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## **Religious Commitment and the Benefits of Cognitive Diversity: A Reply to Trakakis**

### **Abstract:**

Metaphilosophical discussions about the philosophy of religion are increasingly common. In a recent article in *Sophia* N.N. Trakakis (2017) advances the view that Christian Philosophy is closer to ideology than philosophy. This is because philosophy conducted in the Socratic tradition tends to emphasize values antithetical to religious faith such as independence of thought, rationality, empiricism, and doubt. A philosopher must be able to follow the arguments wherever they lead, something that the religious believer cannot do. I argue that there are two main problems with this view. First, Trakakis faces an unpalatable dilemma. It's possible his view recommends a rejection of itself, making it self-referentially incoherent. If it doesn't recommend such a rejection, then Trakakis's preferred method isn't necessary for genuine philosophical inquiry. Second, Trakakis makes numerous knowledge claims about the psychological motivation of religious philosophers but never offers evidence for these claims. Third, Trakakis never considers that the existence of cognitive diversity is truth conducive. Even if devout religious believers cannot conduct genuine philosophical inquiry, unless Trakakis thinks we should ignore all work from religious believers, then it is irrelevant whether it is genuine philosophy.

But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

### **I. Introduction**

Metaphilosophical discussions about the philosophy of religion are increasingly common. In a recent article in *Sophia* N.N. Trakakis (2017) advances the view that Christian Philosophy is closer to ideology than philosophy. This is because philosophy conducted in the Socratic tradition tends to emphasize values antithetical to religious faith such as independence of thought, rationality, empiricism, and doubt. Trakakis argues that the Socratic tradition seems to separate religious commitment and philosophy. His conclusion is that "much of what passes as Christian philosophy is ideological as opposed to rational or truth-seeking in character" (Trakakis 2017, 605). He notes that both the continental and analytic schools have presented very similar arguments to defend this separation, specifically in Heidegger and Russell. In support of his position he also conducts a case study of recent discussion about the problem of evil. Trakakis's view is that the correct

methodology for philosophical inquiry is that the philosopher must follow the arguments wherever they lead. This method is incompatible with devout religious conviction.

After outlining Trakakis's defense of this position I argue that there are three problems with his view. First, Takakis faces in unpalatable dilemma. It's possible his view recommends a rejection of itself, making it self-referentially incoherent. If it doesn't recommend such a rejection, then Trakakis's preferred method isn't necessary for genuine philosophical inquiry. Second, Trakakis makes numerous knowledge claims about the psychological motivation of religious philosophers but never offers evidence for these claims. Third, Trakakis never considers that the existence of cognitive diversity is truth conducive. Even if devout religious believers cannot conduct genuine philosophical inquiry, unless Trakakis thinks we should ignore all work from religious believers, then it is irrelevant whether it is genuine philosophy.

## II. Trakakis on Philosophy and Religious Commitment

### 1. *Heidegger and Russell*

According to Trakakis, one way of interpreting Heidegger's antipathy toward the notion of Christian philosophy is that he defended a methodological atheism. On this view, "theology is regarded as obstructing or preventing genuine questioning and thinking. If one starts from a position of faith, according to Heidegger, then one's philosophical pursuit begins by already having found what it claims to be searching for – viz., God" (Trakakis 2017, 608). According to Heidegger a religious believer might be able to participate in philosophy but she cannot do so authentically because she holds religious convictions. For Heidegger the very idea of Christian philosophy is akin to a square circle. Heidegger understood himself as a constant beginner and thought all philosophers ought to do the same. That is:

Heidegger proposed a way of practicing philosophy that demands deep and searching questioning and a restless and perhaps even endless exploring, but without knowing where such wondering and meandering will lead (and so not predetermining or prejudicing the outcome). Thus, instead of the construction of theories and worldviews, philosophy for Heidegger is more a matter of indicating or pointing, following traces and signs, going down uncertain tracks and byways (Trakakis 2017, 612).

