères qu’ il lui a plu de nous révéler, quelque inconcevables qu’ ils soient, et quelque impossibles qu’ils paroissent à notre raison.”

against them. If this is the case, then it may imply that Bayle has adopted a much more sceptical view of the ability of reason to arrive at truth. He no longer believes that reason can furnish us with certain moral knowledge, and instead believes that moral reasoning is unreliable enough for it to be justifiable to reject moral reasoning in favour of faith. The laws of logic are no longer unassailable to him, they too must be put aside in favour of the doctrines of Christianity. It is at this point that it would be justifiable to call Pierre Bayle both a pyrrhonist and a fideist, who is sceptical of the ability of reason to arrive at truth to the point that he is willing to put aside the most evident conclusions and most fundamental laws of reason in favour of Christian doctrines.

At this point the development of Bayle's thought seems simple enough. Bayle started with a fairly optimistic view of reason as a path to knowledge, only to later lose his optimism and embrace pyrrhonism and fideism. However, Bayle restates his earlier views on moral reasoning in another text shortly after his 1690s edit of the „pyrrho“ article in his *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. In this text Bayle claims that

“If there are certain and immovable rules for the operations of the understanding, there are also such rules for acts of the will. The rules for these acts are not arbitrary at all: they are rules that emanate from the necessity of nature and that impose an indispensable obligation; and just as it is a fault to reason in a way that is opposed to the rules of the syllogism, it is also a fault to will something without conforming to the rules for acts of the will.”⁷⁴

This leads to the question of how it is possible to reconcile Bayle's apparent pyrrhonist fideism with the fact that he appears to have never given up his rationalist view of ethics.

Since Bayle never attempted, in any of his texts, to reconcile his rationalist ethics and his apparent pyrrhonist fideism, it is only possible to speculate about how Bayle might have reconciled these two positions. There are some, like McKenna⁷⁵, who claim that these apparently contradictory claims are evidence of the fact that Bayle was no fideist at all and was in fact a closeted

⁷⁴ McKenna A. (2018) *Pierre Bayle : le pyrrhonisme et la foi*, p. 18. „S' il y a des règles certaines et immuables pour les opérations de l' entendement, il y en a aussi pour les actes de la volonté. Les règles de ces actes là ne sont pas toutes arbitraires: il y en qui émanent de la nécessité de la nature et qui imposent une obligation indispensable; et comme c' est un défaut de raisonner d'une manière opposée aux règles du syllogisme, c'est aussi un défaut de vouloir une chose sans se conformer aux règles des actes de la volonté”

⁷⁵ Ibid. , p. 12.

atheist. Although there is an interesting discussion to be had regarding the truth or falsehood of this claim, it is not relevant to the subject of this article, since the views on faith that are espoused by Bayle can be meaningfully analysed and compared with other views regardless of whether or not Bayle was genuine in espousing them.

One way to reconcile Bayle's fideism with his rationalist ethics is to create a hard separation between the realms of the natural and the supernatural, resulting in a hard separation between the rules that govern these two realms. Natural or rational morality is binding for human beings, but God is not bound by it. The will of God determines what is good and what is evil which means that any of God's acts of the will are good by default, no matter how immoral they might appear to the moral reasoning of human beings. God has endowed human beings with moral reasoning so that they might have a way to determine which human behaviours cohere with the will of God and which ones do not, that is, to judge which actions are good and which actions are evil. However, in granting human beings this ability to correctly judge the morality of human actions, God never intended this faculty to be applied to his actions and his decisions, nor did he endow this faculty with the capacity to correctly judge the actions of a mind that is infinitely greater than the human mind. Since all of the aspects of the Christian faith which Bayle finds to be in conflict with rational morality have to do with moral choices made by God ("The existence of evil, the mystery of original sin, the salvation of a few chosen people")⁷⁶ it could be said that Bayle saw moral reasoning as a reliable means to discover moral laws which human beings have a duty to follow, but Bayle did not consider God to be bound by these moral laws. As the sovereign over all of creation whose will defines what is good and what is evil, God is above the moral laws which he laid down for his creatures to follow.

As mentioned earlier, Bayle never explicitly says that this is the way that he reconciles his rationalist approach to ethics with his fideism there are some facts which indicate that Bayle might have been thinking this way. The first of these being the fact that this way of thinking is common in the Calvinist tradition that Bayle was raised in. It is a way of thinking that, one may argue, is present in st. Paul's Letter to the Romans, in a passage that is often used to argue in favour of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination: „But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 12 [L' existence du mal, le mystère du peché originel, le salut d' un petit nombre des élus].

the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use.”⁷⁷ This passage (as well as other passages evoking the imagery of God as a divine potter with absolute sovereign power over his clay) is very commonly cited by Calvinists both past and present⁷⁸ and Romans 9, 20-21 appears⁷⁹ to make two main points. The first point being that God as the creator has the moral right to use his creations for whatever purpose he wishes, whether this be an honourable purpose or a dishonourable one. The second point being that human beings should not attempt to argue against the choices made by God in order to call into question their moral soundness. This is illustrated by the fact that Paul presents a rational argument against the morality of God’s decisions („how can he blame anyone if none can resist his will“) only to answer it with „who are you, a human being, to answer back to God“. It is therefore possible that Bayle, inspired by Calvinist interpretations of scripture, saw moral reasoning as useful for judging the morality of human actions but also believed that it is not the place of human beings argue against decisions made by God, regardless of how rational their arguments against these decisions might seem.

In short, moral reasoning is a reliable tool for judging the actions of human beings and for laying down moral laws which human beings are obligated to follow. However, moral reasoning is not a reliable tool for judging the actions of God or for laying down laws which ought to govern the behaviour of God. God, being the ultimate sovereign over all things, has the authority to deal with his creatures in whatever way pleases him, and has no moral duty to deal with his creatures a way that is acceptable to the moral reasoning of human beings. Returning to the earlier mentioned list of the aspects of Christianity that Bayle finds to be in conflict with moral reasoning, this conflict could be presented as a series of questions all of which start with the words ”why did God...”. Why did God create a world filled with evil? Why did God allow the existence of original sin, creating human beings with an innate

⁷⁷ The Bible, new international version, Romans 9 20-21.

⁷⁸ See Calvin J. (2012), *Commentary on Romans*, Ravenio Books, pp. 314-317 . Specifically, the section covering Romans 9. For a more modern example of this way of thinking see White J., (2010) *The Potter's Freedom: A Defense of the Reformation and a Rebuttal of Norman Geisler's Chosen But Free*, Calvary Press Publ.

⁷⁹ I would like to note that there are many alternative interpretations of Romans 9 20-21 besides the one that I present here, and personally I strongly disagree with this interpretation, however it is a common interpretation among Calvinists, and the ideas that are presented in this interpretation of the verse help greatly in explaining the way that Bayle might reconcile his fideism with his moral rationalism, provided we assume that Bayle held to these ideas.

flaw and later punishing them for the way that he created them? Why did God choose a few people for salvation, condemning the rest of humanity to hell? If the aforementioned interpretation of Romans 9 20-21 is accepted then human beings have no moral right to ask questions that start with "why did God..." for "who are you, a human being, to talk back to God". It is therefore possible to reconcile Bayle's claim that some aspects of the Christian faith are in conflict with moral reasoning and his apparent belief that moral reasoning is a reliable tool for laying down moral laws. If this explanation of Bayle's thinking is sound then it is possible that Bayle was genuine both in claiming to be a Christian fideist and in his statements defending the reliability of moral reasoning, it is also an important insight into how Bayle saw the relationship between faith and reason, specifically, where Bayle draws the boundaries of the domain of reason and the domain of faith.

The second piece of evidence in favour of the idea that Bayle may have thought in this way is something that has been mentioned earlier and that has been pointed out by K. Irwin, specifically the fact that, according to Bayle, a choice must be made between philosophy and the gospel on the level of individual propositions. When examining each proposition, a decision must be made whether that proposition belongs to the natural order, and is the subject of reason, or if that proposition belongs to the supernatural order and is the subject of faith. In this case, propositions regarding the morality of human actions would belong to the natural order and would be the subject of moral reason. Propositions regarding the morality of God's actions and decisions would belong to the supernatural order and would be the subject of faith. In other words, according to Bayle, Christians ought to be rationalists with regards to the moral decisions of human beings, subjecting every act of the will to the scrutiny of reason, and fideists with regards to the moral decisions of God, believing that all of God's acts and decisions are good and just even when they are in obvious conflict with moral reason.

In summary, given Bayle's often stated rationalist views as well as his harsh criticism of pyrrhonism, it appears that Bayle is not a pyrrhonist sceptic, despite often appearing to think like one. Bayle's view of faith and reason makes use of the same natural-supernatural distinction that can be found in many authors including Komenský. The major difference between Komenský and Bayle being the fact that, where Komenský emphasizes harmony between faith and reason, Bayle emphasizes conflict. It is possible that this distinction is merely a linguistic one, i.e. where Komenský says "There are certain things that cannot be attained by the senses nor understood by

reason clearly enough” Bayle says “a choice must be made between philosophy and the gospel” but both of these statements mean the same thing, that the supernatural is outside the domain of reason and that within the realm of the supernatural there are certain things that are incomprehensible to reason and the Christian must accept these things on faith. However, it is also possible that these linguistic differences are actually reflective of two very different views on how faith and reason relate to each other and of the way in which Christians ought to view reason and faith.

Having examined the reasons that these thinkers may have for arriving at their views of the relationship between faith and reason, the question now is what, if any, difference exists between the views of Komenský and Bayle on the relationship between faith and reason, besides differences in the language that is used to describe said relationship. If there is a significant difference, the question remains which one of these two thinkers is correct. More specifically, is Bayle correct in saying that the fact that the supernatural is above reason and that it is incomprehensible to reason leads inevitably to a conflict between reason and faith or is Komenský correct in saying that the supernatural is above reason and incomprehensible to reason, but that a harmonious relationship can and ought to exist between the two.

Subchapter 2: Komenský vs. Bayle

The first thing that must be said regarding the differences between Komenský's and Bayle's views is that even if the differences between Komenský and Bayle are merely differences in language, Bayle describing the relationship between faith and reason as conflict while Komenský speaks of harmony between faith and reason, despite the fact that they are both essentially saying the same thing, the language that is used by each thinker may still have a significant impact on the way that the relationship between faith and reason is perceived, which may in turn have a significant impact on any theories of the relationship between faith and reason that are built on the foundation of Komenský's or Bayle's thought. In the case of Bayle, the language of conflict that is used encourages the view that faith and reason have an antagonistic relationship, which in turn leads to a negative view of faith as an anti-rational obstacle to knowledge and learning. The fact that there are some who see Bayle himself as a closeted atheist with a negative view of faith is evidence of this. Encouraging a negative perception of faith, which may ultimately lead to a complete rejection of faith as an epistemological principle, is more than a little counterproductive if one is attempting to create an epistemological system which incorporates both reason and faith. And it is likely that Bayle advocated for just such a system, provided that he was genuine both in his statements in favour of Christian faith and in his statements in favour of reason. If the difference between Komenský and Bayle is seen as a difference in language between two people who are, in essence, saying the same thing and who are both attempting to create an epistemological system that incorporates both faith and reason then it is quite clear that Komenský has a better and more rational approach in emphasizing harmony rather than conflict between reason and faith since any system that incorporates both faith and reason while simultaneously making a point of emphasizing the conflict that exists between the two, is encouraging its own destruction.

However, there is evidence in the works of both Komenský and Bayle which suggests that, despite certain similarities, the difference between the views of these two thinkers is not merely a linguistic one. This evidence is to be found in what Bayle says, and in what Komenský *does not* say. Bayle clearly states that the supernatural claims of Christianity go against several of the laws of logic, and specifically names some of them "the law of non-contradiction, the excluded middle"⁸⁰. Bayle also makes it abundantly clear that there are aspects of the Christian faith that are in conflict with moral

⁸⁰ McKenna A. (2018) *Pierre Bayle : le pyrrhonisme et la foi*, p. 12.

reason. Komenský never claims that the supernatural truths of faith contradict the laws of logic, it may even be argued that when Komenský says that faith, when it corrects reason, does so in a “gentle” manner and that such correction is “not to the destruction of [reason]” he is saying that faith never corrects reason in a way that would require us to ignore or discard the laws of reason. Komenský also makes no mention of a conflict between moral reasoning and the supernatural domain of faith, in fact Komenský appeals to God in his reasoning about how people and things ought to be treated (“man is meant to be persuaded since he is created free and is not meant to be forced by any creature, not even by the creator himself doing everything he does with an absolutely free will, just as God himself does, since he is the image of God, created to be in his image”)⁸¹. If Bayle sees some supernatural claims that are accepted on faith as contradicting the laws of logic, and sees other such claims as being in conflict with moral reasoning, while Komenský sees no such conflicts between logic and the supernatural truths of faith and sees moral reasoning as being compatible enough with faith to use certain supernatural claims to support his moral arguments, then it is clear that there is a significant difference between Komenský’s and Bayles thinking, one that goes far beyond mere differences in language. Komenský’s claim that the supernatural “cannot be attained by the senses nor understood by reason clearly enough”⁸² seems to imply that he does not see a conflict between the claims of faith and the laws of reason, but that he sees reason as having a simple deficit in understanding with regards to the supernatural. There are some supernatural claims that appear, at first glance, to contradict the laws of reason, but that does not mean that they necessarily do. It is simply not within the capacity human reason to understand how such claims can be true, while also not contradicting the laws of reason. If we consider the example of the doctrine of the trinity, it seems at first glance that this doctrine violates the law of non-contradiction, since it is clear that one and three are not the same number, and that one cannot be one being and three beings at the same time. However, one might reply that, since we know from reason that the law of non-contradiction cannot be broken, and we know from revelation

⁸¹ Comenius J.A., *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 284 : “Nulla res aliter tractanda est quam natura eius permittit, aut requirit: Metallum liquando, lignum findendo, animalum mansuefaciendo, homo suadendo; est enim per omnia liber factus neque a creatura ulla, nec ab ipso creatore suo cogendus: quicquid agit liberrima voluntate agens ut deus ipse: quippe imago Dei ad eius similitudinem facta.”

⁸² Comenius, J. A. *Naturall philosophie reformed by divine light or, a synopsis of physicks* Page unnumbered., Cf. Comenius, J. A., *Physicae synopsis*, p. 8.

that the doctrine of the trinity is true, then we must conclude that the doctrine of the trinity does not violate the law of non-contradiction, even though it may appear to do so. The problem is neither with the law of non-contradiction nor with the doctrine of the trinity, the problem lies in the fact that our limited human faculty of reason does not have the capacity to understand how it is possible for this doctrine to be true without violating any of the laws of logic. In this way, it is possible for a thinker like Komenský to differentiate between irrational beliefs that clearly violate the laws of logic, and non-rational faith-beliefs which have no conflict with the laws of logic. Thereby placing limits on reason, and differentiating between reason and faith, without claiming that reason and faith are in conflict, and to argue for an epistemological system where the senses, reason and faith work together in harmony, each principle fulfilling its own function.

