ANECDOTAL PLURALISM

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ABSTRACT: Anecdotal pluralism (AP) is the claim that, when two individuals disagree on the truth of a religious belief, the right move to make is to engage in a communal epistemic process of evidence sharing and evaluation, motivated by the willingness to learn from each other, understand the adversary's views and how these challenge their own, and re-evaluate their own epistemic position in regards to external criticisms. What I will do in my paper is to provide a presentation of AP and give a few reasons in support. I will begin with showing how pluralism can be promoted by religious experiences inhering in any (historical) tradition. To this regard, my purpose is to analyse such experiences as conducive to the assumption of the two main principles defining any pluralist view. Subsequently, I will construe AP by seven claims, and I will focus my efforts on justifying its superiority both to exclusivism/inclusivism and other varieties of pluralism. My next and final move is to list a few reasons which support my view.

KEYWORDS: analytic philosophy of religion, epistemology of religious diversity, exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism

1. Introductory Remarks

Anecdotal pluralism (AP) is the claim that, when two individuals disagree on the truth of a religious belief, the right move to make is to engage in a communal epistemic process of evidence sharing and evaluation, motivated by the willingness to learn from each other, understand the adversary's views and how these challenge their own, and re-evaluate their own epistemic position in regards to external criticisms.

The proposal belongs to the pluralist family because it flows from the assumptions that:

1. more than one tradition may secure satisfying knowledge of the divine reality and provide their adherents with salvation (Call this feature *Possibility of Plural Accomplishment*, PPA);

2. it is actually the case that most established religions appear to be as equally valuable in dignity and relevance to human beings' purport (*Equivalence of Religious Relevance*, ERR).

It is a plain consequence of the conjunction of PPA and ERR, that:

3. religious disagreements cannot be answered by merely stipulating that our tradition is epistemically superior to others, and refusing apriori the possibility that

others may be epistemically well situated as we are (*Rejection of Religious Infallibility*).

As for any other pluralist view, the *rejection of infallibility* thesis is a reason for AP's opposition to both exclusivism (i.e., just one tradition is significantly right) and inclusivism (i.e., just one tradition is optimally situated from an epistemic standpoint, although others may be epistemically situated to a sufficient degree)[1]. However, this does not mean that AP manages such an opposition in terms of the metaphysically costly claim *that all traditions reveal, target and refer to the same noumenal reality* (Quinn 1995; Soroush 1998; Hick 2004). Rather, AP is a prescriptive epistemological strategy which evaluates deep diversities in religious affairs as an important source of knowledge, and which relies on the exclusivity of truth and common non exotic principles about how to handle semantic and alethic incompatibility of propositions.

The core focus of AP is on the particularities of the epistemic process of evidence sharing and evaluation. To make a long story short, the view is a conceptual analysis of the intuition that religious disagreements are not conflicts over the truth of a proposition which has a definite, objective and unambiguous meaning (instances of mainstream declarations of such an approach are Hick 1983; Alston 1992; Plantinga 2000; Harrison 2006; van Inwagen 2010; Pouivet 2013). On the contrary, religious disagreements are relations between individuals. The intuitions at work are that religious doxastic opponents concretely access the epistemic features of their own tradition in an anecdotal way (consequently, two individuals assenting to the same utterance may disagree over its meaning), and that the seminal claims of a religious doxastic group are constitutively vague (a claim is seminal for a religious doxastic group if mainstream adherents to the group hold that it is mandatory to accept it). Accordingly, when a religious disagreement occurs, opponents are required to engage in an epistemic journey of meaning clarification to the purpose of having an in-depth and fully rational understanding of the issue at stake.

What I will do in my paper is to provide a presentation of AP and to give a few reasons in support. My point of departure is a general statement for pluralism. I will begin with showing how it can be promoted by religious experiences inhering in any (historical) tradition. To this regard, my purpose is to analyse such

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[1] Exclusivism and inclusivism can be construed in many manners wavering from hard global definitions (i.e., the whole of a tradition is compared with the whole of another one) to mitigated approaches which focus on parts of a tradition (i.e., traditions are compared in regard to determined claims, doxastic sub-fields, interpretive topics of overlapping ideas, etc.) (McKim, 2012). Since AP opposes any construals of exclusivism or inclusivism, I do not need to confront my proposal with different versions of exclusivism or inclusivism.

experiences as conducive to the assumption of PPA and ERR. Essential to this task is the distinction between different kinds of pluralist responses to religious diversity, which leads me to the characterisation of AP in terms of its affinity to and diversity from cognate views. Subsequently, I will construe AP by seven claims, and I will focus my efforts on justifying its superiority both to exclusivism/inclusivism and other varieties of pluralism. My next and final move is to list a few reasons which are able to support my view.