So Heidegger provides one example of someone from the continental tradition who is highly sceptical of the very possibility of Christian philosophy. Trakakis hold that in the analytic tradition, on the other hand, Bertrand Russell famously wrote of Aquinas' work that:

There is little of the true philosophic spirit in Aquinas. He does not, like the Platonic Socrates, set out to follow wherever the argument may lead. He is not engaged in an enquiry, the result of which it is impossible to know in advance. Before he begins to philosophize, he already knows the truth; it is declared in the Catholic faith. If he can find apparently rational arguments for some parts of the faith, so much the better; if he cannot, he need only fall back on revelation. The finding of arguments for a conclusion given in advance is not philosophy, but special pleading. I cannot, therefore, feel that

he deserves to be put on a level with the best philosophers either of Greece or of modern times (Russell quoted in Trakakis 2017, 613).

However, Trakakis observes that before this quote Russell lauds Aquinas for his originality and systemic architectonic, and charity with respect to opposing views (2017, 613-614). But these virtues cannot elevate Aquinas because there is a sense in which they are insincere. Trakakis explains that the problem with Aquinas' work is that he is convinced of his conclusions before the inquiry even begins. No argument or evidence could move Aquinas from what he already believes to be the case (Trakakis 2017, 614). So there seems to be something insincere about how Aquinas practiced philosophy. But Trakakis admits that even if one is insincere or doesn't give their own reasons for believing something, they could well advance an argument for a conclusion that is convincing. And this insincerity doesn't hurt the success of said argument. Rather, Trakakis suggests the following is the problem:

What I am suggesting is a deep-seated disagreement or clash in values between those pursuing philosophy in the manner proposed by Russell and religious or Christian philosophers like Aquinas. The values and goals of the latter drive them to prioritize and obediently defer to authorities such as sacred texts and the church, and this has as a consequence that certain 'unfavourable' lines of inquiry tend to be prematurely closed down or not treated with the rigour they deserve. The dangers this introduces are clear: Russell would call it failing to follow the argument or evidence wherever it leads. Heidegger would describe it as a falling away from a phenomenological fidelity to 'the things themselves' – either way, the danger is that truth is not tracked, and that the practice of philosophy is seriously circumscribed, if not undermined (Trakakis 2017, 616).

He continues:

The source of the problem, then, lies in divergent value commitments. One way of expressing this is in terms of the opposition between premodern and modern values and practices: the premodern (e.g. medieval Christian) orientation to the world prioritizes community, tradition and authority (particularly the authority of religious institutions and texts), while the modern (e.g. Enlightenment) ideal tends to be more individualistic, rational and empirical, emphasizing doubt and dissent, change and novelty, and the liberating possibilities of daring to think for ourselves, as Kant put it. This explains why the values and goals of the religiously committed philosopher will sooner or later run up against the force of a devaluation of the principles undergirding philosophical (and indeed any broadly scientific or scholarly) investigation – and when this happens we encounter what Russell calls a 'lack of a true philosophic spirit' (Trakakis 2017, 616-617).

Thus, it's not so much that insincerity is the problem, as it is that Aquinas fails to follow the arguments wherever they lead. This type of inquiry doesn't "further the pursuit of truth and other goals of scholarly inquiry" (Trakakis 2017, 618).

## 2. *The Problem of Evil*

Trakakis also conducts a case study about the possibility of Christian philosophy by examining contemporary discussions of the problem of evil. It's well known that discussion of the problem of evil have shifted from the logical problem to the evidential problem as formulated by Rowe in his famous 1979 paper. Discussions of the evidential problem of evil have led to a response known as sceptical theism. Trakakis explains that:

This is the view that the limitations of the human mind are such that we are in no position to be able to discern God's reasons for permitting evil – and hence, the fact that we cannot identify such reasons should not surprise us and should not count against the truth of theism. Despite an initial degree of plausibility, the skeptical theist view has struck many critics as a last-ditch attempt to save face. Furthermore, skeptical theism has been criticized as opening the door to more radical and therefore more troublesome forms of skepticism (Trakakis 2017, 620).