The difference between Bayle and Komenský becomes all the more clear when we consider the fact that Bayle rejects such attempts to distinguish between what is in conflict with reason and what is simply non-rational. For example, he critiques Blaise Pascal's distinction between things that are against reason and things which are above reason, claiming that

„if some doctrines are above reason, they are outside of its reach. If they are outside of its reach, reason cannot reach them. If reason cannot reach them, it cannot understand them and if reason cannot understand them it will not know how to find any idea, any principle, which would be a source of solution; and consequently the objections that it makes stay without a response, or, they will be answered with something that is the same as no response at all, a distinction as obscure as the thesis that is being attacked.“⁸³

while it is true that supernatural mysteries are necessarily incomprehensible to reason, „if reason cannot reach them...it cannot understand them“ but that by itself does not provide a reason for not believing in them. The two claims that Bayle makes in his critique of Pascal that are of some significance are also the two claims which are false. The first of these claims is his claim that it is impossible for reason to find „any idea, any principle, that would be a source of solution“(i.e. any idea that would be useful to reason, any idea

⁸³ Bayle P., *Éclaircissement sur les manichéens*, p. 630 “si quelques doctrines sont au dessous de la raison, elle ne sauroit pas les atteindre, si elle n’ y peut les atteindre, elle ne peut pas les comprendre. Si elle ne peut pas les comprendre elle n’ y saurait trouver aucune idee, aucune principe, qui soit une source de solution; et par consequent les objections qu’elle aura faite demeurent sans reponse, ou, ce qui est la meme chose, on n’ y repondra que par quelque distinction aussi obscure que la these meme qui aura ete attaque.”

that would be helpful in finding solutions to problems). The second of these claims is his claim that any objections reason makes to non-rational claims is met with no response or with a worthless response. This second claim is of particular significance, since it could be used as the basis for an argument against faith in supernatural mysteries. If it is acceptable to believe in supernatural mysteries on faith, and to dismiss any rational objection to such beliefs, then it is acceptable to postulate any absurd idea, call it a supernatural mystery, and cling to it despite any rational objections that may be raised, thereby creating an epistemology in which virtually any belief is acceptable. Such an epistemology makes reasoning pointless since it gives irrational beliefs the same standing as rational ones, and is impossible to live by, since it gives absurdly impractical beliefs the same standing as practical beliefs.

However, even though supernatural mysteries are incomprehensible to reason, and belief in them is not accepted on the basis of evidence or arguments which would directly support them, it is not the case that supernatural mysteries are impossible to defend, nor that rational objections to such mysteries cannot be answered. Belief in some supernatural mystery cannot be defended through evidence or rational arguments directly supporting it, but such a belief can be defended as a necessary postulate or presupposition, since it is possible to provide rational arguments for why such a belief ought to be accepted despite evidence or arguments in its favour, usually by arguing for the moral or epistemological practicality of said belief. One example of this type of argument is the arguments put forwards in favour of common assumptions which are shared by all but the most radical sceptics. Why do we believe that the future will resemble the past? Because rejecting this belief would enormously epistemologically impractical since it is this foundational belief that allows us to come to conclusions about how the world works, hold to them and live by them, something that we could not do if we did not believe that the world will, to a certain degree, stay constant in the way that it works. No one would care to conduct research in physics if they did not hold to a belief that the laws of nature that they might discover may change from minute to minute, and no one would dare leave their house if they did not hold to a belief that gravity will not suddenly change direction, and cause them to fall into the sky. There is one key difference between supernatural mysteries and these common assumptions and that is the fact that these assumptions are not incomprehensible to reason and there are very few possible rational objections that might be raised to these assumptions. However, there are precedents for similar forms of argumentation to those presented above

being used to argue in favour of belief in supernatural mysteries. Such arguments do take into account the fact that the supernatural mysteries they defend are not fully comprehensible to human reason, and their proponents do not allow for rational objections to these mysteries to go unanswered. Furthermore, if such an argument succeeds in demonstrating that belief in some supernatural mystery is epistemologically practical, then it shall show that Bayle's first claim, that reason cannot find any useful ideas or principles in supernatural mysteries, is false, since it would show that supernatural mysteries can provide reason with ideas and principles that are useful for creating coherent, consistent, and functional epistemological systems.

An example of such argumentation is the presuppositional school of apologetics advanced by Cornelius Van Til. His argument for Christian theism from predication is of particular interest, since it is an example of belief in the entirety of Christian doctrine, together with all of the supernatural mysteries that it encompasses, being defended as a presupposition that must be accepted due to its epistemological practicality, and the supposed epistemological impracticality of competing worldviews. Predication is defined as "the mental or verbal act of attributing or denying a property or characteristic (predicate) to a subject"⁸⁴, Van Til's argument from predication aims to show that, on any worldview other than Christianity, even the simple act of predication, which is vital to any form of reasoning, cannot be done while remaining consistent with one's worldview, as Robert Barret points out "Van Til has argued that there is no ability to meaningfully and intelligibly assign truth values to propositions apart from the biblical worldview, particularly what the Bible declares to be true about the nature of God and the nature of reality."⁸⁵ Van Til's argument goes as follows:

"Premise 1: That there is a possibility of assigning truth values to propositions presupposes that the Bible is entirely correct on all metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical teachings.

Premise 2: There is a possibility of assigning truth values to propositions.

Therefore: The Bible is entirely correct on all metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical teachings."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Bahnsen G. (1988), *Van Til's Apologetic, readings and analytics*, Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed publishing company, 22 n. 7.

⁸⁵ Barret R. (2017), *An Analytical Presentation of Cornelius Van Til's Transcendental Argument from Predication*, Humanities Commons, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 22.

Van Til's transcendental argument is unique among Christian arguments in that it attempts to prove the entirety of the Christian belief system through the power of a single argument. The question of whether or not this argument is sound is not a question that can be examined with sufficient thoroughness in the space of this paper⁸⁷, however, the mere fact that this argument exist shows that it is at least possible for supernatural mysteries or, more specifically, a belief system which includes supernatural mysteries, to provide reason with ideas and principles which are useful to reason. If Van Til's argument is sound then the supernatural truths of the Christian faith can provide reason with a consistent and functional epistemological system. Some may say that one should not use this argument as a counterexample of Bayle's claim since Bayle's statement predates this argument by (more or less) 300 years. To this I would respond that similar attempts to use supernatural beliefs, specifically the belief in God, as a means to defeat scepticism and found a consistent and functional epistemological system go at least as far back as Rene Descartes (who died three years after Pierre Bayle was born) and his famous attempt at defeating scepticism by claiming that God exists and he is no deceiver, and that therefore he can trust the faculties of his mind to come to true conclusions since they are created by God.⁸⁸ Of all the examples of people who thought in such a way, Van Til's argument simply makes for the best counterexample to Bayle's claim since it argues for the epistemological practicality of the entire Christian worldview, including its most incomprehensible mysteries, the same mysteries that Bayle described as being worthless to reason.

Pierre Bayle has three main arguments supporting his claim that faith and reason are in conflict. Firstly, his argument that the supernatural mysteries of the Christian faith violate the laws of logic. Secondly, his argument that the doctrines of Christianity are opposed to rational morality and thirdly, his critique of attempts to create a distinction between that which is against reason and that which is merely above or outside of reason. I have chosen not address the soundness of Bayle's argument regarding the conflict between faith and rational morality, since Bayle argues from the problem of evil („the existence of evil“) and from Calvinist doctrine („original sin, the salvation of a small number of chosen people.“), and it would be impossible to do Bayle's arguments justice without turning this article into a book,

⁸⁷ For more on Van Til and this argument see Van Til C. (1966), *Why I believe in God* (No. 9) Fig-books. Fig. see also Van Til C. (1947), *Common grace*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

⁸⁸ For more on this see Descartes R. (2013), *Meditations on first philosophy*, Broadview Press. Specifically meditations 3 and 4.

possibly a series of books on the problem of evil and the philosophical and theological soundness of Calvinist doctrine. Though I will say that I do very much agree with Bayle that the doctrines of original sin, election and predestination are very much in conflict with rational morality. The answer to the question of whether or not Christian faith is in conflict with rational morality depends heavily on whether or not these doctrines are taken to be necessary components of the Christian religion. Regarding Bayle's other two arguments, I hope that I have shown that, not only are the conclusions of these arguments, i.e., that reason and faith are in conflict, deleterious to any epistemological system that hopes to incorporate reason and faith, but also that these arguments are unsound. A distinction can rationally be made between beliefs which are irrational and beliefs which are merely non-rational and the fact that supernatural mysteries are incomprehensible to reason does not necessarily mean that they violate the laws of logic. Given the fact that Bayle's arguments are unsound, it would appear that given the choice between Bayle's and Komenský's epistemological system the one proposed by Komenský, one where faith and reason have a harmonious relationship, and where faith corrects reason only in cases where reason has clearly stepped out of its territory, is the better choice for anyone wishing to create an epistemological system that includes both faith and reason. I hope that, in comparing, contrasting and analysing these two systems, I have shed at least a few small rays of new light on the way of thinking of both Komenský and Bayle.

Chapter 3: Kant

Introduction:

The role of faith in the epistemology of Immanuel Kant is seen primarily in his moral argument for the existence of God and the immortality of the Human soul. Kant gives the beliefs which result from these two arguments the epistemic status of “Glauben” (faith) rather than “Meinung” (opinion) or “Wisen” (knowledge)⁸⁹. The difference between Meinung, Wisen and Glauben is the ways in which these three forms of beliefs are justified, knowledge has what Kant calls “objective sufficiency”, faith has “subjective sufficiency” and opinions have neither objective and subjective sufficiency. Lawrence Pasternack explains these different forms of belief and the ways in which they are justified as follows “Kant calls the constituents of objective sufficiency “objective grounds”. These include empirical evidence, testimony, rational demonstration, and other epistemic warrants used in support of a claim. These grounds can amass to a level where they become objectively sufficient, thereby providing sufficient warrant for the claim to be held as an item of knowledge; or, as in the case of opinion, the grounds can remain objectively insufficient, though are still salient to and supportive of a claim’s probability of being true...Belief (or faith) has the peculiar structure of lacking objective sufficiency but is, nevertheless, still subjectively sufficient. Its subjective sufficiency is not, however, subjectively caused by our cognition of objectively sufficient epistemic grounds, as is the case with knowledge. Rather, it is because a sustained commitment to duty requires that we also posit a determinate end for our action (viz., the Highest Good) as well as the postulates necessary for the realization of that end (viz., God and Immortality).”⁹⁰ The source of beliefs with the epistemic status of “Glauben” is not revelation, as is the case in the epistemologies of, for example, Komenský or Bayle. The source of these beliefs is a form of reason which Kant calls practical reason or moral reason, a form of reason that is differentiated from theoretical or analytical reason and that needs these two beliefs to be held by the one employing it, in order to be able to function. In this part of the paper I shall examine Kant’s concept of faith, drawing mostly from Kant’s moral argument for belief in God and immortality, and

⁸⁹ For more on Kants three categories of belief see Höwing, T. (2016). “Kant on opinion, belief, and knowledge”, in Höwing, T. (ed.), *The Highest Good in Kant’s Philosophy*, Berlin: De Gruyter, p. 201-222.

⁹⁰ Pasternack, L. (2014), “Kant on opinion: Assent, hypothesis, and the norms of general applied logic” *Kant-Studien*, 105(1), 41-82, p. 3.

comparing the role of faith in Kant's epistemology to the role of faith in the epistemology of Komenský.

Subchapter 1: Kant on faith and the postulates of practical reason.

Before comparing Komenský and Kant, it is important to define some basic terms from Kant's vocabulary before explaining exactly how Kant's argues in favour of belief in God and immortality. The first thing that must be defined is the difference between the two ways that, according to Kant, reason is applied, between what Kant calls "Theoretical" reason and what Kant calls "practical or "moral" reason. Pauline Kleingeld explains this distinction as follows, "Theoretical reason strives for the systematic unity of knowledge and practical reason for the systematic unity of our maxims for action."⁹¹ Theoretical reason, therefore, is reason employed to answer analytical questions about quantity and number as well as questions regarding the truth or falsehood of empirical or metaphysical claims. Practical reason is reason employed to find the maxims by which we ought to live, to order these maxims in such a way that they are not contradictory and that they are possible to live by and to help one to achieve the highest good (summum bonum). Regarding the highest good, Roe Fremstedal explains the highest good as follows, "The highest good represents the final overcoming of moral evil and the unification of virtue and happiness, morality and prudence, in which priority is given to morality so that virtue leads to happiness. Finally, the highest good involves unifying all moral agents in an ethical commonwealth or a kingdom of God."⁹² In other words, on the level of individuals, the highest good is a state of being where one is both virtuous and happy, with one's virtue leading immediately to one's happiness. On the level of societies the highest good is the creation of an "ethical commonwealth", a society where all of its members are both virtuous and happy and which ensures that the happiness of its members is proportional to their virtue. The topic of the highest good brings us to another key term in Kant's moral thinking, that being the antinomy of practical reason. This antinomy is a problem that arises from the fact that, although all human beings have a moral duty to seek and promote the highest good, it appears that the highest good is an unachievable goal in our world, since there is nothing about the moral law, or about the act of following the moral law, that naturally leads to happiness, in fact following the moral law may lead to

⁹¹ Kleingeld, P. (1998), "Kant on the unity of theoretical and practical reason", *The review of metaphysics*, 52(2), 311-339, p. 4.

⁹² Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*. Springer, p. 94.

great unhappiness, as history's great list of martyrs who died gruesome deaths for just causes seems to demonstrate. Roe Fremstedal explains the antinomy of practical reason as follows: "Kant argues that we are obligated to promote the highest good by being virtuous. Virtue does not bring about happiness in the world [but] the highest good requires that happiness be given according to virtue... Undermining one of the highest good's elements is sufficient for undermining the highest good altogether. Since it is problematic to realize all the different elements of the highest good, the highest good itself seems impossible, and promoting it therefore seems meaningless. This very problem threatens to undermine morality, according to Kant. In the second *critique*, Kant describes it as the *antinomy of practical reason*, an antinomy wherein the highest good appears *practically necessary yet theoretically impossible* simultaneously."⁹³ Kant's moral argument for belief in God and immortality, is essentially an attempt to resolve this antinomy.

With the basic terms defined, let us move on to Kant's argument for belief in God and immortality. The argument for belief in God and immortality is put forward as a solution to the antinomy of practical reason, in other words, it argues that belief in God and immortality allow us to believe that the highest good, the final goal of practical reason, is an achievable goal and that it is not unreasonable to say that it is the moral duty of each person to seek and promote the highest good. The basic idea of this argument is as follows:

Premise 1: all people have a moral duty to promote the highest good.

Premise 2: if the highest good is not possible then people cannot have a moral duty to promote it (*nemo potest ultra obligatur* no one has the moral right to demand the impossible).

Premise 3: We cannot believe that the highest good is possible if we do not accept, as postulates, the belief that God exists and that the soul is immortal.