2. From Pluralism to Anecdotal Pluralism

The ordinary states of facts concerning historical religious traditions (i.e., traditions consisting of a history originated and kept alive by a number of subsequent revelations and interpretations of these) attest that there may be good religious motivations for acknowledging a certain positive degree of religious value to other traditions. The claim is not that religions are always ready to grant their competitors a positive religious value; rather, that at least a few adherents to a tradition grant other religions a positive religious value in terms of reasons which can be found in their own tradition. To my view, this observation has a seminal relevance for how to think about religious diversity, because it attests that the acknowledgment of religious value to the religions of others is a possible outcome for a great number of traditions.[2]

The following is a (admittedly random) list of examples of what I mean:

1. *Baghavad Gita* IV.11 and *Baghavad Gita* IX.25 declare that different religions are particular paths towards a genuine, although particular, religious experience (Long 2014).

2. By commenting on the seminal notion of *Anekāntavāda*, classic Jain teachers Kundakunda and Haribhadra claim that all religions have epistemic value, notwithstanding such a value is only a portion of the whole truth (Long 2018).

3. While in biblical times Judaism endorsed a commitment towards an explicit version of exclusivism, Jews have always been tolerant and interested in other religions. Particularly, a notable number of rabbis claim that all different monotheist traditions play a substantial role in fighting idolatry and paganism, and, accordingly, have a religious value in their own terms (Cohn-Sherbok 1996).

4. *The Gospel of John* IV presents Jesus' meeting with a woman from Samaria.

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[2] I do not intend to qualify all religions by such a property, because I hold that religions are not abstract objects accountable by definitions in terms of substantive properties which any of them actually shows to possess (Bertini 2019a). As a consequence, when I say that most (historical) religions has the feature just described, I simply mean that it is a possibility that a (historical) religion exhibits such a feature.

Samaritans and Jews adhered to different and competing traditions. Nonetheless, Jesus (who was formally a Jew) seems to have an interest in the religious habits of the woman, and addresses her a revelation intended to overcome both Samaritan and Jewish rituals (Lee 2004).

5. According to the Islamic perspective, Christians and Jews are both *People of the Book*, having this way a mission for the spreading of monotheism around the world (Legenhausen 2013).

Individuals which are orthodox insiders to any of the faiths wherein declarations such as (1)-(5) occur, find in similar texts a reason for adopting a benevolent attitude to the other religions involved. My use of *benevolent* is purely descriptive. That is to say, none of (1)-(5) explicitly prescribes the assumption of normative considerations on the religions of others, namely, you should not draw conclusions concerning how to handle religious diversity from the mere acknowledgement that religions of others may have a positive religious value. Actually, such an acknowledgement is compatible with both exclusivism and inclusivism, because the appreciation of the positive religious value of the religions of others is a matter of degree: the more you evaluate that other religions obtain a high score, the more you stand on the inclusivist side; the less you assign a positive value to other religions, the more you are an exclusivist.[3]

Nonetheless, from a descriptive standpoint, the benevolence promoted by texts such as (1)-(5) gives a strong testimony that adherents to a tradition may have a focused interest towards the religious lives of individuals from other traditions. Such an interest often fuels the development of multifaceted inquiring attitudes which promote, favour, and enrich knowledge of religious diversity. The more common are: non judgemental interests for different kinds of ritual forms, fascination for the material culture produced under the push of religious ideas, appreciation for convergent moral conclusions argued from an alien standpoint, and attraction for how exemplar acts of others testify a high level of moral dignity.

It is exactly the outcome of this lively, growing and unsystematic movement towards understanding others which suggests to draw a few conclusions from a normative viewpoint. The first step towards pluralism consists indeed in an super-induction from the pervasiveness of similar phenomena to the assumption of ERR. Summing up: revelation texts as (1)-(5) may incline believers to pay attention to the religions of others, and look benevolently at these; such benevolence may originate and nourish a participative understanding of the particularities of other traditions;

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[3] While irrelevant to the present concern of my argument, I endorse the degree interpretive model developed at length by McKim (2012) as the right mean to provide a taxonomy of answers to religious diversity. I defended such a view in some details elsewhere (Bertini 2016).

finally, such massive acquaintance with diversity promotes the normative super-induced outcome.

