

Thanks to Sam for this paper, which I really enjoyed reading and thinking about. I've divided my comments into three sections; roughly, they address the paper's beginning section on religiosity, theses 1+3, and thesis 2, respectively.

1)

It sounds to me as though true religiosity, i.e. holiness (are these interchangeable?), is an exquisite and rare achievement. It seems to include, but go far beyond, goodness. You can be 'wonderfully good' without it. But mere frumkeit is compatible with being reprehensible, and even 'quite a disgusting creature'.

These two ways of falling short of holiness strike me as very different. True religiosity seems like a noble and valuable aim. But it seems that in its (intermittent) absence, it's *goodness*, rather than frumkeit, that is the second best thing. Does religiosity have anything to do with attaining it?

I take it that when holiness is described as an inability to 'view anything without an attendant attitude of awe', this is intended to be restricted to awe-worthy aspects of creation? Or are they all equally awe-worthy?

Is awe really 'a relatively easy bubble to burst'? It's often fleeting, that's for sure. But when one is experiencing it, and especially when the object of one's awe is worthy of it, I'm not sure it's so easy to lose the feeling at will. Take witnessing the birth of a child, or being moved by the night sky. Unlike enjoying a lecture, these don't seem so easy to snap out of deliberately.

On p. 319 there seems to be a suggestion that the commandments can make one holy. I take it they can't literally adopt an attitude towards anyone. I'd be curious what this is a metaphor for. Or is the idea perhaps that one's observance of the commandments makes one holy?

2)

The paper's concluding remarks suggest that it recommends a dramatic shift in what religious epistemology should be concerned with, if it is to deal with the most important aspects of being religious.

By way of explanation, footnote 1 notes that the term 'epistemology' is being used in a slightly eccentric way. There, the topic of the paper is described as 'the metaphysics of epistemology', which is intended to include an investigation of the nature of the relations, other than belief/knowledge, in which we stand to the contents of our beliefs/knowledge.

Footnote 1 seems to me to correctly delineate the topic as follows: what are the psychological attitudes that a truly religious Jew/person has (and/or should have)<sup>1</sup> towards the contents of their religious belief/knowledge? Part of the proposed answer is that such attitudes include that of make-belief. As I understand it, this is an interesting thesis, though not a very radical one, because it still accords a central role to belief and knowledge (more on this below). But suppose that this wasn't so, and that the thesis was that as far as the attitudes of the religious go, belief and knowledge are not important. Then this thesis about the psychological attitudes of the religious would not straightforwardly translate into a thesis about what religious epistemology should be concerned with. Even broadly conceived, epistemology is concerned with aspects of life relating to knowledge; so to the extent that an aspect of life doesn't (and needn't) aim for knowledge, its implications for epistemology and vice versa seem to be lessened rather than altered.

Take the first thesis: whenever belief is required for religiosity, so is make-belief. I take it that quite a number of (putative) religiously significant facts fall into this category, i.e. belief in them is required for religiosity. That make-belief is required too, if it is, in no way diminishes the importance of belief. Take, for example, the (putative) fact that there is a God. Presumably it is no part of attaining religiosity to lessen one's confidence in this, no matter how pervasive the make-belief. And the reason one make-believes it is not just that it is useful to do so, but importantly, precisely because it is (thought to be) true. Its truth can't be properly done justice to via mere belief. In central cases, one should make-believe precisely what one believes.

Compare this to a position that on the face of it resembles the one proposed, namely a realistic religious fictionalism (see Christopher Jay's 'Realistic Fictionalism' (Thesis, 2011); also his 'The Kantian Moral Hazard argument for religious fictionalism', *Int J for Phil of Rel*, 2014). As I understand it, that position holds that the most central, most important norms for religious practice are not truth-based ones. What matters most to whether a given claim is worthy of playing a role in the life of the religious has nothing to do with truth or falsity. Such a position agrees with the one proposed here that many religious claims are true, that believing them is appropriate, and that simultaneously non-doxastically accepting (e.g. by make-believing) them is appropriate. But I suspect it differs from the one proposed here when it adds that what matters most to whether a given claim (such as whether God exists) is to be accepted is independent of its truth.

One prior question that arises for either view is whether it's possible to make-believe what one believes. There seems to be an important difference between what one can do with things one disbelieves (thesis 3) and things one believes (thesis 1). If I make-believe that the world is right now finely balanced between good and evil, I

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<sup>1</sup> I'll mostly omit the normative add-on, because I take it that 'religious' is already being used normatively. So to describe the (truly) religious is at the same time to say how a relevant group of people should feel and act.

am, hopefully, in control to a large extent. Perhaps the activity can be thought of as a kind of salutary pretense, like children might pretend to be animals. Contrast this with what a religious person is able to do with the thought that there is an all powerful, all-loving God. Can they pretend that there is? Or perhaps make-believe is different from pretense in some way? Even if so, can they make-believe this?