Trakakis believes that current discussions of the problem of evil are stagnant. They have “become petrified into a select number of entrenched and defensive strategies, with little willingness to think creatively and laterally, where this might involve challenging the broad parameters and presuppositions of the debate” (Trakakis 2017, 620).<sup>1</sup> This case study leads Trakakis to observe three problems with how philosophy of religion is practiced today. First, “Christian philosophers, influenced no doubt by Alvin Plantinga's advice to Christian philosophers in the mid-1980s to fearlessly pursue projects of their own choosing and in a specifically Christian manner, now tend to engage with the problem of evil from a distinctly Christian (or at least theistic) perspective” (Trakakis 2017, 621). According to Trakakis this means that Christian philosophers who take up this view of philosophy do not commit to an impartial search for truth with the rest of the philosophical community. Rather, Christians are likely to start with their own Christian presuppositions. With respect to the problem of evil, “Plantinga has given permission to Christian philosophers to tackle the problem in such a way as fundamentally to reorient the terms of the discussion. Simply put, the orientation now is one of ‘bad faith’” (Trakakis 2017, 622). He asserts that regardless of the impression given, the Christian belief of such philosophers is almost never given up or significantly modified in light of philosophical arguments and evidence (Trakakis 2017, 622-623).

Second, Trakakis worries that “[i]f one approaches the POE from the perspective of a specific religious framework, such as that provided by Christian theology, where certain concepts, beliefs and hypotheses are available while others are foreclosed, then the risk run is that the answers or proposals developed will not only be dishonest but distorted too” (Trakakis 2017, 623). He argues that discussions of the problem of evil need to be less abstract and purely theoretical. They need to take into account the first-person perspective of suffering, etc. (Trakakis 2017, 623). In sum, “Christian philosophers have set out to render evil consistent with preconceived ideas about God and the world. One unfortunate consequence of this is that the reality or brutality of much evil is downplayed or denied outright” (Trakakis 2017, 624).

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<sup>1</sup> Trakakis even goes so far as to point out that a distinguished philosopher of religion Keith Parsons has left the field. While Parsons has published in philosophy of religion it's not clear me that his contributions make him ‘distinguished’. I see exactly zero examples of major players leaving the field. But this is neither here nor there.

Third, Trakakis says that what follows from the previous two observations is the “tendency of faith commitments to remain steadfast even in the face of strong evidence against the reasonableness of such commitments” (Trakakis 2017, 626). This is meant to reflect the phrase, ‘death by a thousand qualifications’. Trakakis concludes:

My critique... is aimed not at agnostics or wavering believers, but at theistic or Christian philosophers of the ilk of Plantinga, Swinburne and van Inwagen who have more or less ‘made up their mind’ about the fundamentals of faith. These are philosophers who have developed over lengthy careers a sophisticated account of reality, indebted in large part to the scriptures and teachings of Christianity. As a result, they have an answer ready to hand for whatever evil may eventuate, even if the answer be the modest or skeptical one of ‘God’s ways are not our ways’ (Trakakis 2017, 626).

### III. Trakakis’s Methodological Principles

Trakakis concludes with a discussion of philosophy and ideology. He says that:

Speaking of the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, it will no doubt have been noticed that the objections raised against Christian philosophy – that it does not live up to the Socratic ideal of following the inquiry wherever it leads, that it displays deep intransigence to belief-revision in the face of countervailing evidence, etc. – are reminiscent of the ‘unmasking’ projects of the ‘masters of suspicion’, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud, who criticized religion as driven by a range of disreputable motives and interests that cannot easily be dislodged by reason... Religion, in this respect, operates much like political ideologies such as communism, fascism and certain kinds of nationalism: the world is viewed from the lens of a comprehensive system of ideas; on the basis of this ‘total’ system a program of social and political organization, if not also moral-spiritual development, is developed; and a call is issued to a wide public not merely to persuade but to recruit loyal adherents, demanding unswerving commitment (Trakakis 2017, 627).

According to Trakakis the genuine philosopher does not know the result of her inquiry before conducting it. To know the result beforehand would mean failing to be a genuine seeker of the truth. Trakakis realizes that it’s an open question as to how much of philosophy is infected with ideology. That is, “if the underlying problem with Christian philosophy is that it has the character of an ideology, then why couldn’t the same be said of *nearly all* of philosophy?” (Trakakis 2017, 629). If true, this fact would reduce *all* of philosophy to disingenuously defending hidden presuppositions. The best this kind of scholarship could offer would be internal critique (i.e. to look for contradictions and tensions from within).