The subsequent move is to adopt ERR as a reason for PPA. It is a triviality that religions play a fundamental role in the lives of authentic religious individuals. This means that faith, group belonging and rituals are essential features of the lives of believers, that is, adherence to a tradition forges to a relevant extent what believers hold to be the case about a multiplicity of matters, how they relate to others, which good they pursue, and so on. Now, if a certain number of religions are evaluated equally valuable in dignity and relevance to human beings' purports, adherents to a tradition seem to have no reason to leave their own for embracing another. However, most religions have an universalist presumption: they aspire at providing sound knowledge of their referential target and means of salvation or liberation from evil to their adherents. For most historical religions such a claim take the form of a consequence from the benign nature of their deities. That is, how is it that benign divinities giving salvation or liberation from evil reveal themselves within a tradition, and let other traditions to appear equally relevant and nonetheless delusive and soteriologically ineffective? The pluralist holds that the only way to answer in conformity with a consistent understanding of the conjunction of the universalist presumption and ERR is to endorse PPA. Notably, Hick establishes this endorsement as an application of the golden rule: granting to others what we rely ourselves on (Hick 2004, 235).

As many other general theory, pluralism takes a variety of forms. Some think that all acceptable religions do equally well because these correctly reveal the same referential target in a plurality of historically context-dependent understandings; others that all religions do equally well because they reveal their own particular referential target, which is as effective as those of any other traditions in warranting sound knowledge and salvation or liberation from evil. The former are usually called convergent or reductive pluralists, the latter non convergent or non reductive pluralists (Legenhausen 2009; McKim 2012).

Convergent or reductive pluralism is motivated by two main lines of reasoning. From an epistemic viewpoint, the referential target of a tradition is a noumenal reality which phenomenally appears by means of the particular concepts, inferences and other theoretical tools available within the given alethic context. Most pluralists arguing in this way explicitly follow insights from Kant's epistemology (Quinn 1995; Soroush 1998; Hick 2004). From a historically oriented viewpoint, religions show genealogical relations, framework similarities, and overlapping narratives which slightly differentiate by reason of different social contexts. As a consequence, differences between traditions are accounted for by

characterising them as historical presentations of a basic primitive event, structure of reality, or experience (i.e. the sacred, the numinous, the faith) in the religious domain of discourse (Otto 1958; Eliade 1959; Smith 1981).

Critical to such approaches, non convergent or non reductive pluralism is an effort to warrant the assumption of PPA and ERR by freeing pluralism from the difficulties of convergent or reductive pluralism. Such difficulties basically derive from the assumption of an antirealist epistemology, which lowers the cognitive grasp of religious beliefs in order to read content differences in terms of ways of presentation of a noumenal reality. They can be summed up as follows:

> a) Delusiveness. Religious beliefs can drive believers to the right positioning in relation to the noumenal referential target of different traditions, but they do not provide any substantial information about the nature and properties of such referential target insofar their content is entirely context-dependent (Harrison 2006; Legenhausen 2009; McKim 2012).
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> b) Scepticism. Religious beliefs are not delusive by accident. They are necessarily such a way. Indeed, the noumenal referential target is in principle unknowable. (Heim 1995; Harrison 2006; Legenhausen 2009).
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> c) Irrelevance of disagreements. If religious beliefs are necessarily delusive, differences in religious belief systems do not convey substantial cognitive informations concerning their referential targets (Heim 1995; Harrison 2006; Legenhausen 2009).
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> d) Soteriological indistinctness. Contrary to the evidence that different religions point at qualitatively different kinds of religious ends, convergent or reductive pluralism supposes that genuine religious experiences are structurally the same (Heim 1995; Harrison 2006; Legenhausen 2009).

Although non convergent or non reductive pluralism actually points at real difficulties of the convergent or reductive one, it is doubtful that the proposal can successfully manage such issues as it presently stands. For example, Harrison's theory is challenged by the very same objections by which Hick's one is faced, because she endorses an explanatory model of diversity much more antirealist than that endorsed by Hick (Bertini 2019b). Things are not better for Heim's proposal, that is, the defence of a deep variety of pluralism (deep pluralism is the claim that all effective religions are equally good paths to actualise a religious form of life, each of them warranting a specific and different kind of salvation or liberation from evil). While the theory seems capable to accomodate difficulties (a)-(d), it looks more an ecumenical invitation to tolerating the idea that different possibilities may actualise different events than a real pluralist theory (for example, it cannot provide support to the claim that adherents to different traditions might learn from each others).

AP overlaps with and differentiates from the above versions of pluralisms. Contrary to both convergent or reductive pluralism and non convergent or non reductive one, AP does not make any positive claim about the metaphysical identity of or difference between the referential targets of different religions.

Similarly to convergent or reductive pluralism and differently from non convergent or non reductive one, AP assumes that religions have strong content commonalities, and, accordingly, that debates between adherents to different traditions may be fruitful in establishing the truth of the matter on a number of common points. That is, AP supports the claim that religions are not absolutely distinct objects standing the one next to the other.