What one believes is less easily controlled, and if one believes something, that aspect of the world impresses itself on one as peculiarly independent of what one does. It's probably true that beliefs can be *part* of games of make-believe (child to dad: let's make believe you're my daddy, etc.). But could one make-believe that things are just as (one thinks) they are in all essential respects?

In any case, it does seem possible to engage in an activity of the kind described. If seeing-as is not inclusive enough, perhaps one could speak of experiencing things under the aspect of *p*, making vivid the full significance of *p*, or achieving an intense recognition of the truth of *p*. What seems to matter is not that there is a relation other than belief involved, but that one realizes fully what it is that one believes when one believes that *p*, and constantly attends to the belief's implications.

Indeed, it seems to already help a lot to have the right beliefs. Rabbi Hirsch says the relevant belief is not just to believe that God exists or that God is one and only one. Rather it is to believe 'that every breath that I take and that every moment of my existence is a direct gift of His power and love, and that my duty is to devote every moment of my life to His service alone'. Why should it detract from the significance of these beliefs that they are propositional? What is 'autistic' about a form faith that accords them pride of place? What seems to matter is to experience oneself as in a relationship with the God one believes in. No make-believe required; just like no make-believe that one's spouse exists is required to relate to them in the right way.

Unfortunately it doesn't seem sufficient for holiness, or even for a step on the way to holiness, either. Surely someone can vividly make-believe that they are in 'a world in which God is [their] God making certain demands of [them] and believing certain things about [them] and [their] potential', and kill innocent people. It depends on what it is the God is thought to demand. And the reason this matters is precisely that those things are *believed* to be God's demands – if it was merely a game of make-believe, things might not go that far. Things one believes are able to play a very different role in one's life from things one doesn't believe.

Of course it doesn't seem likely that having the right beliefs can guarantee any degree of holiness either. I suspect that there is no recipe for it. To my mind, a large part of the tangible aspects of holiness could be described as passionate goodness. And I suspect there is no recipe for that either.

3)

Let's now return to the question of whether the paper's claims have any startling implications for religious epistemology. In section 2, a number of different theses are attributed to 'classical epistemology' and dismissed as inadequate, at least for the philosophy of religion. I'll end with some of the questions this section raised for me.

Is it consensus in epistemology that there is only propositional knowledge, or is propositional knowledge just better studied than other kinds? What about objectual knowledge and self-knowledge?

I didn't understand the objection against the view that what Mary learns is that red looks like *this*. Is it that 'that red looks like *this*' is not a proposition, because it contains 'this'? Why is that?

Is there a difference between knowing what it is like to see red and knowing the *what-it's-likeness* of seeing red? Is the kind of non-propositional knowledge we gain from phenomenal experience different from knowledge by acquaintance?

The two paragraphs on autism also seem to raise interesting but complex issues. We are dealing with 'a species of non-propositional knowledge that isn't concerned with the *what-it's-likeness* of phenomenal experiences'. So we are dealing with a different kind of non-propositional knowledge from the one we gain from phenomenal experience. Does that mean we are not dealing with knowledge of what something is like, e.g. what it is like for the other person to be happy? What then are we dealing with?

Or maybe it doesn't mean that, and we *are* dealing with knowledge of what something is like, just not of what (say) red is like (i.e. one not involving phenomenal properties). Suppose it's knowledge of what it is for the other person to be happy. Is that different from what it is for oneself to be happy? The mirror neuron finding sounds more like the opposite, suggesting that we somehow understand others' emotions because we have them too. But we needn't have them then and there (we can understand a person's being happy without being happy). Is it that we feel an echo of happiness that we felt previously, and thereby understand?

Finally, I think it's important to distinguish between the claim that we often hope against all odds and the claim that we are justified in doing so, or right to do so. Moreover, since we're talking about situations in which the odds are against one, this sense of 'justified' presumably isn't an epistemic one. It might be prudential, or all-things-considered, or something else. So the point about hope might be e.g. that hope is often all-things-considered, even if not epistemically justified. Alternatively, the point may be that hope is not subject to epistemic norms, i.e. it can't be either epistemically justified or unjustified. But then it's not that hope somehow defies the norms of epistemology; rather, it's that hope isn't relevant to epistemology (or vice versa).