Conclusion: The belief that God exists and the belief that the soul is immortal must be accepted as postulates.

Kant himself explains the argument as follows:

"The realization of the summum bonum in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. But in this will the perfect accordance of the mind with the moral law is the supreme condition of the summum bonum. This then must be possible, as well as its object, since it

⁹³ Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*. Springer, p. 118.

is contained in the command to promote the latter. Now, the perfect accordance with the moral law is holiness, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence. Since, nevertheless, it is required as practically necessary, it can only be found in a progress in infinitum towards that perfect accordance, and on the principles of pure practical reason it is necessary to assume such a practical progress as the real object of our will. Now, this endless progress is only possible on the supposition of an endless duration of the existence and personality of the same rational being...In the foregoing analysis the moral law led to a practical problem which is prescribed by pure reason alone, without the aid of any sensible motives, namely, that of the necessary completeness of the first and principle element of the summum bonum viz. morality; and, as this can be perfectly solved only in eternity, to the postulate of immortality. The same law must also lead us to affirm the possibility of the second element of the summum bonum, viz. happiness proportioned to that morality and this on grounds as disinterested as before, and solely from impartial reason; that is, it must lead to the supposition of the existence of a cause adequate to this effect; in other words, it must postulate the existence of God, as the necessary condition of the possibility of the summum bonum...There is not the least ground...in the moral law for a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to the world as a part of it...nevertheless, in the practical problem of pure reason i.e. the necessary pursuit of the summum bonum, such a connection is postulated as necessary: we ought to endeavour to promote the summum bonum, which, therefore must be possible. Accordingly, the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature itself and containing the principle of this connection namely, of the exact harmony of happiness with morality, is also postulated...The summum bonum is possible in the world only on the supposition of a supreme being having a causality corresponding to moral character. Now a being that is capable of acting on the conception of laws is an intelligence (a rational being), and the causality of such a being according to this conception of laws is his will; therefore the supreme cause of nature, which must be presupposed as a condition of the summum bonum is a being which is the cause of nature by intelligence and will, consequently its author, that is God. ”⁹⁴

Here Kant explains why it is that the highest good is impossible without the postulates of God and immortality. According to Kant, immortality must be

⁹⁴ Kant, I. (2002). *Critique of practical reason*, pp. 110-111.

postulated because holiness, i.e. perfect accordance of the mind with the moral law is a necessary component of the highest good and since this is not something that is possible for human beings to achieve at any given point in their existence, this component of the highest good can only be seen as achievable if achieving holiness is understood not as achieving perfect accordance of the mind with the moral law at some given point in our existence but as an infinite progress towards this perfect accordance, a progress that is only possible if the soul is immortal and can eternally continue its progress towards perfect accordance with the moral law after the body has died. In the case of God, it is necessary to postulate God because the highest good cannot be achieved if there is not some agent that can make sure that people receive happiness that is proportional to their degree of virtue and “only an omniscient moral being can know whether an individual truly is virtuous, and what precise reward she deserves. And only an omnipotent being is capable of organizing the whole of nature to accord with morality. It should also be added that only a morally perfect being would be interested in organizing nature in such a way as to give human beings happiness that is perfectly proportionate to their virtue. A morally imperfect being would express its moral imperfection in some way that would result in the proportion of virtue and happiness being less than perfect. In essence, God and immortality must be postulated because the highest good, the ultimate end of practical reason, must be an achievable end since all human beings have a moral duty to promote and strive for it, and the highest good can only be said to be an achievable end if God exists and the human soul is immortal.

Subchapter 2: Komenský and Kant.

Comparing the place of faith in the epistemologies of Kant and Komenský highlights an important question (perhaps even the most important question of all) when considering faith as an epistemological principle i.e. what does the word “faith” even mean? So far, in this paper, we have considered faith as a form of trust, whether that be trust in the authority of God, and in the scriptures which are his word (as is the case with Komenský’s concept of Kant) or trust in the testimony of an eyewitness. In Kant’s concept of faith, the notion of trust is not even mentioned, instead, the concept that is of the highest importance in Kant’s notion of faith is duty. The one reason that is given for why the postulates of practical reason ought to be accepted is that, should God not exist and the soul be mortal, a moral duty which is shared by all human beings would have to be considered to be an impossible task, making it meaningless to attempt to do said duty. This emphasis on duty, rather than trust in divine revelation, points to a clear difference between

Kant and Komenský, but the differences do not end there. Though Komenský clearly expresses his desire for a harmonious relationship between faith and reason, he still creates a clear distinction between the two principles and their respective domains. For Kant, faith and reason are so closely related that it is hard to tell where one ends and the other begins, in fact, in the case of Kant “faith” might be something of a misnomer when describing the epistemic status of the postulates of practical reason, since they are, as the name suggests, the products of reason. Though they are produced by practical, or moral, reason rather than theoretical reason their source is nevertheless, still reason. The distinction between theoretical and practical reason brings us to one (rather loose) similarity between Komenský and Kant, specifically to the Kantian idea of the primacy of practical reason. Kant explains the primacy of practical reason as follows:

“By primacy between two or more things connected by reason, I understand the prerogative, belonging to one of being the first determining principle in the connection with all the rest. In a narrower practical sense, it means the prerogative of the interest of one in so far as the interest of the other is subordinated to it, while it is not postponed to any other...If practical reason could not assume or think as given anything further than what speculative reason of itself could offer from its own insight, the later would have the primacy. But supposing that it had of itself original a priori principles with which certain theoretical positions were inseparably connected while these were withdrawn from any possible insight of speculative reason (which, however, they must not contradict); then the question is, which interest is the superior? Whether speculative reason which knows nothing of all that the practical offers for its acceptance, should take up these propositions and (although they transcend it) try to unite them to its own concepts as a foreign possession handed over to it or whether it is justified in obstinately following its own separate interest... if pure reason of itself can be practical and is actually so, as the consciousness of the moral law proves, then it is still one and the same reason which, whether in a theoretical or a practical point of view, judges according to a priori principles, and then it is clear that although it is in the first point of view incompetent to establish certain propositions positively, which, however, do not contradict it, then, as soon as these propositions are inseparably attached to the practical interest of pure reason, it must accept them, though they be as something offered to it from a foreign source, something that has not grown on its own ground, and yet is sufficiently authenticated; and it must try to compare and

connect them with everything that it has in its power as speculative reason.”⁹⁵

In essence, the concept of the primacy of practical reason serves as a justification for accepting postulates which would not pass the objective scrutiny of theoretical reason, in the way that any belief that can be considered knowledge must, but are necessary for the functioning of practical reason. Practical reason therefore has primacy in the sense that the beliefs that it leads to ought to be accepted even in the case that theoretical reason demands that these beliefs be rejected due to a lack of evidence or rational justification. It could be said that in doing so, practical reason corrects theoretical reason in a similar way that Komenský said that faith ought to correct reason, although in the case of Kant, practical reason does not correct theoretical reason when theoretical reason steps out of its domain, instead it corrects theoretical reason, when theoretical reason would dismiss as unjustified any belief which is indispensable to the functioning of practical reason. It could be said that, in Komenský's epistemology, faith has primacy over reason, because faith may correct reason but not vice versa and in Kant's epistemology, practical reason has primacy over theoretical reason because practical reason may bring us to accept postulates which are not acceptable to theoretical reason but not vice versa.

It could be said that the fundamental difference between Komenský and Kant when it comes to faith is that Komenský's concept of faith has a primarily theological nature. It is the theological virtue with which all Christians are acquainted. The trust in God and in all of his promises and salvific works. In Kant faith has a far more practical nature, not only practical in the Kantian sense (meaning moral) but practical as in instrumental. Faith beliefs are held not because of some personal relationship with God, or because of stubborn religious zeal, they are held because they serve a function, that function being the preservation of the meaningfulness of our striving to lead moral lives. It is this difference that I would like to focus on when it comes to comparing faith in Komenský to faith in Kant, the distinction between faith as something personal i.e. trust in a person, and faith as something functional.

The fact that, in Komenský, faith is somewhat akin to trust in witness testimony is made evident in what Komenský says in *Physicae synopsis*, „we are indebted to the grace of God, that he hath by his Word revealed unto us even some secrets which concern us to know.“ Komenský believes what God

⁹⁵ Kant, I. (2002). *Critique of practical reason*, pp. 98-99.

has revealed and he does so because God is a trustworthy witness. The function of these beliefs, which is to say, ways in which they might lead to other true beliefs or ways in which that they might make reasoning or morality possible or meaningful, is not even mentioned⁹⁶, not in *Physicae synopsis* nor anywhere else in Komenský's works. In the case of Kant it is the precise opposite, there is no mention of the idea that faith ought to be based on some personal connection in *A critique of practical reason* and in another one of his works, specifically *Dreams of a spirit seer*⁹⁷ Kant is highly critical of the supernatural beliefs of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg and over the course of his critique he calls into question the belief of others in the authenticity of Swedenborg's visions based on the testimony of others⁹⁸

⁹⁶ In the appendix to some editions of *Physicae synopsis*, Komenský mentions "diseases of the soul" which can be cured through correct religious belief and practice, and this could be seen as a way in which Komenský sees faith as something functional. (One such edition is the 1651 English translation Comenius, J. A. (1651) *Naturall philosophie reformed by divine light or, a synopsis of physicks*, page unnumbered) However, I would argue that this is not an example of Komenský viewing faith as functional, since the existence of these diseases of the soul is never used as an argument for accepting the doctrines of the Christian religion, and therefore faith is not presented as a principle that we ought to cling to because it serves some function. I would instead argue that this is another example of Komenský presenting faith as something personal between God and the believer, as beliefs that arise as the result of a relationship between the Christian and God and the trust that is an inextricable part of that relationship. The diseases of the soul are the result of that relationship becoming warped in some way, as a result of the believer neglecting the relationship or as a result of the believer's trust in God being incomplete. This is made clear in the fact that two of the diseases of the soul which are named by Komenský are „the forgetfulness of God“ (i.e. turning away from a relationship with God in favour of lesser, worldly matters) and „despair of mercy“ (i.e. failing to trust in God's promise that the salvation and mercy are available to all who are willing to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.)

⁹⁷ Kant, I., Goerwitz, E. F., & Sewall, F. (1900). *Dreams of a Spirit-seer: Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*. S. Sonnenschein.

⁹⁸ Delacroix, H. (1904), "Kant et Swedenborg", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 12(3), 559-578, p.562 „When [Kant] learned the story of Swedenborg and queen Ulrique, it is the value of testimony, and not the miraculous character of the event that caught his attention, for in the case of stories of miracles he was inclined to disbelieve them, not because he considered them impossible (what do we know about the nature of a spirit?) but because they lack proof, because they are unintelligible and useless, because they have a number of signs of deception and of excessive credulity. [Quand il apprit l'histoire de Swedenborg avec la reine Ulrique, c'est la valeur des témoignages et non le caractère merveilleux de l'événement qui pouvait seule fixer son attention; car en fait d'histoires merveilleuses, il inclinait par tempérament à la négation, non qu'il les estimât impossibles (que savons-nous de la nature d'un esprit?), mais parce qu'elles manquent de preuves, parce qu'elles sont inintelligibles et inutiles, parce qu'elles présentent un grand nombre de traces d'impostures et d'excessive crédulité.]

and the beliefs of Swedenborg himself⁹⁹ which were based on his alleged interactions with angels, demons and various spirits in his visions and on his personal relationship with and Jesus Christ himself who, according to Swedenborg, directly inspired him to write *The Heavenly Doctrine*, tasked him with reforming Christianity, and gave him the ability to travel to both heaven and hell at his leisure. In Kant's critique of Swedenborg Kant's disdain for faith based on testimony, revelation and perceived personal relationships with the divine is made clear. For Kant, an acceptable form of faith is not based on some interpersonal relationship, whether that be with a human witness or a deity, but is instead based on practical necessity. The postulates of practical reason are believed because they must be believed, because they are necessary. The highest good is the final end of practical reason, striving towards it is the only purpose of human morality and if the highest good is impossible to achieve then morality has no purpose and practicing it is therefore meaningless. Furthermore, the possibility of achieving the highest

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 565 [According to Kant] what gives miraculous stories their power is the fact that they all speak to a very strong tendency of the human spirit, all the more since they are not supported by factual arguments. Hope for the future, desire for the life to come, makes us voluntarily accept these stories of spirits, or at least prevents us from resolutely refusing to believe all of them, even if we could not restrain ourselves from casting doubt on each particular one. In this way is explained the frequent return and the constant and passionate adoption of such stories, through an essential disposition of human nature...therefore doctrine must be examined together with the facts. This examination will show that the doctrine of spirits, pneumatology, is nothing more than an immense fiction, an irrational caprice of reason; it is unsurprising that it makes certain phenomena intelligible, whether they are real or imagined; it is easy to make sense of everything if one invents laws and activities at will. Critique annihilates doctrine; its beliefs, since they refuse to follow the ordinary laws of the mind and since they therefore present nothing but disorder in the witness of the senses, we cannot accept them; these disordered experiences cannot be used to found any empirical law. [Ce qui fait leur force c'est qu'elles répondent toutes à une tendance profonde de l'âme humaine, plus encore qu'elles ne reposent sur des arguments de fait. L'espérance du futur, le désir de la vie à venir, nous fait croire volontiers les histoires d'esprits ou du moins nous empêche de leur dénier résolument toute croyance, dans l'ensemble, alors même que nous ne pourrions nous retenir de les révoquer en doute chacune en particulier. Ainsi se trouvent expliqués par une disposition essentielle de la nature humaine le retour si fréquent, et l'adoption constante et passionnée de récits de ce genre...Il faut donc examiner la doctrine en même temps que les faits. Cet examen montrera que la doctrine des esprits, la pneumatologie n'est qu'une immense fiction, un caprice irraisonné de la raison; il n'y a point à s'étonner qu'elle rende intelligibles certains phénomènes vrais ou prétendus : on peut aisément rendre raison de tout quand on suppose à volonté des activités et des lois. La critique réduit à néant la doctrine : quant aux faits, comme ils ne se laissent pas ramener aux lois ordinaires de l'esprit, et qu'ils ne manifestent par conséquent qu'un désordre dans le témoignage des sens, on n'a pas le droit de les admettre; ces expériences désordonnées ne peuvent servir à fonder une loi de l'expérience]

good is what makes human morality rational, since it is not rational to follow a moral law which does not always lead to happiness and often leads to misery. Therefore, if the postulates of practical reason are not accepted, human morality becomes both irrational and meaningless, this is a conclusion which must be avoided since it leads to absurdity within practical reason, (which shows that promoting the highest good is a moral duty while also showing that an impossible action cannot be a moral duty) while also leading to absurdity in the lives of all human beings since, in the absence of a rational and meaningful moral law, there is no rational foundation for how one ought to live one's life and what one ought and ought not do. This is what makes belief in the postulates of practical reason necessary, and why it is irrelevant whether or not these beliefs meet the criteria for beliefs that are acceptable to theoretical reason and equally irrelevant whether or not one has a perceived relationship with the divine, or some personal experience of the afterlife (e.g. Swedenborg). These beliefs are accepted because they are not only useful to practical reason, but desperately needed by it.