Furthermore, differently from convergent or reductive pluralism and similarly to non convergent or non reductive one, AP denies that such commonalities can be reduced to different context-dependent understandings of the same reality, and, accordingly, claims that beliefs of different traditions can exhibit substantive incompatibility of semantic contents. Concerning the metaphysical frame which the convergent/reductive and the non convergent/non reductive approaches rely on (i.e. religions give voice to the same core of a single divine realm *versus* religions look at different features of either the same core of a single divine realm or the plurality of distinct divine referential targets), AP holds that there is no evidence for taking a reasoned view about the one or the other claim: all we should be contented of is that more than one religion provides sound religious knowledge on the common points, and that non reducible difference should be accepted and profitably investigated without commitment to any definitive metaphysical proposition. In a sense AP grants the non convergent or non reductive party a theoretical advantage: by giving value to the reality of differences, religious propositions are modeled as vehicles of cognitive informations in a way that the convergent or reductive approach cannot explain (due to the antirealist epistemology which the convergent/reductive variety introduces to the purpose of providing an account of the diversity of traditions). Nonetheless, the crucial idea of the proposal goes beyond this dispute. Its motto is: *don't you agree? You should think together, then!*. This is captured by the proposition that the main feature of AP is an epistemically motivated invitation to understand differences by departing from a shared investigation context: religious individuals from different traditions accept common core ideas to a degree which makes epistemic disputes over beliefs a profitable mean to increasing their religious knowledge. To my view, a notable consequence of this epistemic practice for dealing with religious diversity consists in that irreducible epistemic religious differences should be treated as alternative paths departing from partially overlapping and partially diverging religious

experiences. All considered, AP is a strategy for making justice to both a global respect for differences between traditions and for the informative relevance of learning from others.

Finally, AP is a systematic application of the notion that doxastic comparisons between individuals adhering to different religions are constitutively anecdotal in nature, and mainly concern vague propositions which are in need of a clarification of their meaning.

3. Seven Defining Claims for AP

In light of the preceding characterisation, what the theory states can be spelt out by the following claims:

1. In face of intractable religious disagreements, none can presume to be on the right side by assuming the question-begging reason that their epistemic positioning is the better available;

2. We can learn from others in religious matters, and we should do it;

3. Individuals adhering to different religions may converge in establishing a high number of common points from different perspectives;

4. Content differences in different traditions are real and worth-investigating;

5. Understanding the reason of others in religious disputes produces higher-order justified beliefs;

6. Convergent or reductive pluralism is challenged by strong difficulties because of the assumption of a Kantian framework;

7. The non convergent or non reductive strategy has possibly the chance to be on target, but needs an in-depth reformulation to accomodate the evidence that religions are not simply juxtaposed abstract objects, having overlapping features indeed.

The following subsections provide a line of reasoning in support of (1)-(7).

3.1. The Unacceptability of Non-pluralistic Answers to Religious Diversity

The implausibility of any forms of exclusivism and inclusivism relies on that, while exclusivists and inclusivists correctly accept non exotic principles about the semantic incompatibility of beliefs, they assume a strongly exotic principle towards belief-revision in face of disagreements. Ward (1990), Alston (1991), van Inwagen (1996), Gellman (2000), Plantinga (1999), van Inwagen (2010), Bogardus (2013), Pittard (2014), Choo (2018), to mention just a few, all argue that the epistemic response to how to handle religious diversity should flow from the trivial claim that incompatible beliefs cannot be both true at once. I agree with the principle of the

exclusivity of truth, and I cannot see how one could ever deny a similar fact about truth. However, I cannot see how such a principle does have the consequences for religious diversity which its proponents think that it has.

Briefly, exclusivists and inclusivists commonly assume that when two individuals adhering to different traditions disagree, there are no unquestionable reasons for engaging in a substantial revision of their beliefs. Disagreements may cause believers to pay attention to claims challenging their own ones, and, accordingly, to make available their reasons in support of these.[4] Nonetheless, exclusivists and inclusivists think that the story ends here: there is no normative requirement commanding to achieve a first person understanding of the viewpoint of others, nor to update their own belief in light of reasons and arguments following from such viewpoints, because, given that incompatible beliefs cannot be both true, just one of the doxastic alternatives can be correct.[5]

There are various strategies at disposal. Exclusivists and inclusivists can argue that any epistemic situation permits more than one justified response. As a consequence, given epistemic peerhood between the doxastic adversaries and the fact that neither of the their beliefs prevails after common evidence sharing and

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[4] Essential to AP is the assumption that adherents to a tradition endorse, assent to and argue for their beliefs in an anecdotal manner. Such a claim implies that religious diversity is not a matter of a comparison between traditions in terms of homogenously shared beliefs; rather, religious diversity flows from particular claims whose conflict emerges from the concrete doxastic meeting of real individuals. To my understanding of labels as they are employed in literature on religious diversity, exclusivists and inclusivists commonly spell out diversity in beliefs between two (or more) adherents to different traditions in terms of their adherence to competing traditions. From the viewpoint of AP, this is a categorical mistake. As a consequence, an essential feature of AP is to reject that answers to religious diversity should be developed from a model which grounds diversity on adherence to traditions.