Finally, Trakakis realizes that one might object to all of this by claiming that it is the *content*, rather than the *method* of inquiry that matters. Philosophical insight can be gained from various methods, even ones committed to ideology. While Trakakis admits there is some truth to this proposal he says that “it is the methods, and not the results, that matter here (as to whether something counts as a genuine work of philosophy). It is the preparedness to follow the argument wherever it leads, regardless of whether one is thereby securely led to the truth, that qualifies one’s endeavour as

philosophical in spirit” (Trakakis 2017, 630). While following the argument wherever it leads might never be completely possible, it is an ideal that can be achieved with varying degrees of success. It is something to strive to achieve. Trakakis concludes that “[w]hile few, if any, philosophies might live up to the Socratic ideal in full, the conclusion of this paper... is that Christian philosophy falls so far short of the ideal that it cannot properly be thought of as a form of philosophy” (Trakakis 2017, 630).

Initially, one might be tempted to understand Trakakis as advocating for a kind of methodological presupposition-less philosophy. But his position is more nuanced than this claim.<sup>2</sup> For instance, Trakakis aligns himself with Heidegger who isn’t exactly advocating for presuppositionless philosophy or completely religiously neutral philosophy. Trakakis explains:

Having taken the hermeneutical turn in phenomenology, Heidegger conceives philosophy as ineliminably interpretative and perspectival (a matter of seeing-as rather than simple or pure seeing). But this does not as yet license religious interpretations or perspectives. Not just any interpretation will be admissible, and it seems clear that Heidegger would wish to exclude, in the name of a rigorous phenomenological study of ‘the things themselves’, any presuppositions that are (in some significant sense) arbitrary or unjustified... And so, even if some religious presuppositions might make the grade, Heidegger’s view is that traditional, creedal Christianity fails – it does not enter the circle in the right way ‘because its faith-presuppositions are based, not on ‘the things themselves’, but on an alleged revelation... In its ultimate loyalty to faith rather than facticity, Christian philosophy takes a direction that cannot fulfil the goals of a phenomenological analysis of being (as these are understood by Heidegger, at least) (Trakakis 2017, 610).

Trakakis clearly has a degreed notion of what kind of and how many presuppositions a philosopher can take on before slipping into ideology. Wherever that benchmark is, commitment to a creedal version of Christianity surpasses it and hence is ideology. It’s clear that Trakakis’s main concern is methodological. He appears committed to the following two methodological principles or maxims:

Methodological Enlightenment Principle:

*One should conduct philosophical inquiry in the Socratic tradition and with Enlightenment presuppositions which do not ultimately commit one to ideology.*

Follow-the-Argument Principle:

*Philosophy in the Socratic tradition and with Enlightenment presuppositions ought to always follow the argument wherever it leads.*

These two principles summarize what I think Trakakis would consider necessary to conducting genuine philosophical inquiry. Notice too, that the Methodological Enlightenment Principle entails the Follow-the-Argument Principle. If one conducts philosophical inquiry using the former, she

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<sup>2</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for helping me to see this point.

will necessarily be committed to the latter. We might take these to be a minimum requirement for conducting philosophy in the Socratic tradition. Again, it's important to note that this can be achieved to varying degrees. Trakakis's claim is that Christian philosophers violate these principles, or at least don't follow them to a sufficiently high degree in order to be considered conducting legitimate philosophy. In the rest of this paper I discuss reasons to reject these principles.

#### IV. Problems for Trakakis's Methodological Principles

One worry for Trakakis's account is that it's not possible to coherently maintain both the Methodological Enlightenment Principle (or 'MEP') *and* the Follow-the-Argument Principle (or 'FEP'). Recall that Trakakis acknowledges (with Heidegger) that all philosophical inquiry fails to completely live up to FAP. This is not a problem in itself. The problem is that inasmuch as a philosopher follows FAP she might be required to give up MEP. But we've seen that MEP entails FAP. So MEP could entail a principle which recommends its own rejection.

