Replies to Dani and Natalja

I first of all want to thank my dear friends Dani and Natalja for their kind, thought-provoking and insightful comments on my paper. I only wish I had shared my paper with them before it was published so that I could have benefited from these insights earlier! In what follows, I will try to make my arguments clearer, in the light of their comments, and to point to the sorts of redrafting this paper should probably be subjected to if it hadn't already been published! These comments won't make much sense if you haven't read the paper itself, or Natalja and Dani's comments.

Religion and Frumkeit

Natalja is right to point out that goodness should be valued more than frumkeit. After all, the frum person can be a 'disgusting creature'. But, I would like to point out that frumkeit, even though it is compatible with the lack of goodness, is still a necessary ingredient of religiosity, and that that is why it's still an important notion (not merely sociologically but even philosophically). Religiosity requires certain beliefs that are shared with frumkeit, even if religiosity demands more, and thus, frumkeit is an ingredient of religiosity. And although goodness can be attained without religiosity, I think it impossible to fail to be good in one's truly religious moments. Religiosity is equivalent to holiness, and holiness seems to include goodness as a constituent (or, at least as a corollary).

Natalja asks whether holiness, as an inability to 'view anything without an attendant attitude of awe', is to be restricted to awe-worthy aspects of creation? Or, are all aspects of creation equally awe-worthy? Here I will confess ignorance. I want to think about this further. Intuitively, it strikes me that there may be times when it is *inappropriate* to view a certain object with awe. But, that doesn't mean that it is inherently unworthy of awe. Perhaps awe-worthiness is relative to time and circumstance, even if it is theoretically unlimited in terms of what it can appropriately extend to.

Natlaja goes on to doubt that awe is as easy to burst as I suggest. '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.' I think Natalja may just be demonstrating that she is more inherent holy than I, since I think that if I was depraved enough to try, deliberately, to burst the bubble of awe engendered by witnessing a child-birth, I probably could.

On p. 319, I make it sound as if the commandments can adopt an attitude of awe towards *you*. Natalja is right to point out that this must be a metaphor. It is a metaphor that I think is lurking in the Midrash I quote. But, what is it a metaphor for? Going back to my previous discomfort about what and when things are awe-worthy, if I had a better handle on what it means to be awe-worthy, I think I'd want to say the following: that keeping the commandments in the right way, with the right attitude, can help to make us awe-worthy, or more awe-worthy, or awe-worthy more of the time. This is what the commandments making us holy might be a metaphor for!

Make-Believe

Dani agrees with my claim that, to use his words, 'religious epistemology must demand more of us than mere propositional attitudes with the appropriate credentials; it must

demand a mode of existence that is appropriately borne out of holding a set of propositions.' But, as far as he's concerned, classical epistemology needn't be adapted in the slightest to appreciate this demand of religiosity. Again, to use his words: 'The person who holds a set of beliefs {p1, p2, p3, …} but who fails to adopt a mode of existence that intuitively arises out of holding that set of beliefs has failed to appreciate the psychological import of those beliefs.' And thus, the person who believes in God, but doesn't adopt 'a mode of existence that is appropriately borne out' by holding that belief, suffers from an 'interesting kind of psychological disconnect … But this is a matter for the psychologist, not the epistemologist.'

I think I can cut against the force of Dani's argument here if I can show you a case in which a person has (1) the appropriate propositional-belief set, for being a religious Jew; (2) is such that she appreciates the psychological import of those beliefs; and (3) still falls short of religiosity.

Take Sarah. Sarah believes in God. She believes that God wills her to observe Jewish law. She recognizes the psychological import of those beliefs. Accordingly, she diligently observes every detail of Jewish law. To strengthen the thought experiment, let us imagine that she's almost super human in that she never suffers from any form of akrasia. Furthermore, given her recognition of the psychological import of her beliefs, she is suitably moved by God's kindness, suitably reverential of His power and might, and, as we've said, because of her almost super-human psychological fortitude, she never acts in ways that conflict with her religious beliefs.

Is she religious, rather than merely frum? In my paper, I wrote:

> There are some beliefs that we have that you can just put into your belief box, and then you don't have to think about them again. I believe that smoking causes cancer. I rarely think about that belief. It's just there, unconsciously waiting until somebody asks me, 'Do you believe that smoking causes cancer?' to which, I'll respond, 'Yes, I do.' Despite the fact that I constantly believe it, I'm not constantly thinking about the belief or its content. It's a belief that demands no attention from me. The belief that you have chronic back pain, on the other hand, is of a very different nature. You can't hold that belief without being constantly aware of that which you believe. It would never be appropriate to respond to the question, 'Do you believe that you're in chronic back-pain?' with the response, 'Oh, Gosh, yes, I suppose I do.' Regarding other beliefs, you can be surprised to realize that you have them, but that cannot be the case with some beliefs, such as the belief that you have chronic back pain because the content of some beliefs forces itself upon your experience.