[5] Some exclusivists and inclusivists deny that adherents to different traditions are peers (e.g., Plantinga 1999; Bogardus 2013; Pittard 2014; Choo 2018); others do think that they are (e.g, Alston 1988; Ward 1990). While those within the former group hold that believers do not have epistemic obligation towards debating with adherents to other traditions (i.e., beliefs opposing their own ones at best provide contingent reasons for considering objections to their own beliefs), those in the latter group should allegedly hold that believers are required to answer reasons of their peers against their own beliefs (Alston 1988). Exclusivists and inclusivists of the former kind are obviously not able to prescribe any form of doxastic comparison. However, neither those belonging to the latter kind are in a better position, because they assume a completely a priori notion of peerhood (Bertini 2021a). Indeed, on the one hand, they idealistically stipulate that believers are peers before engaging in a process of evidence sharing and mutual understanding; on the other, they are not ready to acknowledge that believers of different traditions which assume the viewpoint of others cannot be rational in standing firm after having had an experience of the rationality of the beliefs opposing their own ones.

evaluation, all individuals in doxastic conflict may be justified in standing firm with their belief (Pittard 2014; Choo 2018). For example, each of them may have partisans reasons, namely, reasons based exclusively on their adherence to their own tradition, which cohere with and make intelligible the epistemic situation but are not acceptable unless a believer adheres to the very tradition (Alston 1992; Gellman 2000).

Alternatively, exclusivists and inclusivists can assume that, in despite of appearances, doxastic opponents are not really epistemic peers. According to this assumption, one party is epistemically better positioned than the other one, and, as such, it has a fuller and more adequate access to the relevant evidence (Ward 1990; van Inwagen 1996; Plantinga 1999; van Inwagen 2010; Bogardus 2013).

The former strategy relies on the idea that, in case doxastic adversaries are both justified in holding their belief, if conclusive reasons for one or the other belief lack, than it is irrational to give up your belief, because if you are the right party, you evidently hold the true belief. The latter one contends that justification has features dependent on truth, that is, you cannot be really justified in holding a false belief: something epistemically relevant went wrong for the party accepting the false belief.

AP attacks the assumption that disagreements do not have any normative effect on the investigation of the truth of a doxastic opposition. Common to both strategies for exclusivism or inclusivism is that the way for providing support for the assumption of the view is to suppose that the correct side can ignore the other one by reason of having some kind of epistemic advantage over the rival side, although such advantage cannot be made available to others.[6] To this regards, the former variety is more cryptic than the latter. Actually, it accepts that individuals of different traditions may be all justified in holding their belief, although it denies that

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[6] The two strategies converge as to their epistemic commands. Alston like exclusivists and inclusivists may suggest that at least a degree of doxastic comparison is necessary before deciding that your views are superior to the rival ones but such a position concedes too little for being of interest to the pluralist: if you hold that your adversaries are as sincere and knowledgeable and as justified in holding their beliefs as you are, and still decide, after thoughtful dialogue and self-reflection, that what you believe is the superior perspective, you are simply saying that your viewpoint is superior without giving any reason in support. Such a move is the end of any dialogue, and it is a matter of fact that doxastic adversaries which are not ready to learn from each other soon arrive at dead trails. AP distinguishes from position as Alston's one in that it does not simply prescribe dialogue in order to establish which belief is correct, but ask believers to understand others because they can learn something from them. Exclusivists and inclusivists as Plantinga (suppose for the sake of argument that a form of inclusivism can be construed in Plantinga's terms) simply stop dialogue much much before.

they stand on equal footing, given that the correct side has access to the true belief. On the contrary, the latter variety explicitly claims that the correct side of a doxastic opposition has sound epistemic insights which the wrong one lacks.

However, an epistemic insight is evidently sound if and only if can be communicated: someone holding that they see how things stand but they cannot explain why their seeing is the sound one, is not arguing for any view, but is simply declaring how they are seeing things without providing reasons in support.[7] Naturally, the fact that individuals ordinarily rely on partisan reasoning, internal evidence, and first-person belief-forming-processes on a lot of epistemic affairs does not provide any normative reason for epistemically behaving in that manner. The fact may indeed have a descriptive value about epistemic habits, but cannot account for why we should follow such habits. The motive is basically simple: whenever I presume that one of my contested belief is right without providing any other reason for its soundness that I am epistemically better situated than my opponents, my presumption is an evident question-begging assumption: in face of reasons contrary to my position, standing firm on one's own belief without answering those reasons, consists in holding a view independently of evidence (whose consequence is to reject the principle that acknowledgment of contrary evidence is evidence; Feldman 2006). Now, relying on question-begging epistemic habits is not a valid principle for justification of contested beliefs. Conclusion is then that disagreements over incompatible beliefs need a much more sophisticated epistemological approach than comfortable suggestions to begging the question and similar.