The strong and weak points of these two approaches, and the question of whether Kant's approach or Komenský's approach is the best approach to faith, or if the best approach is to be found somewhere in middle between these two opposing views, are all topics for the critical part of this paper. For now, I hope to have shown the key similarities and (mostly) differences between these two views on faith.

Chapter 4: Kierkegaard

In the entirety of the history of western philosophy, there is perhaps no other philosopher more closely associated with the concept of faith than Kierkegaard. As has been mentioned earlier, Kierkegaard saw faith as a necessary form of self-defense against despair, which, taken in isolation, would seem to indicate that he saw faith as something functional, rather than as a personal with, and a trust in God. However, as I hope to show in this part of the paper, the faith of Kierkegaard may serve a necessary function but it is no less personal than the faith described by Komenský. Furthermore, although I will not be considering the soundness of Kierkegaard's arguments by themselves, I hope to show that there is some merit to the basic principle upon which the faith of Kierkegaard stands, namely, the idea that the need for self defense against despair is a sufficient reason for accepting a belief.

When considering Kierkegaard's idea of faith it is important to consider what Kierkegaard says when speaking as his various pseudonyms, since each

pseudonym has something different, though not necessarily contradictory to say on this subject, as Merold Westphal points out “Different pseudonyms give us different accounts. Anti-Climacus describes faith as the opposite of despair and gives the following formula for faith: “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself the self rests transparently in the power that established it.” For Christian faith, which is Kierkegaard’s concern, this power is the Christian God, and what is at issue is relational and not epistemic, at least not obviously or primarily epistemic. It is a matter of being rightly related to oneself and to God. The suggestion is that these two relations are interdependent, but there is no suggestion that knowledge in some philosophically ideal sense is either necessary or even helpful to such faith. Johannes Climacus defines truth as subjectivity this way: “An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing individual.” Then he adds that “the definition of truth stated above is a paraphrasing of faith. Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty.”¹⁰⁰ Westphal elaborates further on the relational nature of Kierkegaard’s concept of faith stating that “Of course, one can reflect on the epistemic status of the beliefs ingredient in faith, but one must remember two things. First, it would be more than a little weird to assume that these beliefs can or should have the form of our beliefs in mathematics, natural science, or speculative metaphysics. Prima facie our knowledge of other human persons would provide the best analogy and clue, and it does not have these forms. Second, to engage in distanced reflection is to abstract from the fullness of faith. We need to avoid confusing the abstract, doxastic dimension of faith with its core concern of being rightly related to a personal God and thereby to oneself. The demons have the right, monotheistic metaphysics, we are told (James 2:19), but they do not have faith.” Here Westphal (unintentionally) highlights two ways in which Kierkegaard’s concept of faith departs from Komenský’s concept of faith, the first of these being the idea that faith beliefs ought not have the form of our beliefs in mathematics, natural science and speculative metaphysics and the second being the idea that the core concern of faith is having the correct relationship with God.. The first of these two differences is evident in the fact that, in the 11th chapter of the *panorthosia*, Komenský identifies faith-beliefs as knowledge and later in the same chapter he says the following “what is the most certain is that which is apodictic, that which is demonstrable to the eye... from this day forward let

¹⁰⁰ Westphal, M. (2011), “Kierkegaard on faith, reason, and passion”, *Faith and Philosophy*, 28(1), 82-92, p. 83.

each person know only to the extent that they can demonstrate, in order that knowledge immediately follows demonstration, and action follows knowledge.”¹⁰¹ Beliefs that are arrived at through the correctly applied sense-perception, reason or faith in the bible are all identified as knowledge and all knowledge has the same form, it is apodictic, it has been demonstrated and can be held with certainty, regardless of whether its subject is a mathematical principle, a scientific fact or some supernatural truth contained in the bible. The second difference is evident in the fact that, according to Komenský, having the correct relationship with God may be the definition of faith, since the correct relationship with God, namely a relationship of trust, is required to accept the supernatural truths contained in the bible, the core concern of faith is very much doxastic, in that the core concern of faith is to provide human beings with knowledge of supernatural truths, thereby allowing the Pansophia to be complete. In Kierkegaard, having the correct relationship with God and with oneself is both the definition of faith and its purpose (though, for Kierkegaard faith also serves the purpose of providing human beings with a means to defend themselves against despair, more on this later) faith in Kierkegaard does not serve the purpose of providing human beings with beliefs, correct or incorrect, though certain beliefs about the existence and nature of God are necessary for faith to exist, these beliefs are not the result of faith nor is it the purpose of faith to provide one with these beliefs.

Although Kierkegaard, whether he is speaking as Climacus or anti-Climacus, places a heavy emphasis on the relational aspect of faith, similarly to Komenský, but one important difference to point out between the view of Anti-Climacus and that of Komenský is that Komenský makes it very clear that faith and knowledge (in a „philosophically ideal sense“) are very closely connected, something that is made clear in the fact that Komenský calls faith a “principle that leads to knowledge” and states repeatedly that beliefs that are held as a result of faith in the bible can be held with certainty, since the bible was written by God and God neither lies nor makes mistakes. In the case of Anti-Climacus’ account of faith, it seems that having the right kind of relationship with God is what faith is, the degree of certainty with which one believes in the existence of God and the truth of his word and his promises seems to be irrelevant to whether or not one has faith (as long as one

¹⁰¹ Comenius J.A., *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 283: “Certiora autem quae apodictica, quae ad oculum demonstrabilia...Ex hoc nunc tantum quisque sciat se scire quantum potest demonstrare: demonstrare autem sic ut demonstrationem sequatur mox scientia, scientiam opus.”

believes in these things, in one sense or another, it is hard to imagine having a relationship with a God that one does not believe exists). In short, the difference between the faith of Anti-Climacus and the faith of Komenský is the fact that for Komenský, a very important aspect of faith is the fact that our relationship with God leads not only to our salvation but also to certain knowledge whereas for Anti-Climacus faith is a relationship with God in which certainty, uncertainty and other epistemic notions play no role. Although Kierkegaard gives a different definition of faith when writing as Johannes Climacus, the definition that he gives makes this difference even more brazen in the fact that Climacus explicitly states that one of the defining characteristics of faith is uncertainty, thereby directly contradicting Komenský's claim that faith is one of the three paths that lead to beliefs that can be held with certainty.

All of the differences that I have outlined can be explained as differences in perspective which then lead to differences in goals and priorities. Komenský's effort to reform philosophy, which has already been pointed out many times in this paper thus far, are motivated by the fact that Komenský sees a great deal of problems in the philosophy of his time, but he believes that these problems can be solved and that he has the way to solve them, that he has a way to repair what he sees as the broken ways of thinking present in the philosophy of his time. Komenský sees a similar brokenness in most if not all aspects of human life, which is evident in the fact that Komenský's magnum opus, *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, contains chapters on the emendation of not only philosophy but also religion, politics, language and many other things, but the fact that Komenský writes about how these things may be emended testifies to his belief that these things can be emended and that these things can be brought from brokenness to perfection. For Kierkegaard the human condition which leads to uncertainty, struggle and moral despair is irreparable and impossible to perfect, it can only be coped with and defended against. Perfect apodictic knowledge of supernatural things is unattainable but the need to defend ourselves against despair allows us to accept uncertainty and cling to uncertain faith-beliefs with fervour, and even to justify ourselves in doing so. This is made clear in what Kierkegaard has to say on despair as an inevitable part of the human condition, as J. Buttler points out "despair is defined by Kierkegaard as "a misrelation" one which confirms the failure of any final mediation and, therefore, signals the decisive limit to the comprehensive claims of the philosophy of reflection. Despair not only disrupts that subject's efforts to become at home with itself in the world, but it confirms the fundamental impossibility of ever achieving

the self's sense of belonging to its world."¹⁰² The fact that it is fundamentally impossible for the self to become at home with itself in the world, implies that there is a brokenness in the world, or in the self, that cannot be repaired by human means. If this brokenness were reparable by human means then it could not be said that it is fundamentally impossible for the self to become at home with itself in the world. This is a problem that no amount of knowledge can solve, which explains, to a certain extent, why the priorities of Komenský and Kierkegaard vary so greatly, where Komenský sees the knowledge that is gained from the three books of God as a way that man might become more like God, and that in doing so he might eliminate many of the problems that plagued Komenský's era,¹⁰³ Kierkegaard, on the other hand, sees a problem that cannot be solved, the self cannot feel at home with itself in the world because „the world itself [is] a place where virtue typically leads to unhappiness, mocking and punishment. “ and in this world „there is no reward to expect, only suffering to endure.“ It leaves the self with the choice of being good, and enduring suffering, or being evil and enduring guilt, a state of affairs that leads inevitably to despair. It is impossible to change this state of affairs through the acquisition of knowledge or true beliefs but it is possible to have hope, and this hope is provided by faith, as Roe Fremstadal states “Kierkegaard maintains that an eternal blessedness or unblessedness is decided in time by a relation to something historical, despite everything, this world is supposed to make it possible to become a good person (that is, a Christian), something that involves anticipating the highest good by believing in, and hoping for, good. But instead of hoping for good in this world, Kierkegaard appears to hope for the afterlife.”¹⁰⁴ It is for this reason that Kierkegaard does mention knowledge or true beliefs as the goals of faith, the goal of faith is not to provide knowledge of supernatural truths or to bring mankind to omniscience or to repair the brokenness that is present in the world and in

¹⁰² Butler, J. (2003), “Kierkegaard's speculative despair”, in K. Higgins and R. C. Solomon (eds.), *Routledge History of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, The Age of German Idealism, p.365.

¹⁰³ Comenius J.A., *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica*, tomus 2, p. 280 “ut quemadmodum sapientia Dei una existens videt et disponit omnia ita sapientia humana (divinae ectypa) una fit diversas in scientias, artes, facultates indistracta. Nempe sicut mens nostra aeternae mentis imago est, ita etiam lux ilius hujus lucis ut imago fit.” (here Komenský describes one way how his perfect philosophy can make man more like God, see the *Panorthosia* of Komenský's *De rerum humanarum emendatione consultatio catholica* for the various ways in which, according to Komenský, the problems of the world might be solved by making man more like God).

¹⁰⁴ Fremstadal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good*, p. 124.

human nature but to provide one with hope in the face of the despair that arises in the human mind faced with this brokenness.

There is still one question that remains to be answered with regards to Kierkegaard's concept of faith. Since it has been stated that there are beliefs (specifically the beliefs that God exists and that he is the God of Christian revelation) which are prerequisites for faith we must ask ourselves how, if at all, does Kierkegaard justify these beliefs? It is at this point that we reach the idea of despair being used as a justification for beliefs, as another way that beliefs might be justified on a practical basis. Kierkegaard outlines the way that he believes that belief in God ought to be justified in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

“God is indeed a postulate, but not in the loose sense in which it is ordinarily taken. Instead, it becomes clear that this is the only way an existing person enters into a relationship with God: when the dialectical contradiction brings passion to despair and assists him in grasping God with “the category of despair” (faith), so that the postulate, far from being arbitrary, is in fact necessary defence, self defence; in this way God is not a postulate, but the existing persons postulation of God is – a necessity.”¹⁰⁵

For Kierkegaard, God is a postulate, an assumption that is not supported by empirical evidence or rational argument in the way that any belief that can be called knowledge is, but it is distinct from irrational or arbitrary beliefs in that it has subjective, practical justification as necessary self defence against despair. In order to understand Kierkegaard's argument here it is important to understand what Kierkegaard means by despair and why he believes that, without faith, it is impossible to avoid despair. Kierkegaard describes several kinds of despair, each one of them distinct from the others in the fact that it is caused by a different aspect of the human condition. Although Kierkegaard describes many types of despair in his works¹⁰⁶, the two forms of despair that are relevant here are what I chose to call moral despair and existential despair. Roe Fremstedal describes moral despair as follows “Kierkegaard argues that human sinfulness and guilt render our natural capabilities completely inadequate to fulfilling the ethical task. We have seen that this has the consequence that nobody can avoid “the despair of necessity”¹⁰⁷ and

¹⁰⁵ Kierkegaard, S. (2019), *Concluding unscientific postscript*,. transl. by Swenson D. F. , Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 238.

¹⁰⁶ For more on this see Theunissen, M. (2016), *Kierkegaard's concept of despair*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹⁰⁷ The despair of necessity is what Kierkegaard calls despair that results from a lack of possibility, in this case a lack of the possibility of breaking with an evil past, wiping away

“the despair of finitude”¹⁰⁸ types of despair that take the form of an inability to break with an evil past. Thus Kierkegaard’s point is simply that the existence of evil necessitates divine grace and forgiveness.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, moral despair is the despair of a man who is striving to be morally good, only to realise that he can never be good enough. No amount of good deeds can wipe away his guilt and no amount of effort can give him a life that is truly free of sin. In this case, despair results from the fact that any man who strives to be good knows that he has a duty to be good, but ultimately realises that it is beyond his abilities for him to do his duty. What I call existential despair is described by Kierkegaard in *fear and trembling*

“If human being did not have eternal consciousness, if underlying everything there were only a wild fermenting power that writhing in dark passions produced everything, if a vast never appeased emptiness hid beneath everything what would life be then but despair? If such were the situation, if there were no sacred bond that knit humankind together, if one generation emerged after another like forest foliage...how empty and devoid of consolation would life be! But precisely for that reason it is not so.”¹¹⁰

This passage requires some interpretation but, in short, It describes a form of despair that is the result of disbelief in God and the afterlife, a despair that comes from the realisation that everything is meaningless, that the universe is the product of a power that is completely indifferent to everything inside the universe, that the fate of each human being is to simply die and be replaced by the next generation (like forest foliage) ultimately being forgotten with the universe continuing as though they had never existed in the first place.

The reason why Kierkegaard believes that despair is a sufficient reason for accepting belief in the Christian God as a postulate is described by Roe Fremstedal, who describes Kierkegaard’s argument for accepting this belief

guilt and living a good life. For more on the way that Kierkegaard classifies the various kinds of despair see Kierkegaard, S., & Lowrie, W. (1946), *The sickness unto death*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Chapter 3, p. 216.

¹⁰⁸ Despair of finitude is a form of despair which, according to Kierkegaard, is the result of seeing the world as it truly is, as a world that rewards virtue with suffering, and as a result of this losing one’s self becoming „an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd“. Such a man loses his self in order to recreate himself in the world’s image, acting not in ways that are true to his self but in ways that allow him to exist and function comfortably in the world.

¹⁰⁹ Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*. Springer. p. 124.