Just as one can have background beliefs, one can also have background psychological states. Sarah believes in God. Whole hours go by (between her performance of ritual laws, for instance) in which Sarah doesn't think about her theological beliefs. At those times, the relevant beliefs are background beliefs. And, at those times, perhaps her reverence, and her being moved by God's kindness are also background states. At any point, if you asked her,

'are you moved by God's kindness', she'd say, 'Yes, I am.' But, her theological beliefs and the concomitant psychological states might be equally in the background. At those times, she fails to be religious, even though she (1) has the requisite belief and (2) recongises the psychological import of those beliefs. Why? In those moments what is missing? Or, put better, what do we need to add into the mix to arrive at religiosity?

My claim is that Sarah needs to hold an additional propositional attitude to the relevant beliefs. If, in addition to believing in God, and in His wanting Sarah to act in certain ways, she made-believe in God, and in His wanting her to act in those ways, then her relevant background beliefs and psychological states would move to the foreground, and, accordingly, her frumkeit would be transformed into religiosity.

Make-belief is the extra ingredient. But, does it belong to epistemology or to psychology? I'm pretty sure, given what I've already said, that it can't be reduced to the notion of recognizing the psychological import of one's beliefs. The notion is more robust than that; harder to reduce. But, as Natalja says, 'even broadly conceived, epistemology is concerned with aspects of life relating to knowledge', and this relation of make-believe does not, at least not essentially, relate to knowledge. She points to the first footnote of my paper [the published version, rather than the online draft], which states:

> I recognise that I use the term 'epistemology' slightly eccentrically— normally, we think of epistemology as the study of belief and knowledge in terms of evidence, warrant and justification. I relate to epistemology, in this paper, to include that study, but also to include an investigation of the nature of the relations that stand between us and the content of our belief/knowledge—what might be called the metaphysics of epistemology.

Let me clarify the point that I had hoped to make. Bertrand Russell's notion of acquaintance doesn't always have any obvious connection to our pre-philosophical concept of knowledge. In order to assert the proposition that Socrates is wise, according to Russell, I first of all need to be acquainted with wisdom. This isn't like being acquainted with a person, in the non-technical sense of, 'I'm acquainted with Simon, but I don't know him very well'! To be acquainted with wisdom is to have some sort of epistemic contact with it, allowing you to construct propositions containing wisdom as a constituent. And, even though this technical sense of 'acquaintance' is only knowledge in a very loose sense (it isn't knowledge about wisdom, or even knowledge about how to use wisdom in assertions about Socrates); it is still a relation that one needs to have to the constituents of a proposition before one can have propositional-*knowledge*. For that reason, *acquaintance* is a notion properly thought to be a part of epistemology. You can't do epistemology without it. Similarly, I claim that religious-belief, rather than frum-belief, has to come along with make-belief. In that this is an essential ingredient of religious-belief, I think it fair to call is 'epistemological' even if, in isolation, it doesn't bear all that much relevance to knowledge.

In short, I've been trying to say that beliefs plus appropriate psychological states isn't sufficient for religiosity, and that the extra ingredient of make-belief is required; an ingredient that can properly be called epistemological in some broad sense of the word. But, perhaps I should accept that this isn't epistemology at all, but it's a related field – the

metaphysics of propositional attitudes – and, in my paper, I'm merely interested in which propositional attitudes are essential for religiosity. Such a redraft would entail changing the title of my paper! This isn't about epistemology, nor about psychology, but about the propositional attitudes that give rise to religiosity. In fact, it's more complex than that, since not all of the attitudes in question are directed towards propositions. So, it's a paper about the propositional and non-propositional attitudes that one needs to have in order to be religious. Having raised that possibility, and knowing that it's an option, I still don't feel compelled to give up so easily; even if Natalja's treatment of my comments about the nature of hope gave me pause for thought! Make-belief seems to be an essential ingredient of distinctively religious-belief. For that reason, it seems fair to call it an epistemological notion.

Natlaja makes another suggestion as to what the extra ingredient, if not make-belief, might be: '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.' I think I could be brought round to viewing things in this way, but, to address Dani's point, is this merely to have a belief and then to have the appropriate psychology in place? I think not. To attend to a belief isn't obviously a psychological notion; and, to attend to its implications isn't either. Furthermore, can we practically pull this feat off, if we don't engage in make-believe, as I have described it?

Natalja writes:

> 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 [of] 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.