The problem is not so much that MEP and FAP are free-hanging normative commitments. Trakakis is clear that these principle reflect the Socratic ideal. And Socrates indeed comes to philosophy with certain presuppositions. The problem is that it's not clear what makes philosophy in the Socratic tradition (and commitment to enlightenment values) genuine philosophy, albeit not without presuppositions, but *not* Christian philosophy genuine philosophy. In other words, what makes MEP and FAP the right suppositions for a philosopher to adopt as opposed to merely being ideology? Why does Christian philosophy not meet the standard set by MEP and FAP while they themselves meet their own standard? This is something that Trakakis doesn't say enough about given that it's absolutely essential for his thesis to be correct.

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, FAP is brought into existence by the Socratic ideal, but also by Enlightenment values. It's entailed, after all, by MEP. Recall the values that Trakakis associates with the Enlightenment. He writes such values tend "to be more individualistic, rational and empirical, emphasizing doubt and dissent, change and novelty, and the liberating possibilities of daring to think for ourselves" (Trakakis 2017, 617). Trakakis, however, never considers all of the Enlightenment thinkers who contributed to promoting and defending these values who were themselves Christian believers. It's far from clear that some of these values aren't the direct result of thinkers working out the implications of their Christian commitments. For example, Jesus's interaction with women and disabled persons would have stunned the ancient Greeks, particularly the land and slave owning Greek men. Perhaps I'm overstating the case, but Trakakis should have explained why and how such values arose independently of Christian values. Or, if he accepts that they are rooted in Christian values, then he needs to explain why we should adopt them without also adopting other Christian values, if not Christianity itself.<sup>3</sup>

Here's the rub: What separates the Enlightenment values from ideology? Why is a strong commitment to these values not considered ideological, when a strong to commitment to the truth of the Apostle's creed, for instance, is ideological? If FAP is true, then one should in principle be willing to give up the Enlightenment values (and hence MEP) that Trakakis lauds as necessary for

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Trakakis could draw a distinction here by claiming that certain enlightenment values might be grounded in Christianity historically, but not normatively. But there needs to be an argument for drawing this distinction.

conducting philosophical inquiry. But in conducting genuine philosophical inquiry by living up to FAP one needs to be willing to give up not only MEP, but also FAP if that's where inquiry leads. So conducting 'true' philosophy might lead one to reject 'true' philosophy, particularly the two methodological principles Trakakis appears committed to claiming is required for genuine philosophy. In other words, following FAP could lead one to reject both MEP and FAP.

If Trakakis denies that FAP can lead one to reject to MEP or FAP, then it's difficult to see how his position is any different from the dogmatic ideology that he wishes to disavow. This worry can be stated in the form of the following unpalatable dilemma:

*The FAP Dilemma: Either FAP is itself ideology or it isn't necessary to philosophical inquiry.*

If FAP is ideology then it could recommend a rejection of itself or the principle which entails it, MEP. If it's ideology then it's self-referentially incoherent. And these are supposed to be methodological principles that avoid ideology. In trying to avoid this worry Trakakis might respond that FAP could be given up if that's where the arguments lead. But then FAP isn't a methodological principle which is necessary to philosophical inquiry. And if it's not necessary for philosophical inquiry then it can't be used as a standard by which to distinguish genuine philosophy from ideology. I can't see a plausible way out of this dilemma that preserves FAP. Perhaps Trakakis could offer a rejoinder by modifying his position and claim that he is only committed to MEP. But as already mentioned, we need reasons to think the values associated with MEP aren't Christian values, and are also incompatible with Christian values. And even if that's established we need further reasons to choose them over Christian values. There doesn't appear to be a way to reformulate MEP or FAP, or Trakakis's position more generally that can explain (in a principled, non-arbitrary way) why philosophers ought to adopt MEP and FAP, but aren't allowed to adopt Christian values.

## **V. Is there empirical support for Trakakis's Principles?**

One aspect of MEP and FAP that Takakis doesn't discuss is whether there is any empirical support for using them as methodological principles. By this I mean whether there is any evidence to suggest that philosophy is better-off when philosophers try to live-up to MEP and FAP in their inquiry. I suppose the closest he gets is the case study about the (evidential) problem of evil. I was particularly puzzled by his analysis of the current state of the problem for a number of reasons. For instance, Trakakis makes numerous claims about the *psychological motivations* of philosophers who endorse a strategy such as sceptical theism. He views this strategy as a last-ditch attempt by the Christian philosopher to preserve the rationality of theistic belief. I seriously doubt that this is case. However, my disagreement with Trakakis need not be settled by a 'he said, she said' back and forth. The truth of Trakakis's claim about psychological motivation is ultimately subject to empirical scrutiny and he offers no such evidence in support of his claims.