¹¹⁰ Kierkegaard, S. (2021), *Fear and trembling: a new translation*, Liveright Publishing, p. 38.

as a “*reductio ad absurdum*” stating that “Kierkegaard argues that denying [the argument’s] conclusion involves despair. However, avoiding despair is not only desirable but possibly obligatory since despair involves inconsistency and threatens to undermine moral agency.”¹¹¹ There are various ways in which despair might involve inconsistency. The existential despair that is the immediate result of the belief that the universe is a bleak and uncaring void (a vast, never appeased emptiness) and that all human effort, regardless of its nature or intention, is ultimately meaningless, leads to inconsistency in the fact that any person who does not immediately commit suicide upon adopting such a belief must live their life as though their actions were meaningful, as though they have reasons for the actions that they are taking (since any action that is taken must have some justification, otherwise the person performing the action would not waste energy on performing a task that they have no reason to perform). This means that they must live in a way that is inconsistent with their belief. In the case of moral despair, the despair that comes from the inability to overcome guilt and the inability to be virtuous and avoid suffering at the same time, the inconsistency is found in the fact that this despair reflects the fact that there are things that, on the one hand, every human being must do, but on the other hand, no human being is capable of doing. This state of affairs leaves one with two options, to accept moral nihilism thereby getting rid of the impossible duty to live a good life and to seek the remission of guilt, or to live in a way that is inconsistent with one’s beliefs, to continue in striving to fulfil one’s duty despite knowing full well that doing so is impossible. There is however, one way that one might escape both existential and moral despair, and that is through Christian faith. If Christianity is true, then existential despair is eliminated because the universe is not the product of some utterly indifferent force, but the creation of a loving God. The ultimate fate of human beings is not to die and be replaced and forgotten, all will exist for eternity and all may hope for everlasting bliss. Moral despair is also eliminated since the God of Christianity offers to wipe away all sin and guilt through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, thereby allowing any person to find forgiveness for any sins they might have committed in the past and to achieve moral purity even if a sinless life is beyond their ability as mere human beings.

One might ask if avoiding despair is a sufficient justification for accepting beliefs for which there exists no empirical evidence or rational argument, I

¹¹¹ Fremstedal, R. (2014). *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest Good: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*. Springer, p. 125.

would argue that accepting a belief in order to avoid despair and all of the inconsistency that it entails does not differ greatly from other beliefs which are held by virtually everyone and which are held in order to avoid absurdity and inconsistency despite being unsupported by evidence or argument. One such belief that has already been discussed in the chapter on Bayle is the belief that the future will resemble the past (that gravity will work the same way tomorrow as it worked today, that the solid ground beneath my feet will still be solid in ten minutes etc.). A belief that is not, and cannot be, justified through evidence or argument but is nevertheless accepted by everyone save for the most extreme sceptics simply because a refusal to accept this belief makes predicting anything completely impossible and thereby makes it impossible to live our lives in a way that has any sort of consistency with what we believe. If despair causes a similar sort of inconsistency, if it makes it impossible to live our lives in a way that is consistent with the beliefs that are the cause of despair, then it could be said that it is acceptable to accept certain beliefs as a means of self-defense against despair. If despair leads to such inconsistency, then self-defence against despair truly is necessary. The question is whether or not despair truly does lead to such inconsistency in our lives, if the consequences of despair can truly be compared to the results of refusing to believe that the future will resemble the past.

I shall return to this final question in the critical part of this paper, for now, I hope to have shown where Komenský's and Kierkegaard's concepts of faith meet and where they depart from each other, as well as the reasons for both their similarities and differences. The greatest point of departure between the two is undoubtedly Kierkegaard's insistence on accepting uncertainty, contrasted with Komenský's equally ardent insistence that all knowledge must be demonstrated to a point where it can be held with certainty, and that beliefs held on faith are a form of knowledge, a difference that would most likely lead to Komenský himself rejecting any attempts to justify faith in the bible in a Kierkegaardian manner.

Chapter 5: Plantinga

Subchapter 1: Reformed epistemology

Reformed epistemology is an epistemological system invented by Alvin Plantinga and promoted by many contemporary protestant thinkers, could be seen as a contemporary product of the tradition of protestant Christian philosophy which is represented by Bayle, Kant, Kierkegaard and even Komenský himself. The defining trait of reformed epistemology are the claim that natural, non-inferential beliefs that are produced by a cognitive faculty are properly basic meaning that they ought to be accepted as true even in the absence of evidence or argument, at least until evidence or arguments are presented that definitively refute such beliefs. Reformed epistemologists go on to claim that religious beliefs, such as Christian beliefs about the existence and nature of God, are natural, non-inferential and are produced by a cognitive faculty which they refer to as the *sensus divinitatis* and that therefore such beliefs are properly basic and ought to be accepted as true. In this chapter, I shall strive not only to point out similarities and differences between the way that Komenský and Plantinga approach faith, but will also try to synthesise these two systems together and examine the idea of using reformed epistemology as a means of justifying the inclusion of faith in Komenský's ideal philosophical system as a principle that leads to knowledge alongside sense-perception and reason.

Before a comparison can be made between Komenský's and Plantinga's approaches to faith, it is important to examine Plantinga's reformed epistemology in more depth, in order to understand all of the claims and arguments of Reformed epistemology and how these claims and arguments relate to those of Komenský. First, to define some terms commonly employed when discussing reformed epistemology, a basic belief is a belief that is not based on any other beliefs. For example, my belief that my knee hurts is not dependent on any other belief that I might hold at the moment of experiencing pain, but is instead produced directly and immediately by my experience of pain, it is not inferred from other beliefs. This is what is meant when basic beliefs are described as non-inferential. An example of a non-basic belief would be my belief that I ought to have my knee examined by a doctor, this belief is based on my belief that my knee hurts but also on my belief that it is possible for me to get to a doctor, that doctors can be trusted to do their work competently, and other related beliefs. As can be seen from this example, a basic belief (the belief that my knee hurts) can serve as a foundation on which we can base our non-basic beliefs (e.g. the belief that I ought to go to the doctor.). A properly basic belief is a basic belief that it is

rational to accept even in the absence of evidence and argument, and the most important question to ask regarding basic beliefs is what criteria a basic belief should meet in order to be considered a properly basic belief.

Reformed epistemology rejects the criteria for properly basic beliefs laid down by classical foundationalism, these criteria being that “a proposition is properly basic if it is self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses, and second, a proposition is properly basic only if it meets these conditions.”¹¹² Plantinga argues¹¹³ that the criteria of classical foundationalism are too narrow, since they do not encompass beliefs that are held as properly basic by all but the most extreme sceptics, the examples that he gives being the belief that our memories are reliable and the belief in other minds, two beliefs which are neither incorrigible nor self-evident nor evident to the senses, but are nevertheless almost universally accepted as properly basic. Criteria that these beliefs do meet are that they are immediately produced by a cognitive faculty that is working correctly in an environment that is appropriate for it (I shall refer to such beliefs as natural beliefs from this point forwards). Plantinga goes on to argue that the classical foundationalism is incoherent, since the belief that properly basic beliefs must be self-evident, incorrigible or evident to the senses, is not backed up by evidence or rational arguments and is not inferred from other beliefs, making it a basic belief, however it does not meet its own criteria for a properly basic belief since the belief that properly basic beliefs must meet the listed criteria is neither incorrigible, nor self-evident, nor evident to the senses. Classical foundationalism therefore requires that we accept these criteria for properly basic beliefs while simultaneously rejecting them because belief in these criteria does not meet the criteria for a properly basic belief, a position which is clearly self-contradictory.

Plantinga goes on to argue that belief in God also meets these criteria, claiming that this belief is produced by a cognitive faculty which he calls the *sensus divinitatis* a faculty that produces belief in God in response to certain experiences, giving a list of examples of such experiences:

„Upon reading the Bible, one may be impressed with a deep sense that God is speaking to him. Upon having done what I know is cheap, or wrong, or wicked I may feel guilty in God's sight and form the belief God disapproves of what I've done. Upon confession and repentance, I may feel forgiven, forming the belief God forgives me for what I've done. A person in grave danger may turn to God, asking for his protection and help; and of

¹¹² Hoitenga, D. J. (1991), *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, p. 148.

¹¹³ Plantinga, A. (2000), *Warranted christian belief*.

course he or she then forms the belief that God is indeed able to hear and help if he sees fit. When life is sweet and satisfying, a spontaneous sense of gratitude may well up within the soul; someone in this condition may thank and praise the Lord for his goodness, and will of course form the accompanying belief that indeed the Lord is to be thanked and praised.¹¹⁴

The *sensus divinitatis* immediately produces the belief in God in response to these experiences in a similar way that my brain immediately produces the belief that there is a tree in front of me, and that this tree truly exists outside of my mind, in response to my experience of seeing a tree and natural beliefs of this kind are universally accepted as properly basic if they are produced by a cognitive faculty which is functioning correctly in an environment in which it is meant to function. Therefore, according to Plantinga, if belief in God truly is a similar kind of natural belief, produced by the *sensus divinitatis*, it should be granted the same epistemic status as these other natural beliefs, and should be accepted as properly basic. Perhaps the most relevant claim of reformed epistemology is the claim that natural beliefs are not only properly basic, but that the justification for them is strong enough for them to be considered knowledge. This would mean that, if the arguments of reformed epistemologists prove to be sound, then faith truly is a principle that leads to knowledge, as Komenský terms it. In his defence of the claim that properly basic beliefs ought to be granted the status of knowledge, Plantinga creates a distinction between what he calls strong justification and weak justification as well as creating a distinction between *prima facie* and *ultima facie* justification. A *prima facie* justification for a belief is when a proposition that appears true on the surface is accepted as true simply because of this semblance of truth without considering any of the possible reasons for why this belief might be false. An *ultima facie* or “all things considered” justification is when a proposition is accepted not just because of the surface appearance of truth but because all of the reasons for why this proposition might be false have been considered and discredited. The main difference between strongly and weakly justified beliefs is that strong justification for a belief creates an obligation to accept said belief, and if a strongly justified belief is true, and no reason can be found to consider that belief to be false, then it can be considered knowledge while a weakly justified belief is a belief that it is rational for one to accept, put otherwise, that one has a right to accept, but one has no obligation to accept a weakly justified belief. The examples that Plantinga gives¹¹⁵ for strong justification and weak justification

¹¹⁴ Plantinga, A. (1981). *Is belief in God properly basic?*, p. 46.

¹¹⁵ Hoitenga, D. J. (1991). *Faith and reason from Plato to Plantinga*, pp. 191–193, “belief on testimony vs belief on appearance”.

are belief based on perception (for strong justification) and belief based on testimony (for weak justification). Although it is also possible for a belief to be strongly justified through evidence or argument, what is most relevant for this examination of Plantinga's concept of faith is strong justification of beliefs through perception. Upon examining Plantinga's examples more closely, it becomes clear why Plantinga creates this distinction between strong and weak justification and why belief based on perception is strongly justified whereas belief in testimony is merely weakly justified. Belief based on perception and belief based on testimony differ in the fact that in the case of belief based on perception, there is a direct acquaintance of the believer with the object of his belief, when the object of belief is perceived there is no separation between the mind of the perceiver and said object, in the case of belief based on testimony however, there is a separation between the object of belief and the believer i.e. the witness. This separation results in a belief justified by testimony needing a different set of assumptions to a belief based on perception and creates reasons to doubt a belief based on testimony that does not exist for a belief that is based on perception. Imagine, for example, that a neighbour of mine came to me and claimed that he saw two men who live down the street loading what looked like a dead body into the back of a car. My choice to believe his claim would require me to assume that he is telling the truth, but if my neighbour is not known to me to be a particularly trustworthy or untrustworthy person, I have no knowledge of this event outside of his testimony and I have no evidence that would point to this event being more probable or more improbable (I know nothing about the men across the street, I have never seen them acting suspiciously, they do not look like hitmen etc.) then I am fully justified in simply withholding judgement, refusing to believe or disbelieve what my neighbour is saying, and as a result refusing to act on it, simply telling my neighbour to notify the police if that is what he thinks he saw and shutting the door in his face. However, if I were a more trusting person, I may choose to believe the testimony of my neighbour and go on to act on that belief, I may for example, offer to take him in my car to follow the men from across the street to wherever they might be taking the body so that we may guide the police to them before they can dispose of the evidence of their crime. If I were more inclined towards distrusting people that I don't know, I may instead choose to disbelieve my neighbour and act on my disbelief, shutting the door in his face and calling the police on *him*, denouncing him as a paranoid lunatic who is currently trying to frame two people for murder, and may do something even worse to them if he is simply left to live in his delusions. What this example shows is that whatever stance

one chooses to take on the neighbour's claim (belief, withholding judgement, disbelief) is not without justification but whether or not one accepts a claim justified by testimony alone is entirely subjective, a trusting person may accept it and a sceptical person may choose to withhold judgement or outright disbelieve the proposition. This subjectivity is what makes weak justification weak. In this case, what informs my decision to believe or disbelieve my neighbour is whether I have a natural disposition towards trust or distrust, or alternatively my lived experiences, I might be more inclined to believe him if trusting others had yielded positive results for me in the past, or if I previously lived in an area where things like this are relatively common. I may be more inclined to disbelieve him if my trust had been regularly betrayed in the past, even more so if I myself have been framed for a crime by lying witnesses. It is not irrational for me to decide based on lived experience or disposition that my neighbours testimony alone is sufficient justification for my belief in what he is saying, since what he is saying does not actively go against reason or evidence, however, someone else may be equally rational in deciding that the same justification is not sufficient for them, should they find themselves in a similar situation. On the other hand, if a belief is strongly justified, accepting it is rational and refusal to accept it is irrational. In the example of perception the fact that no separation exists between the perceiver and the object of perception means that the reasons for doubt that exist in the example that I gave do not exist in the case of perception, the information is directly available to the perceiver rather than being relayed through a potentially dishonest witness. The hypothetical possibility that our perceptual faculties may deceive us does not justify us in doubting beliefs based on perception, since such doubt lacks any basis in what we know about our perceptual faculties. Correctly functioning sense-organs connected to a correctly functioning brain that is working in the environment for which it was designed have never been known to perceive things that are not there, contrast this with the act of doubting the neighbours testimony in the previous example which is very much based in what we know about people i.e. that sometimes people lie, and that not all people are sane. As is the case with belief based on testimony, belief based on perception requires an assumption, specifically the assumption that our perceptual faculties, when functioning correctly, are reliable. Refusing to accept a belief that is based on perception without sufficient evidence that the belief is the result of perceptual faculties that are not functioning correctly or of perceptual faculties that are working in an environment for which they are not designed would mean rejecting this assumption, since the only way to justify ones disbelief would be to claim

that even correctly functioning perceptual faculties working in the right environment are unreliable or deceptive. Unlike the assumption in the first example, discarding this assumption would have major epistemic and practical consequences since in doing so one dismisses any possibility of empirical knowledge and can no longer make any decisions based on what one perceives without being inconsistent. If the options are to either make an assumption that is backed up by intuition (our percepts feel real) or to tear down the foundations of empirical knowledge while also making it virtually impossible to live life consistently, the former is clearly the more rational option. Belief based on perception is therefore an example of strongly justified belief and what is more, it is an example of strongly justified properly basic belief because the beliefs that are produced as a result of our perceptions are not based on any other beliefs that we might hold at the moment of perception, they are produced immediately at the moment that perception happens. The moment that I see a tree in front of me I immediately believe that there is a tree in front of me and that it is not merely a figment of my imagination.