But I think that she actually answers her own question for me. It isn't merely to believe that God is giving me every moment of my existence as a gift; it is, in her words, 'to experience oneself as in a relationship with the God one believes in.' That isn't mere belief. That is what I have called make-believe. And though I don't need to make-believe that my spouse exists to relate to her in the right way, perhaps I do need to make-believe, in addition to my belief, that she needs and deserves my compassion, love, respect and attention; I need to experience myself as being related to her in relevant ways.

Natalja is right to point out that my make-belief in God isn't guaranteed to inculcate holiness. If I believe, for instance in an evil God who wants me to do evil things, making-believe in that God and his will for me isn't going to make me holy. But, I want to argue that a combination of the *right* sorts of belief (true theological ones) and make-belief are sufficient for holiness. When I believe in a loving and compassionate God who wants me to

be loving and compassionate, and when in addition to that belief, I also make-believe in a loving and compassionate God who wants me to be loving and compassionate, I don't see how I won't achieve, if only fleetingly, a moment of holiness.

Belief as an Impoverished Notion
Dani and Natalja claim that the second thesis of my paper – that belief is an impoverished notion – is less revisionary than I take it to be. As Dani says:

> Many epistemologists in the twentieth century recognized the rough epistemic division between propositional knowledge, know how, and knowledge by acquaintance. The last two were not the stuff of the first; that is, knowing that w is a way to ϕ does not entail that one knows how to ϕ. Similarly, knowing that Obama is the President of the United States does not entail that you know Obama personally. But those who worked on these different kinds of knowledge did so within the confines of mainstream epistemology.

I'm in broad agreement with these words. My graduate work on Russell's Multiple Relation Theory of Judgement won me over to Russell's theory of acquaintance, briefly sketched above (even if subsequent reading and reflection has put some pressure on this commitment of mine). And thus, I'm well aware that 20th Century epistemology has made room for non-propositional attitudes to count as forms of 'knowledge'. And, to the extent that that has remained an orthodoxy, I accept that my second thesis is not at all revisionary. All I sought to do was to point out that personal, non-propositional knowledge of God is a key ingredient in the religious life. I shouldn't have claimed that classical epistemology would struggle to accommodate that key ingredient. I should have been more careful. But, Dani goes on to say:

> My point is that mainstream epistemology, where propositions and our attitudes to them are the objects of analysis, is sufficiently versatile and dynamic to cater for a robust discussion of the kind of relationship theists ought to have toward God.

Here, Dani either made an inadvertent error, or he revealed a tendency to downplay the non-propositional forms of knowledge that he had only just previously accepted as part of the mainstream epistemological taxonomy. If we allow knowledge by acquaintance and know-how into that taxonomy, then it won't be the case that 'propositions and our attitudes to them are the objects of analysis.' When we're talking about knowledge by acquaintance, we're talking about an epistemic relation between subjects and the *constituents* of propositions; not propositions. When we're talking about know-how, we're not talking about a relation to propositions. If you think otherwise, if you think that all types of knowledge can be reduced to propositional types of knowledge, then you're denying Russell's principle of acquaintance; you shut down the diverse taxonomy that Dani had only just alluded to, and you *will* have a struggle on your hands when you want to accommodate my second thesis and the key role that personal knowledge of God plays in the fabric of religiosity.

The Corrective Effects of Make-Believe

I think Dani is right that we 'do not have to make-believe that we left Egypt to get ourselves in the right frame of mind to display the kinds of sensitivities [that] Lebens thinks that such make-believing engenders.' The sorts of sensitivities in question, broadly construed, are open to people who do not engage in the sort of make-believe that my paper discusses. You can still be kind to the stranger and still be thankful to God for freeing our ancestors, even if you don't engage in the make-believe that you yourself we're freed from Egypt. But I would raise two questions for Dani to reflect upon: (1) why does Jewish law seem to mandate these games of make-believe (as the Hagadda says, 'In every generation a person is obliged to regard himself *as if* he [personally] had come out of Egypt'); and (2) is belief in the Exodus story, plus the appropriate psychological states enough to generate exactly the same sort of sensitivity as the make-believe, or merely the same general *kind* of sensitivity? To expand upon my second question: does the concern for the stranger and the gratitude to God *feel the same* when not produced by make-belief, or is there a phenomenological difference?

Whether my paper was truly about epistemology, or more accurately about the sorts of propositional and non-propositional attitudes necessary for religiosity, I was gratified to see that Natalja and Dani recognized the importance of the notion of religiosity (as opposed to frumkeit), and, with some caveats, seemed to agree about the sorts of attitudes that one might need to have in order to achieve it.