3.2. Learning from Others

The point of the matter is that human beings are rational entities: asking and giving reasons for a view are constitutive features of rationality. The common state of facts about the doxastic life of human beings is that we are continuously concerned with declaration of what we believe in and with providing reasons for our beliefs and against those of others. In ordinary matters, disagreements invite to take the

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[7] Exclusivists and inclusivists may hold that one is justified in believing that one's perspective is true even if they do not have reasons convincing to all: all they assume is that they do have reasons that they hope their competitors will consider. Does this suffice to infer that they are not simply declaring how they are seeing things without providing reasons in support whenever they do not consider their adversaries criticisms? The answer is negative because the following three claims are *prima facie* evidently contradictory (taken together): 1) A and B are equally reliable in epistemic matters; 2) A provides reasons x, y, z against B's objections to A's belief that P; 3) A continues to hold the belief that P notwithstanding B advances criticisms against that x, y, and z are reliable reasons for the belief that P.

adversary's viewpoint as a possible defeater for one's own belief. When someone challenges those ideas which have a strong relevance for our understanding of things, namely, those ideas on which we rely for their value in defining our manner to pursue our ends, both theoretical and practical, the common reaction is to defend them and provide arguments and reasons in support. What I'm doing is to call attention to the fact that human beings love and think necessary engaging in debates and comparing their views (this claim seems to apply to any situation, from discussion between friends at the pub in front of a lot of beers to highly technical scientific debates between professionals of knowledge: why should not it apply to religious matters as well?). Such epistemic behavior is based on the shared and implicit acceptance of the epistemic norm that *we can learn from others by debating on controversial issues*[8].

Now, I see no reason why such epistemic norm should not work for religious matters. Most apologists of either the exclusivist or the inclusivist strategies defend indeed the claim that religious beliefs epistemically work exactly as any other belief within any other domain of discourse does (Alston 1992; Plantinga 2000; Swinburne 2004; van Inwagen 2010). Thus, why should not epistemically act towards religious beliefs as we act towards non religious ones? To my part, while I'm not agree with the claim that religious beliefs are like ordinary ones (actually, I hold that religious beliefs are sui generis beliefs because of their constitutive and irreducible anecdoticity and vagueness, that is, the justificatory practices which relates to religious beliefs are sui generis; Bertini 2019c; Bertini 2020; Bertini 2021b), I accept that religious beliefs stand in a doxastic public space wherein they are exhibited, upheld and challenged as any other belief is. It is a matter of fact that, contrary to the exclusivist and inclusivist claims that partisans reasoning dispenses a believer from engaging in disputes with adherents to other traditions, ordinarily people from

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[8] Some might claim that inclusivism is the view that we can learn from others without giving up our core beliefs (McKim 2012 provides in fact interesting considerations for such a construal of this approach to inclusivism). Nonetheless, concrete examples of inclusivist authors appear faraway from such a perspective. Shaid Mutahhari and Karl Rahner can be both characterised as soteriological degree pluralists (Legenhausen 2013), and soteriological degree pluralism is a version of inclusivism. Notoriously, they develop the theory of the anonymous affiliation to a tradition, in virtue of which believers can gain salvation although they do not formally adhere to the very tradition. Neither of them, however, seem to make substantially any use of non-native religious doctrines within their theorisation. Another example is Keith Ward's book on *Religion and Revelation* (1994). His Wittgensteinian evaluation of alternative traditions as dependent on opposing forms of life does not leave any place to interreligious constructive dialogue on common points of doctrine across different religions.

different religions and denominations lively engage in such disputes, and think that these are relevant to their faiths.

The strongly exotic principle towards belief-revision in face of disagreements assumed by exclusivists and inclusivists consists exactly in neglecting this common state of facts about epistemic controversies. It can be captured by the following proposition: *whenever you disagree on a religious issue with adherents to other traditions or denominations, you should act in conformity with that you cannot learn anything relevant from them.*