The example of belief based on perception as strongly justified properly basic belief provides a model for how properly basic beliefs might be strongly justified even in the absence of evidence or argument. In other words, it shows us a way that faith beliefs might be strongly justified and therefore have an epistemic justification strong enough to be considered knowledge. In order for a faith-belief to be strongly justified then firstly: there must be no evidence or sound argument against said faith belief. Secondly: if there is no evidence or sound argument against the given faith belief, rejecting said belief would require one to abandon some assumption that has epistemic and practical importance comparable to the epistemic and practical importance of the assumption that our perceptual faculties are reliable. The question now is how is it possible for religious beliefs to meet these criteria.

The idea that we ought to trust our perceptual faculties, and that the beliefs that they produce are strongly justified, is nothing new. However, this is not the case for all natural beliefs. The answer to the question of whether beliefs produced by some cognitive faculty are strongly justified or weakly justified depends on what is known about the nature of the cognitive faculty that is producing them. For example, the cognitive faculty of perception produces strongly justified beliefs whereas the faculty of intuition produces weakly justified beliefs. The reason why intuition, unlike perception, does not produce strongly justified beliefs is that any example of intuition producing a demonstrably true belief can be countered with an example of intuition producing a demonstrably false belief. There are also cognitive faculties that

produce both strongly and weakly justified beliefs, for example memory, which has never been known to produce false beliefs about the general outline of remembered events, except in cases where it was caused to function incorrectly by some external influence, but has been known to yield false information when recalling the small details of these events. Some beliefs produced by these faculties may be completely unjustified, since a natural belief that contradicts the laws of logic or is contradicted by conclusive evidence is clearly irrational. In every one of these examples, what can be seen is some form of evidence being presented for beliefs produced by correctly functioning cognitive faculties that are working in the correct environment are weakly justified or entirely unjustified. If no such evidence can be found then the default stance to take is that the belief is strongly justified. In an article published earlier, I have presented the following argument for why this is the default stance to take:

“The reason for this is that when one has an experience that immediately produces a natural belief one has five options: accept the belief as true; present a sound argument or sufficient evidence against this particular belief; present a sound argument against the reliability of this particular faculty; present evidence that in this moment the faculty was functioning incorrectly or in the wrong environment or deny the assumption that our cognitive faculties are reliable, even when functioning correctly and in the right environment. the assumption that justifies accepting natural beliefs as true is the assumption that the cognitive faculties that produce them are reliable. If no evidence or argument can be found against the belief or against the one specific faculty that produced it, then the only way one can justify not assenting to the belief is by discarding this assumption. It may seem like a stretch to say that rejecting a single belief produced by a single cognitive faculty leads to a blanket rejection of all cognitive faculties, since one could claim that they have no intention of denying the reliability of all cognitive faculties but only deny the reliability of one particular cognitive faculty. Alternatively, they may claim that they do not deny the reliability of the cognitive faculty that produced some natural belief, saying that they only deny the truth of that particular belief. The problem with the first of these responses is that denying the reliability of a single cognitive faculty without a sound argument or sufficient evidence for its unreliability leads to the question of why the reliability of this specific cognitive faculty can be denied without good reason, but the reliability of other cognitive faculties cannot be. To say that we must assume that our cognitive faculties are reliable, but discard that assumption in the case of one specific faculty is a clear case of special pleading. The problem with the second response is that it too is

special pleading, if it can be said that the faculty in question has produced a dubious or false belief, and no evidence or argument is needed to support this claim, then why can this not be said of other beliefs that this faculty produces. If a cognitive faculty produces dubious or false beliefs then it is unreliable, meaning that this second objection is simply a disguised version of the first.”¹¹⁶ If this argument is sound, and natural beliefs ought to be accepted as strongly justified properly basic beliefs, then that would mean that Komenský is correct in saying that faith beliefs can be considered knowledge. The final step that would have to be taken to prove Komenský right in what he says about faith is to show that belief in God and belief in the revelations contained in the bible are natural beliefs.

If the arguments presented above are accepted, and it is accepted that natural beliefs are strongly justified unless evidence can be presented that they are not, then if there is such a faculty as the *sensus divinitatis*, which immediately produces belief in God and other religious beliefs, Plantinga is correct in saying that belief in God is strongly justified unless valid evidence or sound arguments can be presented to disprove these beliefs. Which specific religious beliefs which are natural, and should therefore be accepted as properly basic, depends on the nature of the *sensus divinitatis* and the specific beliefs that it produces. What is most relevant, for both the epistemologies of Plantinga and Komenský, is whether or not the *sensus divinitatis* can be said to produce specifically Christian beliefs and not beliefs which align with the teachings of other religions and may actually contradict the teachings of the bible, which Komenský sees as an infallible source of knowledge regarding supernatural things. Arguments for the existence of the *sensus divinitatis*, and the exact nature of this faculty, will be discussed at more length in the critical part of this paper. For now, we can continue with examining how the epistemologies of Komenský and Plantinga relate to each other.

¹¹⁶ Whittaker, D. (2020), “Natural Knowledge: An Analysis of Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology in Light of Contemporary Cognitive Science of Religion”, *e-Rhizome 2* (1), p. 32-53, pp. 48-49.

Subchapter 2: Komenský and Plantinga

The first and most significant similarity between the epistemologies of Komenský and Plantinga is the fact that both thinkers see faith as a source of knowledge. In the case of Komenský, faith beliefs which result from careful study of the bible can be considered knowledge because the bible is the perfect work of an infallible author, and as such any belief which is the result of diligent and honest study of the bible can be held with certainty. In the case of Plantinga, belief in God and other religious beliefs can be considered knowledge since the *sensus divinitatis* produces these beliefs in the same immediate and natural way as our perceptual faculties produce belief in what we see and hear, and we about as much reason to doubt a correctly functioning *sensus divinitatis* as we have to doubt a correctly functioning pair of eyes or ears. Even though this is an important similarity, there is one important difference between the epistemic status that is given to faith beliefs by Plantinga and the epistemic status that Komenský gives to faith beliefs, and that is the fact that, while Plantinga does say that faith beliefs are strongly justified, unlike Komenský he does not say that faith beliefs can be held with certainty. In fact, Plantinga's statement that properly basic beliefs ought to be held until evidence or argument is found to refute them suggests that he does not see properly basic beliefs as something that can be held with certainty, since it suggests the possibility that evidence or arguments will be found to refute these beliefs and if one admits that there is a possibility that some belief they hold will be refuted in the future, one cannot claim to hold to said belief with certainty. As can be seen here, faith beliefs have a lower epistemic status in the epistemology of Plantinga than they do in the epistemology of Komenský, but this is not the only way that faith has a lower standing in Plantinga's epistemology. Plantinga's admission of the possibility that properly basic religious beliefs may be refuted by evidence or argument is essentially a reversal of the way that faith and reason correct each other in the epistemology of Komenský. Instead of faith correcting reason when reason strays outside of its domain into the realm of the supernatural, in Plantinga's epistemology reason corrects faith whenever a sound argument is found to refute some faith belief. The key difference between Komenský's and Plantinga's epistemological system appears to be that faith has a higher status in Komenský's epistemological system than it does in Plantinga's reformed epistemology. If we were to imagine a sliding scale of fideism and evidentialism which ranks epistemological systems according to the importance of faith in each system, where on one end of the scale there is sceptic fideism (Reason cannot be trusted, there is no such thing as knowledge, all beliefs are faith beliefs therefore rationally

unsupported religious faith has the same epistemic status as my empirically supported belief that the sky is blue.) and on the other end of the scale there is pure evidentialism (all beliefs must be supported by sufficient evidence and/or sound arguments, it is irrational to accept any belief on faith) Reformed epistemology is closer to rationalism on this scale than Komenský's epistemological system which is in turn closer to sceptic fideism. This is evident not only in the fact that, unlike Plantinga, Komenský claims that faith beliefs can be held with certainty and gives faith the right to correct reason in certain circumstances but also in the fact that Komenský presents faith in the bible as the only way that human beings can achieve knowledge of supernatural truths, while Plantinga never denies that reason can help us understand supernatural things nor does he claim that the supernatural is outside the scope of reason. Given the fact that, in his article titled *the threeness/oneness problem of the trinity*¹¹⁷ Plantinga presents a rational analysis of the trinity, which could be considered the ultimate supernatural mystery of the Christian faith, it is safe to say that Plantinga actively denies the idea that faith is the only source of knowledge regarding supernatural things.

Komenský argues that faith correcting reason is not to the destruction of reason¹¹⁸, which seems to suggest that faith never directly contradicts arguments presented by reason, which seems like Komenský is simply rephrasing what Plantinga says. Faith is not in conflict with reason, faith does not destroy reason, therefore if reason does manage to produce a sound argument against some faith belief, this belief must be discarded to avoid the emergence of a conflict between these two principles. However, the most important thing to consider here is the fact that Komenský sees the supernatural as being above reason¹¹⁹ and as such, he sees beliefs about the supernatural which are based on faith in the bible as being outside the scope of reason. If it is the case that faith beliefs about the supernatural are outside the scope of reason then it is not even theoretically possible that a rational argument will be found that refutes one of these beliefs. When a

¹¹⁷ Plantinga, C. (1988), "The threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity", *Calvin Theological Journal*, 23(1), p. 37-37.

¹¹⁸ Comenius, J. A. (1651), *Naturall Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light*, Page unnumbered: „So when Reason hath gathered any thing falsely of things invisible, it is amended by divine Revelation. Yet that emendation is not violent, and with the destruction of the precedent principle: but gentle, so that that very thing which is corrected, acknowledgeth, and admits it of its own accord, and with joy, and soon brings something of its own, whereby the same corrected truth may become more apparent.“ Cf. Comenius, J. A. (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Page unnumbered. Cf. Comenius, J. A. (1978), *Physicae synopsis*, p. 9.

rational argument is made for or against some proposition regarding the nature of some entity (for example, the triune God of Christianity) it is made with the assumption that said entity is limited by the principles and laws of reason and that arguments can then be formed to show either that the nature of said entity adheres to these laws and principles (in which case such an entity is possible, and belief in such an entity may be rational to hold) or the nature of said entity does not adhere to these laws and principles (in which case the entity is not possible, and belief in such an entity is irrational). However, if supernatural entities are outside the scope of reason, then any argument that reason forms in an attempt to refute the existence of these entities by pointing out ways in which they do not conform to the laws and principles of reason, is merely a confirmation of what is already known, i.e. that these entities are not limited by the laws and principles of reason and that any knowledge that we might have of their nature is only attainable to faith. The fact that Komenský makes the claim that faith does not destroy reason, that faith and reason are not in conflict, does not mean that he agrees with Plantinga on the idea that the refutation of faith beliefs by reason is theoretically possible, it is merely a reaffirmation of his belief that the rational refutation of faith beliefs is not possible, because the domain of faith, the supernatural, is outside the scope of reason.

Aside from the differences outlined above, it could be said that the epistemological systems of Komenský and Plantinga are almost identical. Both of them advocate a system which incorporates the senses, reason, and faith and the functions of sense perception and reason are identical in both systems¹²⁰. In both of their epistemological systems, the function of faith is providing human beings with beliefs about and knowledge of supernatural things. Plantinga claims that the *sensus divinitatis* produces strongly justified beliefs about supernatural things, and if these beliefs are true then they are knowledge, Komenský claims that beliefs about the supernatural which are drawn from the bible are knowledge and can be held with certainty due to the status of the bible as an infallible work of an infallible author. The

¹²⁰ Plantinga has very little to say on the function of the senses and reason in his epistemological system, though the fact that he uses sense-perception as his primary example of strongly justified properly basic beliefs shows that he does see sense-perception as a principle that leads to knowledge. It is safe to say that he holds the same beliefs regarding the reliability and purpose of the senses and reason, since only academic sceptics deny that the senses are a reliable source of knowledge regarding the material world, that reason is a reliable source of knowledge regarding abstractions such as numbers and logical arguments, and that reason can analyse sense-data to draw conclusions about perceived objects whose properties are not immediately evident to our senses or correct the senses when they perceive something that appears to make no rational sense.

question now is whether or not a Comenian epistemology can be built on the foundation of reformed epistemology. In other words, can reformed epistemology function as a justification for something like a Comenian epistemological system, which incorporates faith in the bible as a source of knowledge.

The first thing that must be pointed out is that, if reformed epistemology is to be used to justify Komenský's classification of faith in the bible as a principle that leads to knowledge, then Komenský's claim that beliefs based on this faith can be held with certainty, must be dismissed. The reason for this is quite simple, Komenský's only justification for this claim is the idea that the bible is the work of God, who is infallible, and therefore it is impossible for the bible to contain false information, so any information drawn from the bible should be accepted with certainty, but Plantinga never claims that the existence of the *sensus divinitatis*, or the fact that religious beliefs are properly basic, means that the *sensus divinitatis* produces certain knowledge or that religious beliefs can be held to with certainty. He indirectly states the precise opposite when he states that it is theoretically possible that religious beliefs will be disproven by evidence or argument. Since Komenský never provides an argument for the existence or the infallibility of God in his works, a Komenian epistemological system built on the foundations of reformed epistemology will have to use the methods of reformed epistemology to justify the existence and infallibility of God, but these methods provide a justification for beliefs that is strong, but not certain. If the belief in the bible as a source of knowledge is founded on belief in the existence and the infallibility of God, and these two beliefs cannot be held with certainty, then belief in the bible as a source of knowledge is itself not certain since no belief that has another, uncertain, belief as its foundation can be held with certainty.

Since the unique characteristic of the Comenian epistemological system is the division of labour between the three principles that lead to knowledge, where the senses explore the material world, reason provides abstract knowledge and corrects the senses and faith in scripture provides supernatural truths and makes sure that reason stays in its domain, and since the roles that such a system gives to the senses and reason are almost universally accepted, the primary task for anyone attempting to justify such a system through the ideas and arguments of reformed epistemology will be to show that beliefs about the supernatural which are the result of faith in scripture are just as strongly justified as beliefs which are the product of the senses or reason. In other words, anyone wishing to justify Komenský's epistemological system in this way would have to show that not only is belief

in God properly basic, but belief in the inerrancy of the bible is also properly basic.

Plantinga has mentioned the bible¹²¹ as something that the *sensus divinitatis* is likely to respond to, that it may create a strong sense that God is speaking. However, he never mentions the possibility that the *sensus divinitatis* may create properly basic beliefs about the truth of individual propositions contained in the bible, or a properly basic belief in the inerrancy of the bible as a whole. Attempting to justify belief in the inerrancy of the bible by arguing that, in response to reading the bible, the *sensus divinitatis* naturally creates belief in the truth of each individual proposition that is contained in the bible, would be difficult to say the least. There are simply too many propositions in the 66 books of the bible to individually verify whether or not each one of them triggers the *sensus divinitatis* to naturally create belief in its truth. The only way I can imagine to demonstrate this is through what may be the most exhaustingly tedious psychological experiment ever conceived, where a sample of people from various religious backgrounds are forced¹²² to go through the bible verse by verse, from cover to cover, and after each verse an interviewer asks them whether or not they feel as though they are having a religious experience. Given the fact that such an experiment would be almost impossible to carry out, a different approach must be taken.