Finally, Takakis's case study leaves many questions as to his broader views about philosophical progress and related issues. First, it's not clear that there is any coherent notion of progress in philosophy, at least with respect to employing a truth-tracking criteria to measure success. There's no obvious way to measure truth-success in philosophy, unlike in more empirical subjects. Thus, when Trakakis says the debate over the problem of evil has stagnated, he needs to be more specific

about what he thinks would constitute progress in such a debate. This aside, it's strange that Trakakis would worry that discussion of the problem of evil since Rowe's 1979 paper is entrenched and stagnant. Thirty-eight years is an extremely *short* period of time when it comes to philosophical inquiry. The human species is incredibly young. We haven't been conducting philosophical inquiry for a very long time. Pending environmental disaster or nuclear war (i.e. assuming we don't destroy ourselves) the human species will live another billion years (until the luminosity of the sun makes biological life on earth impossible). Surely we will discover many more interesting things to say about the problem of evil given enough time. If discussion of the problem of evil remains stagnant for a few more million years then maybe we have something to worry about.<sup>4</sup>

## VI. The Benefits of Cognitive Diversity

While I don't think Trakakis can avoid the dilemma I've set out for him, and I'm sceptical of his ability to provide empirical support for his speculation about the psychological motivation of Christian philosophers, suppose he is able to avoid these concerns. There is another worry for MEP and FAP and one that I believe is unavoidable too. The last problem with these principles is that, ironically enough, the existence of Christian philosophers turns out to be epistemically beneficial for the philosophical community. And their existence is epistemically beneficial even if they aren't doing what Trakakis would consider genuine philosophy. This fact undermines MEP and FAP because they turn out not to be the best thing, at least not epistemically best, for the discipline. Why think that the existence of Christian philosophers or other religiously devout philosophers are an epistemic benefit to the philosophical community?

Trakakis never considers the Millian idea that there are epistemic benefits to be gained from the existence of cognitive diversity. This idea has been hinted at as a reason to remain steadfast in the face of epistemic peer disagreement (Elgin 2010; Moffett 2007). Elsewhere I have endorsed this line of argument and also claimed that this implies that disagreements between fundamental frameworks are epistemically beneficial since they entail cognitive diversity.<sup>5</sup> These benefits have also been noted by Phillip Kitcher's well-known arguments on the cognitive division of labour (1990). Likewise, there is significant empirical support for the claim that cognitive diversity is epistemically beneficially.

In his book, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, Scott Page (2007) argues that groups composed of heterogeneous members outperform homogenous groups composed of individually superior members, especially with respect to cognitive tasks such as problem-solving and prediction. In other words, within certain parameters cognitively diverse groups are epistemically superior to homogenous groups. Page offers some technical economic models and cites different sociological and psychological studies to support his claim that I will not outline here.<sup>6</sup> It's also worth pointing out that some have argued that cognitive diversity helps to counteract the pernicious effects of various types of cognitive bias

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<sup>4</sup> For more on *deep time* and how it should be applied to religion and inquiry see Schellenberg 2015.

<sup>5</sup> See Lougheed "The Epistemic Value of Deep Disagreements," Unpublished Manuscript.

<sup>6</sup> His book culminates in the Value in Diversity Hypothesis which states is that "[i]dentify diverse groups perform better than homogeneous groups" (Page 2004, 319). See also Surowiecki 2004 for more empirical support. For a summary of empirical support for the epistemic benefits of disagreement and cognitive diversity see Matheson 2015.

(Durate et al 2015). I don't have the space to outline or evaluate the philosophical or empirical merits of the benefits of cognitive diversity. But this is something that Trakakis never considers as possible evidence *against* MEP and FAP.