Now, besides that the proposition contradicts the ordinary manner for managing controversial matters, there are seminal specific religious reasons for refusing it. First, exclusivists and inclusivists overestimate the extent to which different religions represent alternative and opposite worldviews. Common approaches attest that adherence to a religion is outlined in terms of the acceptance of a system of epistemic principles shaping how individuals experience and understand their world (Ward 1994; Plantinga 2000; van Inwagen 2010; Pittard 2014). Accordingly, adherents to the same tradition are qualified as agents who share the same epistemic situation by belonging to a common intersubjective doxastic context. Any similar context counts as a discrete conceptual object, and logically differs from any other because either it is epistemically incompatible with other ones (van Inwagen 2010; Pouivet 2013; Pittard 2014) or it is expressive of a form of life which is irreducible to any other (Ward 1994). However, differences between traditions, religions within the same tradition, and denominations of the same religion, are much more nuanced than what exclusivists and inclusivists commonly assume. Actually, historians of religions and theorists of semiotics provide massive evidence for the reasonableness of dealing with different religions in the light of overlapping materials, doctrinal acquisitions from proximal social contexts, and mutual influences (Bianchi 1975; Lotman 2001). For example, religions have often developed within a common background, by addressing the same core of revelation narratives in different times: Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all rooted in a tradition of stories about Abraham, Exodus, Prophets, Jesus Christ, and so on,[9] most religions which have flourished within the Indian subcontinent relate to the theologies embodied within the Vedic hymns and their canonical commentaries; different varieties of historical polytheism from Indo-European civilities show structural, ritual and content similarities and have carried out cultural effects the one over the others. This being the case, areas of content overlapping are ordinary phenomena concerning religious beliefs of different traditions. As a consequence,

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[9] After Christ Event, the Jewish tradition has mainly developed within Christian settings, and, accordingly, incorporates a theological reflection addressing a number of christological issues.

religions express different viewpoints on their referential targets, but such viewpoints are not incommensurable. On the contrary, practices as interfaith and inter-religious dialogue, scriptural reasoning, and discussions about doctrines between friendly individuals adhering to different traditions, attest that believers may actively and positively engage in religious disagreements by holding that religions can cognitively be compared on a number of relevant points.

Second, exclusivists and inclusivists reason by assuming that there is just one kind of religious diversity, namely, logical incompatibility between the basic diverging framework propositions of the doctrinal systems of different traditions. For the sake of the argument, concede the point against which I moved the preceding criticisms, namely, that religious traditions are alternative and incompatible worldviews. Given this point, if all cases of religious diversity were examples of global religious diversity, it should follow that disputing with others over the truth of beliefs of different traditions would be completely unfruitful. However, I doubt that such a characterisation of epistemic religious diversity works. Suppose indeed that adherents to different religions meet and debate over the truth of a proposition P. P is a seminal claim for one of the tradition, but it is denied by others. For example, P is the claim that there is only one divine entity which can be predicated of being God. In such a case, strict monotheists as Jews and Muslims disagree *prima facie* with Trinity monotheists like Christians or openly non monotheists as Brahmanic Hindus (this example provides an instance of global epistemic religious diversity). But there are different manners of disagreeing over religious beliefs. For example, let P be the claim that a transcendent awareness without content is the only existing reality, and has no proper parts. While Advaita Vedantins accept P, Vedantins adhering to the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedanta school deny it. Here, we have individuals adhering to the same tradition, that is, the Vedanta one, and a strong difference in the interpretation of the same revelation corpus. This is the interdenominational variety of disagreement: individuals belong to the same tradition, but they differentiate by adhering to differing denominations. Furthermore, disagreements without any normative consequences are common also between coreligionists. Suppose that the contested claim P is the proposition that the Trinity of God should be accounted for by starting from the notion of onefoldness. Latin trinitarians and social trinitarians oppose by reason of their epistemic reactions to P, notwithstanding their shared adherence to Christianity (this is intrareligious diversity). The notable point of the latter kind of disagreement is that it is not possible to split individuals in different groups in terms of their acceptance or refusal of P: within any Christian denomination, some individuals are Latin trinitarians and other are Social trinitarians. Nonetheless, disagreement over

the nature of the Trinity is neither a peripheral and irrelevant issue, nor a topic whose solution seems comfortably at hands. This being the case, it is not clear why we should deal with epistemic disputes in conformity with the reduction of religious diversity to a hypersimplifed model as the exclusivists' and inclusivists' one is. However, once that the model fails to account for religious diversity, it follows that there are no clear reasons for denying that individuals adhering to different traditions can learn from each others.

Third, a multifaceted and empirically informed notion of religious diversity shows that not all disagreements, even when they are deep and concern fundamental issues, produce normative insights towards the doctrinal identity of groups. In addition, an high degree of epistemic diversity is tolerable within any group, namely, contrary to substantive assumptions about the nature of religions, internal epistemic variability is the ordinary state of facts of any tradition (Bertini 2019a). Once again, this suggests that, if religious diversity is not always a matter of global comparisons, exclusivists and inclusivists should provide an argument for denying that you can learn from adherents to other traditions, given that debates between coreligionists who dissent over fundamental beliefs recur within any tradition, and such disputes are usually thought useful to increasing religious knowledge.