An alternative approach would be not to argue that each individual claim in the bible can be justified as a properly basic belief which is naturally created by the *sensus divinitatis*, but that these beliefs are non-basic beliefs which are based upon a single properly basic belief, specifically the belief that the bible is the word of God. Since God is both infallible and morally perfect he neither lies nor makes mistakes therefore, if the bible is the word of God, it cannot contain lies or mistakes and all of the claims contained therein must be true and if the belief that the bible is the word of God is properly basic then this belief, as well as the non-basic beliefs that necessarily stem from this belief, ought to be held until evidence or sound arguments can be found to refute the claim that the bible is the word of God. For this particular approach, a wealth of anecdotal evidence could be found that reading the bible does in fact trigger the *sensus divinitatis* to naturally create the belief that God is speaking through the bible, and that the bible truly is the word of God, since such experiences are commonly reported by Christians and

¹²¹ Plantinga, A. (1981). *Is belief in God properly basic?*, p. 7: „Upon reading the Bible, one may be impressed with a deep sense that God is speaking to him.“

¹²² No one would take part in this voluntarily.

Plantinga himself mentions such experiences as one way that the *sensus divinitatis* might work.¹²³ The naturalness of the belief that the bible is the word of God would also be significantly easier to verify in a more rigorous, scientific, way, than the naturalness of every individual claim in the bible. There are already studies that mention religious experiences that are connected with biblical passages¹²⁴ and the ways in which the human mind responds to scripture could be studied through relatively simple experiments, where subjects are given passages from the bible and are told to report the psychological effects that these passages have on them. Such experiments could serve the twin functions of showing whether or not the *sensus divinitatis* as described by Plantinga is indeed a cognitive faculty which is common to all people and showing whether or not the belief that the bible is the word of God is properly basic from the standpoint of reformed epistemology.

If religious beliefs about supernatural entities such as God are, as Plantinga claims, properly basic, strongly justified beliefs which it is rational to accept and irrational not to accept, then it follows that belief in a supernatural reality is also strongly justified. This supernatural reality may well be relevant to our lives, since the morality or immorality of our actions may be directly determined by the will of God, and knowledge of the truth about this supernatural reality may be of paramount importance for human beings, since our knowledge or ignorance of this reality may have a direct impact on the salvation or damnation of our souls. In such a case, it would be of great importance to have a trustworthy source of information on this supernatural realm which is outside of the domain of our senses and cannot be fully understood by reason. Komenský proposes that the bible ought to be this source of information, but does not provide a justification for why it ought to be the bible specifically and not, for example, the Koran or the book of Mormon. If it could be shown, through the arguments of reformed epistemology, that belief in the divine inspiration of the bible is properly basic, then the Comenian epistemological system, based on the three books of God, could be put forward as a fully justified epistemological system that

¹²³ Plantinga, A. (1981). Is belief in God properly basic?. *Noûs*, 41-51. p. 7 „Upon reading the Bible, one may be impressed with a deep sense that God is speaking to him.“

¹²⁴ For an example of one such study see Azari, N. P., Nickel, J., Wunderlich, G., Niedeggen, M., Hefter, H., Tellmann, L., ... & Seitz, R. J. (2001), “Neural correlates of religious experience”, *European journal of neuroscience*, 13(8), 1649-1652. In this study researchers „studied a group of self-identified religious subjects, who attributed their religious experience to a biblical psalm, in order to explore for the first time using functional neuroimaging the brain areas involved in religious experience.“

is a serious option even for the 21st century philosopher, and not just a curiosity of the renaissance era. The question now is whether or not the epistemological principle of faith, as put forward by Komenský, truly is justified and if the arguments that can be presented in its favour, whether they are drawn from reformed epistemology or any other perspective, can hold up to scrutiny.

Part 3: a critical analysis of the epistemological principle of faith, as presented by Komenský.

A note on personal and practical faith.

Before beginning this analysis, I would like to return to a distinction that I mentioned in the chapter on Komenský and Kant. Specifically, the distinction between faith as something personal and faith as something practical. To put it simply, personal faith is akin to trust in the testimony of another person, I believe the testimony of that person because I have a personal relationship with them and I know them to be trustworthy. In the case of religious faith, this form of faith manifests as belief in, for example, the claims contained in the Christian bible because one has experienced the Christian God in a way that leads one to feel as though they have truly had an experience of the all-powerful, morally perfect and omniscient creator of the universe. This in turn leads to a perceived personal relationship with the Christian God, a relationship of complete trust, since one feels that one knows from experience that God, as a morally perfect and omniscient being, can neither lie nor make mistakes. As I have pointed out earlier, Komenský's faith is a form of personal faith. Practical faith is based neither on a personal relationship nor on experience, but it is belief that is accepted out of practical necessity. In the case of Kant, this necessity takes the form of the need to resolve the antinomy of practical reason. Belief in God and immortality must be accepted because to disbelieve in God is to claim that the highest good is impossible, despite the fact that the promotion of the highest good is a moral duty. It is therefore necessary to accept belief in God and immortality, these beliefs *must* be accepted, because rejecting them creates a contradiction between our beliefs and our moral duty. At first glance, practical faith seems to be the more defensible of the two. If an argument can be formed to show that some belief is practically necessary then it is far easier to share this argument with those who may be sceptical of your faith, than it is to share the personal experience that led to your trust of God. It is possible to testify of your experience, but there is nothing stopping others from accusing you of lying or of being deluded. There is, however, a possibility of bringing the two approaches together. One need not view faith the way that Kant does, as a set of postulates of practical reason, while rejecting personal revelation outright, or view it as purely the product of personal encounters with God. As will be shown later, practical arguments and personal experience can work to support one another, each one functioning to support the other.

A possible defences of Komenský's faith

To begin this examination of Komenský's idea of faith, let us return to the argument that I presented near the beginning of this paper, as a potential means to justify faith as Komenský presents it. The argument goes as follows:

1. No belief can be rationally inferred if information from the world and the mind is not reliable.
2. If the world and the mind do not have an infallible and morally perfect creator then information from the world and the mind is not reliable.
3. Conclusion 1: Therefore, If the world and the mind do not have an infallible and morally perfect creator, no belief can be rationally inferred.
4. If any belief entails the conclusion that no belief can be rationally inferred then it should be rejected and its denial accepted.
5. Conclusion 2: Therefore the belief that the world and the mind do not have a morally perfect creator should be rejected and its denial accepted.

The purpose of this argument is to justify the faith that underpins Komenský's advocacy of all three of the three principles that lead to knowledge, belief and trust in an all knowing and morally perfect creator who is the author of the three books of God which are studied through the three principles. Though this argument does not show that the bible truly is the work of an omniscient and morally perfect Author, it may at least help in demonstrating that it might be by showing that we are justified in believing that such an author exists, while also justifying Komenský's faith in the other two principles of his epistemological system. I have also mentioned three possible objections to this argument, which I will be examining here. These objections are the following:

1. There is the objection that there is a similarly large number of possible worlds where the world and the mind have some degree of reliability, that is to say they provide us with true information more than half of the time, and it is therefore just as likely that the actual world is one of the possible worlds where the material world and the mind ought to be given credence as it is that the actual world is one of the possible worlds where they ought not be given credence.
2. There is the objection from evolutionary theory, stating that true beliefs are conducive to survival and reproduction and we have therefore evolved faculties that lead us to true beliefs about the world. The material world was not adapted to our senses and reason before we

even existed, so that the conclusions we reach might be true. Our senses and reason adapted to the world through natural selection so that they would produce true beliefs. Regardless of what sort of world the indifferent forces produced, the cognitive faculties of the lifeforms in that world would evolve in such a way as to reliably produce true beliefs. Since the minds of these lifeforms also evolved, they would be shaped by natural selection to produce innate beliefs which are true and which can serve as the foundation from which other true beliefs can be inferred. Therefore, we can trust in our ability to form true beliefs from the information of the world and the mind, regardless of which possible world we are in.

3. It could also be argued that there is not necessarily a strict dichotomy of Abrahamic theism-atheism. Faith in a creator/creators who is/are good and wise, rather than completely infallible and morally perfect, could give us sufficient faith in the world and the mind, since a world and mind with good and wise creators could be trusted to be reliable in most, and possibly even all cases.

An argument which may help in answering the first two objections was formulated by Plantinga. This argument is the evolutionary argument against naturalism. Omar Mirza explains one version of this argument as follows:

„When we consider whether or not a given source of beliefs is reliable, one relevant set of facts concerns those processes that causally affect the reliability of that source. These processes include those that were responsible for the origin of that source, as well as those that affect the source after it has come into being. There are cases in which a person S has an undercutting defeater for her belief in the reliability of some source of beliefs F when the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) S believes that there has been a process P, capable of causally affecting the source F, such that the reliability of F is not only dependent on the outcome of P, but is also completely determined by that outcome i.e. S believes that there were no causal factors involved independent of this process P that interfered with the causal effects of P.
- (2) S believes that she has no source of warrant for the belief that F is reliable other than the pronouncements of F itself.
- (3) S has good reasons to doubt or deny that the operation of the process P involved a filter of unreliable cognitive faculties.

These conditions describe a situation in which, from S's point of view, S's belief in the reliability of her source is based only on the output of that source itself, and in which that source is causally dependent on a process

which simply didn't "care" whether or not it turned out reliable. It ought to be intuitively obvious that there will be such situations in which S will have a defeater for her belief in the reliability of her source. Moreover, since in these situations none of her beliefs give S anything like strong evidence against her belief in the reliability of the source in question, S cannot have a rebutting defeater for that belief."¹²⁵

The source of beliefs F refers any of the various cognitive faculties that human beings use in forming beliefs (for example the senses or reason). The process P that is mentioned here refers to the process of naturalistic evolution by natural selection, which is to say evolution by natural selection functioning without any input or guidance from a supernatural conscious agent such as God. Evolution by natural selection occurs because individuals who have genetic traits which are well suited for survival in a particular set of circumstances are more likely to survive in those circumstances and as such, they are more likely to survive long enough to reproduce and pass on their traits to the next generation. As time goes on and these traits are passed on across many generations, they will become more and more prominent. On evolutionary naturalism, the cognitive faculties which are the sources of belief evolved through this process because the behaviour that stems from possessing these faculties increased our ancestors' chances of survival and reproduction. For example, Homo sapiens has a more developed and effective faculty of reason (simply put: is more intelligent) than Homo Habilis and the reason for this is that the most intelligent individuals of Homo Habilis survived, passed on their intelligence, and over generations, as the most intelligent individuals continued to survive and reproduce, the species of Homo Habilis eventually evolved into the more intelligent species Homo sapiens. The problem here is the fact that, as Mirza points out, this process does not "care" whether or not the cognitive faculties that it produces are reliable sources of true beliefs. Natural selection would produce faculties which produce those beliefs which are the most beneficial for survival and reproduction in a given environment, regardless of whether or not those beliefs are true or false. Some may say that natural selection will produce cognitive faculties that reliably produce true beliefs because true beliefs are practical and beneficial for survival and reproduction. For example, if some early human does not form the true belief that predators are dangerous and that it is therefore dangerous to venture into the wilderness unprepared for a potential encounter with a predator, that early human is very likely to get

¹²⁵ Mirza, O. (2008), "A user's guide to the evolutionary argument against naturalism", *Philosophical studies*, 141, 125-146, p. 131.

eaten and very unlikely to pass on his genes. However this only shows that *some* true beliefs are beneficial for survival and reproduction, it does not refute the idea that cognitive faculties that evolved through the process of naturalistic evolution by natural selection are just as likely to produce false beliefs as they are to produce true beliefs, provided that some false beliefs are also beneficial for survival and reproduction. The fact that some false beliefs are beneficial for survival and reproduction, and the fact that evolved cognitive faculties will produce such beliefs, is even admitted by those who believe in evolutionary naturalism.¹²⁶

It is quite clear how the evolutionary argument against naturalism answers the second objection. The objection is based on the idea that evolution by natural selection will inevitably produce sensory and cognitive faculties that will reliably produce true beliefs, but the evolutionary argument against naturalism shows that this central claim of this objection simply is not true. How the way in which this argument helps us answer the second objection is somewhat less evident.

The evolutionary argument against naturalism helps us answer the first objection because it points out an important fact about the actual world (the possible world in which we find ourselves. Even if we grant that there are a similar number of possible worlds where our cognitive faculties are reliable as there are possible worlds where they are unreliable, we know that we find ourselves in a possible world where our cognitive faculties evolved through natural selection. This leaves us with only three options:

1. We accept naturalistic evolution, in which case, if the evolutionary argument against naturalism is sound, is the same as accepting that, in the actual world, our cognitive faculties are unreliable regardless of how many possible worlds there are where they are reliable.
2. We accept that the evolution of our cognitive faculties was guided, directly or indirectly, by an immaterial being of great power (such as God), in which case our cognitive faculties are only reliable if we find ourselves in a world where this being is at the very least good if not morally perfect, because a morally neutral being would be just as indifferent to the reliability of our sources of belief as the evolutionary process and an evil being would take pleasure in deceiving us.

¹²⁶ Guthrie, S. E. (1995). *Faces in the clouds: A new theory of religion*. Oxford University Press. pp. 177-205.

3. Accept that the evolution of our cognitive faculties was guided by a material being or by material beings of great power, who are morally good or at least have some interest in creating beings with reliable sources of belief. However, if there is no immaterial and morally good creator, these beings would themselves be the product of an evolutionary process, so we would have to either assume they evolved through naturalistic evolution (in which case we have no reason to believe that their cognitive faculties are reliable enough for them to be trusted to create beings with faculties that are reliable) or we assume that they themselves had material creators who evolved, which ultimately leads to infinite regress.

Given all of the above, it is safe to say that, if the evolutionary argument against naturalism is sound, the first and the second objection both fail. However, the third objection is still left unanswered, and is certainly the most difficult to answer, if it can be answered at all. It is true that a morally good creator could be trusted to create our cognitive faculties in such a way that they are more likely to produce true beliefs than they are to produce false beliefs, provided that said creator is also assumed to have the power and wisdom necessary to competently create our faculties in such a way. A morally perfect creator is not necessary for us to justify our belief that our cognitive faculties are mostly reliable and we do not need to believe that they are 100% reliable in order to avoid falling into epistemological and practical inconsistency. This is likely the reason why Plantinga chose to formulate an evolutionary argument against naturalism, rather than an evolutionary argument for the existence of God or for Christianity. I would like to add though that sufficient justification for a morally good immaterial creator of our cognitive faculties does help in justifying a Komenský's idea of faith, and although it may not be enough on its own to justify faith in the omnipotent omniscient and morally perfect triune God that is the foundation of Komenský's epistemology, it could still function as part of a cumulative case for adopting such an epistemology.