Even if Trakakis is right about the psychological motivation of religious philosophers, it turns out to be a good thing given that cognitive diversity is epistemically beneficial. Elsewhere, in a co-authored article, I observe that there are:

[M]ajor contributions to knowledge that have been made, in post-war Anglophone philosophy, by philosophers whose work is partly motivated by the aim of substantiating or clarifying some aspect of their prior religious convictions. Some of that research has been done by authors who self-consciously situate their work in the sub-discipline of philosophy of religion. For instance, in attempting to defend the view that a certain kind of religious experience justifies theistic belief, William Alston (1991) formulates an influential defence of a view that has general and wide-reaching epistemological ramifications, namely, that there is no non-circular way to defend the justificatory import of sensory perception. In a nearby region of the philosophical map, Alvin Plantinga's work, which broadly aims at defending the warranted status of Christian theism, builds in novel contributions to prior understandings of (i) externalist epistemologies founded on a conception of a proper functioning perceptual apparatus (Plantinga (1993)), and (ii) the concept of beliefs being properly basic, i.e. justified on non-inferential grounds (Plantinga (2000)). Outside of research that's self-consciously situated in philosophy of religion, Elizabeth Anscombe's Catholic faith was a discernible guiding force in her ground-breaking work on the nature of intention (Anscombe (1957)), and in her (related) influential critiques of mid-century ethical theory (Anscombe (1958)), both of which germinated major research programmes that have expanded our breadth of understanding in ethics and philosophy of action (Lougheed Simpson 2017, 162).

I'm not claiming to know what the motivations were behind of the abovementioned philosopher's work. But even supposing their religious convictions were responsible for these contributions, the philosophical community is better off for having members with these religious convictions. It turns out that this sort of cognitive diversity does indeed "further the pursuit of truth and other goals of scholarly inquiry" (Trakakis 2017, 618).

This discussion leads to my final observation. Even if MEP and FAP are correct it doesn't matter. Trakakis (and indeed Russell) acknowledge that religious convictions don't preclude someone from making important philosophical contributions. The problem is that they aren't really doing philosophy when they make such contributions. Their methodology is incorrect, and so their contribution is perhaps merely an incidental by-product of their underlying goal of defending their religious faith. It's clear that Trakakis wants to exclude such scholars as genuine philosophers but what's not clear is whether Trakakis would welcome further contributions from Christian philosophers in the discipline. And as I've just noted, even if Trakakis is correct about methodology, there are strong epistemic reasons to welcome contributions from the devoutly religious regardless of whether they are doing what Trakakis calls genuine philosophy. If we start excluding contributions from religiously devout philosophers the discipline of philosophy will be

epistemically worse-off. If we aren't going to stop including philosophical contributions from the religiously devout (even if they aren't really philosophers) then who cares what methodology they use?

## VII. Conclusion

Trakakis's piece is well-written and displays an understanding of both the continental and analytic traditions that is difficult to come by in our era of hyper-specialization. I'm initially much tempted to think that the best way to conduct philosophical inquiry is from within the Socratic and Enlightenment tradition. In other words, I'm initially sympathetic to the Methodological Enlightenment Principle and the Follow-the-Argument Principle. But closer examination raises serious questions for MEP and FAP. What makes philosophy pursued under Enlightenment presuppositions not ideological, but Christian philosophy ideological? Enlightenment values possibly arose from Christian values. FAP could recommend rejecting itself and/or MEP, making it self-referentially incoherent. If we should follow such a recommendation then FAP is hardly essential for philosophical inquiry. I can't imagine how Trakakis's account could be modified to avoid this or similar worries. Trakakis provides no empirical support for his speculation about the psychological motivation of religious philosophers. His case study on the problem of evil fails to support MEP and FAP. The human species has spent very little time reflecting on the problem of evil. We have another billion years to say something interesting about it. Finally, it isn't clear what Trakakis would have us do with all of the philosophy that has been conducted using the wrong methodology. He seems to allow, with Russell, that there can be genuine philosophical insight from those with devout religious convictions. We would lose a lot of the past, some of the present, and probably some of the future if we exclude from the canon those philosophers working with fixed religious presuppositions. There are, after all, good reasons to hold that cognitive diversity is epistemically beneficial. Successful philosophizing may well require a diverse marketplace of ideas. Thus, even if those religious philosophers aren't really genuine philosophers, it's difficult to see why this matters.<sup>7</sup>

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