In order to determine whether or not Komenský's inclusion of faith in the bible in his epistemology can be defended through Kierkegaardian arguments, it must be shown that Kierkegaard is correct in his claim that self-defence against despair is a sufficient justification for belief. It may seem at first that accepting beliefs simply to avoid despair is nothing more than pure wishful thinking, forcing ourselves to adopt unsubstantiated beliefs as a means to avoid unpleasant emotions. However, despair is more than simply an unpleasant emotion, despair is itself a belief, it is the belief in the futility

of human effort, the belief that human beings have no hope to accomplish their most fundamental goals. In the case of moral despair it is the belief that all human effort to be good and moral people is futile and in the case of existential despair it is the belief that human effort to find meaning in life is futile.

Why is it important that despair is a belief as well as an emotion? Because it is a fact that some beliefs are considered so impractical, so destructive to our ability to acquire knowledge, make predictions, and live our lives consistently that they are seen as conclusions to be avoided at all costs by all but the most extreme sceptics. Take for example the belief in solipsism, the claim that my mind is the only thing in the universe that exists and that material objects and other people are simply creations of my mind. It is common for arguments in favour of idealism to be defeated by pointing out the fact that these arguments, when taken to their logical conclusion, lead to solipsism¹²⁷. The mere fact that an argument leads to solipsism, no matter how sound the argument may be, is seen as a sufficient defeater for the argument, because belief in solipsism is to be avoided at all costs. The reason why solipsism is to be avoided is because it is a belief that leads to absolute defeatism, if solipsism is true, then any action that we take in the world is absolutely meaningless since there are no other people that could be benefitted by our good actions or harmed by our evil actions, making any attempt to be moral meaningless. there is no point in attempting to acquire knowledge about the world because the world does not exist. Solipsism is a belief that makes it impossible for us to live and act in the world in a way that is consistent with our beliefs, since any action we might take in our lives, whether good, evil or morally neutral, has no justification whatsoever.

Could despair be said to be similar to solipsism in some relevant way? I would argue that existential despair is even worse than solipsism in the inconsistency that it creates. In the case of solipsism, there is arguably a way that one might live that is consistent with their belief. The solipsist might decide that the fact that the world does not exist, and that other minds do not exist, does not change the fact that pleasure feels good, that pain feels bad, and that they have an innate desire to seek the former and avoid the latter. They may then choose to live their life in the way that brings them the greatest possible amount of pleasure and the least possible amount of pain,

¹²⁷ For more on solipsism and how it has been used as a defeater for arguments in favour of idealism see Ural, Ş. (2019), *Solipsism, Physical Things and Personal Perceptual Space. Solipsist Ontology, Epistemology and Communication*, Wilmington: Vernon Press. See also the chapter on Berkley in Russel, B. (2000), *A History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, p. 310.

with morality serving only as a set of guidelines for avoiding punishment by others (or, from their perspective, punishment by the person-shaped figments of their own mind). It is a similar case with moral despair, it is possible to avoid moral despair simply by accepting moral nihilism and concluding that it does not matter that our efforts to be morally good are futile because neither moral goodness nor moral evil exist and it therefore makes no sense to despair over the fact that we fail in achieving the former and avoiding the latter. The moral nihilist, like the solipsist, has the option of simply living one's life in a way that provides them with the greatest possible amount of pleasure and the least possible amount of pain, free from any duty to be moral and any despair that may accompany such a duty, with any morally good behaviour serving only as a means to be rewarded or to avoid punishment. However, existential despair is different from both Solipsism and Moral despair in the fact that it is far more difficult, if not impossible, to live consistently with one's beliefs once existential despair has taken hold. In the case of existential despair it is impossible to restore consistency simply by accepting the implications of the beliefs and ignoring morality, as is the case with solipsism or moral despair. Existential despair, as defined earlier, is despair which, according to Kierkegaard, is a direct result of disbelief in God and the afterlife. It is the belief that life is meaningless, that any action we might take, whether good, evil or morally neutral is ultimately meaningless because the fate of all human beings, and of all of their works, is simply to pass away and be forgotten as time goes on, as though they had never existed in the first place. If existential despair is accepted, and every human action is considered meaningless, then inconsistency is inevitable since, according to this belief, it is impossible to justify any action that we might take in our lives and there is an obvious inconsistency in continuing to live and act in the world while at the same time admitting that there is no reason for any action that one might take. Even the choice to live for the sake of pleasure alone is inconsistent with existential despair since any pleasure or pain we might experience is just as meaningless as any other experience we might have, since it is doomed to oblivion just like all of our other experiences and memories (not to mention the fact that existential despair, by its very nature, is likely to be accompanied by depression and therefore makes living for pleasure difficult to say the least). Existential despair is therefore similar to solipsism at least in the fact that it leads to inconsistency, meaning that it may in fact be a practical necessity to accept beliefs as „self defense“ against existential despair. Kierkegaard would say that this self defense takes the form of faith in the God of Christianity, who undeniably gives meaning to the actions we take, since my actions in life may

make the difference between my salvation or damnation, or the salvation or damnation of someone else. If Kierkegaard is correct, then this argumentation could function as a justification for declaring faith in the bible to be a principle that leads to knowledge. The bible must be believed because the alternative is existential despair. Of course, Komenský's focus on the certainty of all beliefs derived from the three principles that lead to knowledge would have to be abandoned since Kierkegaard admits that uncertainty is a key characteristic of beliefs which are justified in this way. There is also a greater problem with this form of justification which is the fact that the Christian faith, and the Christian bible, is not the only religious faith or religious text that could be argued for in this way. Any religion that promises some form of life after death where moral goodness will be rewarded and moral evil will be punished, could be argued for in this way, since such religions all work equally well as forms of self defence against existential despair, belief in any such religion, whether it is Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism or any other similar religion works as self defence against despair because they all give meaning to our actions in very similar ways. It is also necessary to point out that, for this form of argumentation to work, it would have to be shown that a lack of religious belief necessarily leads to existential despair, a very counter intuitive idea for anyone who knows multiple atheists who do not appear to be permanently grappling with existential dread. In order for this form of argumentation to work, a direct causal link would have to be shown between Atheism and existential despair would have to be shown, which is unlikely given that there are already studies which show that there is no such causal link.¹²⁸ It therefore seems that the Kierkegaardian approach does little to defend the Comenian view of faith, not only by admitting to uncertainty, but also by failing to provide an argument specifically for faith in the bible. It should also be pointed out that Kants moral argument for belief in God and immortality has a very similar problem, even if the argument is conceded, and belief in God and immortality is accepted, the argument never mentions that the God that makes the highest good possible would necessarily have to be the God of Christianity. The final possible defence of Komenský's faith that I would like to cover is a defence from the approach of reformed epistemology. I have already explained how such a defence might work, and I have already

¹²⁸ Schnell, T., & Keenan, W. J. (2011), "Meaning-making in an atheist world", *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 33(1), 55-78, p. 70: „In spite of less meaningfulness, atheists do not suffer more frequently from crises of meaning than religionists or nones do. But heterogeneity within atheism has to be taken into account, as was demonstrated by cluster analysis.“

presented an argument for why natural beliefs ought to be accepted as strongly justified properly basic beliefs. However, for such a defence to be successful, two more claims would have to be shown to be true:

1. The *sensus divinitatis* exists
2. Faith in the bible is a natural belief.

Regarding the existence of the *sensus divinitatis*, there is some experimental confirmation for such a faculty existing. Specifically, there is evidence that human beings have a natural predisposition to believe in God and the afterlife, a predisposition that can be found even in very young children. Developmental psychologists have studied ways in which religious acquisition takes place in children and came to the conclusion that children develop cognitive biases towards seeing the world as the result of design, and these cognitive biases prepare children to accept religious beliefs. An example of experiments confirming the existence of these cognitive biases in children are the experiments conducted by Deborah Kellemen, in one of her experiments Kellemen found that children have a tendency to see natural objects as being designed for specific purposes. Kellemen states that “when asked to identify unanswerable questions, American 4- and 5-year-olds differ from adults by finding the question “what’s this for?” appropriate not only to artifacts and body parts, but also to whole living things like lions (“to go in the zoo”) and non-living natural kinds like clouds (“for raining”)”¹²⁹. Kellemen’s term for this tendency is „promiscuous teleology“ and other experiments have shown that young children understand that teleology originates from minds¹³⁰. Furthermore, „not only are children prepared by their cognitive equipment to accept that there is purpose behind natural objects and that this purpose was given to them by a mind that created them, but they are also prepared to accept the idea that this mind has superhuman qualities such as superhuman powers of perception and knowledge and immortality¹³¹ all qualities, which

¹²⁹ Kelemen, D. (2004), “Are children “intuitive theists”? Reasoning about purpose and design in nature.” *Psychological science*, 15(5), 295-301.

¹³⁰ See Newman, G., Kuhlmeier, V., Keil, F. C., & Wynn, K. (2005), “12-month-olds know that agents defy entropy: Exploring the relationship between order and intentionality.” Poster presented at the Biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development.

¹³¹ See Barrett J.L. and Richert R.A. (2003), “Anthropomorphism or preparedness? Exploring children’s God concepts”, *Review of Religious Research*, 300–312 for a detailed run down of studies conducted on this topic before 2003. They include the so-called “cracker box experiment”, Wellman H.M., Cross D., and Watson J. (2001), “Meta-analysis of theory-of-mind development: The truth about false belief”, *Child development* 72, no. 3, 655–684, which serves as the basis for a new version, Barrett J.L., Richert R.A., and Driesenga A. (2001), “God’s beliefs versus mother’s: The development of nonhuman agent concepts”, *Child Development* 72, no. 1, 50–65, Experiments 1 and 2, which shows the preparedness of

are commonly attributed to God or gods. There is even some evidence that children are prepared to accept the immortality of human minds.¹³² A study¹³³ can also be found which seems to support the idea that these tendencies persist into adulthood. This study was performed with a sample of self-identified atheists and Bering states that „Many of these individuals’ answers revealed an implicit attribution of teleo-functional fatalistic purpose to these turning points in their lives“¹³⁴. There is therefore at least some experimental confirmation that something like a *sensus divinitatis* exists. Which is to say, that there is some faculty or collection of faculties in the human brain that naturally produce religious beliefs, and this faculty exists even in very young children who are not yet capable of fully grasping most religious concepts. One important fact about the cognitive biases described by Kellemen, which may help in showing that beliefs produced by these biases do fall into the category of the natural beliefs that Plantinga describes, is the fact that the way that these cognitive biases create beliefs is very similar to the way that commonly held properly basic beliefs are formed, specifically the belief in other minds and belief in the reliability of memory. Just like beliefs produced in children by the cognitive biases described by Kellemen, belief in the reliability of memory and in other minds appears at a very young age, does not have to be taught and are treated as obvious facts as those who believe them. There is therefore some evidence that there is a *sensus divinitatis* that produces religious beliefs in a natural and non-inferential way. On Plantinga’s reformed epistemology, the beliefs created by the cognitive biases described by Kellemen, would be strongly justified properly basic beliefs. The question now is whether or not faith in the bible is a natural

children to accept the idea of a God with superhuman knowledge as well as providing evidence against the anthropomorphism hypothesis by showing that children’s concept of God has non-human properties. More evidence to this end is found in Barrett J.L., Richert R.A., and Driesenga A. (2001), “God’s beliefs versus mother’s: The development of nonhuman agent concepts”, *Child Development* 72, no. 1, 50–65, Experiment 3.

¹³² See Bloom P. (2005), *Descartes’ baby: How the science of child development explains what makes us human*, New York: Basic Books. See also Bering J.M. and Bjorklund D.F. (2004), “The natural emergence of reasoning about the afterlife as a developmental regularity”, *Developmental psychology* 40, no. 2, 217–233. Cf. Whittaker, D. (2020), “Natural Knowledge”, p. 37.

¹³³ Heywood B. (2010) and Bering J., *Do atheists reason implicitly in theistic terms? Evidence of teleo-functional biases in the autobiographical narratives of nonbelievers*, Unpublished manuscript, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

¹³⁴ Bering J. (2010), “Atheism is only skin deep: Geertz and Markússon rely mistakenly on sociodemographic data as meaningful indicators of underlying cognition”, *Religion* 40, no. 3, 166–168. Bering’s response to Geertz A.W. and Markússon G.I., “Religion is natural, atheism is not: On why everybody is both right and wrong” (2010), *Religion* 40, no. 3, 152–165.

belief, and if it could in fact be considered a strongly justified properly basic belief, as Plantinga would say, and a principle that leads to knowledge, as Komenský would say. The best way to show that faith in the bible is a natural belief would be through psychological research, of a similar nature to the studies that were carried out by Kellemen and other developmental psychologists on children. As I have pointed out earlier, there are studies which link religious experience with reading the bible, but none of these studies thus far have shown that faith in the bible arises naturally, since none of these studies have focused on the origin of believers' faith in their sacred text. There are studies that could be performed in order to confirm or refute the idea that faith in the bible is a natural belief, and I would like to propose one here. The subjects of this study would have to be children, preferably from non religious homes, in order to make sure that there is no possibility that their responses to the presented stimuli are in some way learned or influenced by their experiences. The subjects could be read passages from the bible and then be asked by an interviewer who they believe said/wrote this. If their answers suggest that they believe that these passages have a supernatural origin, or that the author was in some way "more than human" it could be taken as confirmation that belief in the bible is a natural belief, and could go some way towards showing that belief in the bible is natural and that it could be considered a strongly justified properly basic belief. Given that there is, for now, at least the possibility of confirming the bible as a principle that leads to knowledge, and given the fact that my modified version of the argument from reason and Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism suggest that we may have good reason for adopting a Comenian view of the senses and reason i.e. our trust in knowledge acquired from the senses and reason stems from our trust in their omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect author, I would say that there is good reason for us to start discussing Komenský's epistemological system not only from a historical perspective, but also as a serious epistemological system, one that, with some changes and developments, may have a place among the epistemological systems of present-day philosophers.

Conclusion:

Given the comparative studies that I have presented here, it seems clear that Komenský is historically somewhat unique in the way that he presents faith. It is neither in conflict with reason (as Bayle presents it) nor a source of weakly, subjectively justified beliefs that is epistemologically inferior to reason (as Kant and Kierkegaard present it) but it is a principle that leads to knowledge that works alongside reason and the senses in order to give human beings a complete knowledge (pansophia) of the visible and invisible worlds. The way that the various concepts of faith and their justifications have changed as they moved through the protestant philosophical tradition over the years, from Komenský and Bayle, through Kierkegaard and Kant, to present day philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, shows us that faith is not something simple or blind. It is an epistemological principle which, just as all aspects of philosophy, must change and develop when confronted with new data, new arguments and new schools of thought. Furthermore, given my altered version of the argument from reason, Plantinga's evolutionary argument against naturalism and the evidence that exists for the *sensus divinitatis*, I hope to have shown that the epistemology described by Komenský, where our trust in the knowledge we glean from the world, the mind and the bible is founded on our trust in the perfect author of these three books of God, is something that could, potentially and with some small alterations, even be revived in the present day.

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