Fourth, according to the exclusivists' and inclusivists' claim that we cannot and should not learn from others because disagreements over framework beliefs involve incommensurable viewpoints, any kind of religious reasoning would be affected by an unpalatable dose of subjectivism. Internal epistemic variability being indeed the ordinary state of facts of any tradition, coreligionists dissenting over fundamental beliefs would give voice to incommensurable viewpoints on fundamental religious matters. Actually, any tradition is a doxastic battlefield between groups and individuals for the establishment of the correct reading among a plurality of competing interpretations of the same verbal utterances (i.e., individuals adhering to the same tradition all accept a set of framework beliefs, but give such beliefs a different meaning and provide justification for them by means of a particular access to evidence, none being able to manage completely the extensive mass of religious knowledge developed along the historical grown of the very tradition).

Admittedly, exclusivism and inclusivism can be construed in a way which results friendly open to diversity. According to such a construal, they might be qualified as exploratory strategies which accomodate the idea that a tradition is superior to others only in regards to a determined issue. Moreover, superiority may be a matter of degree. The crucial point is to appreciate that they 'might be thought of as an interim response, as a starting point for reflection that is endorsed even while

it is recognized that a further reflection is needed, and even while hoping to engage in this reflection in the future' (McKim 2012, 34). Unfortunately, such characterisation seems unable to pick out any real exclusivist or inclusivist proposal in literature (as McKim 2012, 30 recognises), and, consequently, looks more like an act of wishful thinking than a legitimate interpretation of the matter at dispute. Mainstream exclusivists and inclusivists, even when they are ready to acknowledge a certain degree of truth in points of other traditions which are similar to their own, do not commonly focus on that their tradition is superior to other ones because of its overall sum of epistemic success, in despite of the possibility that on a number of beliefs adherents to the sound tradition might be wrong. On the contrary, they assume that, independently of the possibility of epistemic failure on local points, the epistemic position of the sound tradition is unsurpassably better than, and definitely incommensurable with, that of the competing ones. My conclusion is then that what a friendly-to-diversity construal of exclusivism and inclusivism gives value to, namely, that whoever holds a belief is *prima facie* an exclusivist towards the truth of their belief, is certainly secured by admitting that doxastic conflicts do not involve a spineless approach promising a half-way truth; although a rigorous approach to such a requirement is better pursued within a pluralist setting, given the inconclusiveness of shared evidence for competing beliefs.

3.3. Convergent Doxastic Commonalities across Opposing Belief Systems

In order to understand why pluralism is the best strategy for religious knowledge and cognitive enhancement of differences in a way which do not relinquish and conflict with the normative triviality of principles as the exclusivity of truth, suffices to investigate disagreements between religious individuals in terms of a notion of religious diversity sensitive to how religious traditions actually work. The assumption of (3) and (4) depends exactly on such a move, which I will briefly justify now.

The mainstream approach to the religious diversity scenario can be captured by the following proposition: diversity between religions is a matter of an incompatibility in the doctrinal, ritual and institutional bodies of them. Accordingly, religions stand in epistemic, ritual and institutional relations of opposition.

The following are a few considerations against such a mainstream approach. First, the way in which differences between religions are discovered, experienced and understood depends on how individuals from different traditions become acquainted with and are exposed to the religious lives of others (Bertini 2019c). Such an exposition is anecdotal in nature. Individuals do not indeed access the whole doctrinal, ritual and institutional body of their religion. It follows from this that

whenever someone detects a difference between their religious life and those of others, they do not detect a difference between religions as abstract conceptual objects, but they access a difference between religious experiences of concrete individuals.

Second, internal variability within a tradition cannot be rendered by means of a cognitive reduction to a unambiguously shared view among its adherents. As seen above, intra-religious disagreements are ordinary and constitutive events for any tradition. They are attested both within revelation texts, which often present a plurality of competing understandings of the religious core of a tradition, and within the historically growing body of exegetical, theological and liturgical literature over revelation materials. From an epistemic viewpoint, such disagreements appear structurally similar to inter-religious ones: local differences within a religion (e.g., a point of doctrine longly disputed by a plurality of competing standpoints) are given exactly in the same manner as external differences between religions sharing a basic belief (e.g., all monotheist religions accept that there is one and only one divine entity, although they develop such a belief in a plurality of different ways). This being the case, if disputes over points of doctrine between coreligionists make sense and reveal epistemic commonalities notwithstanding the incompatibility of their views, the same should hold for disputes between adherents to different traditions.

Consider a few reasoning in support. Within any historical tradition, revelation corpora are collected among a mass of competing materials by means of a literary process. Ordinarily, religious elites use oral narratives, texts and ritual interpretations of these to the aim of providing a compelling understanding of the meaning of life, nature, and history. Different communities living within either the same environment or proximal ones, adopt divergent and overlapping materials at once. The establishment of a canon of holy texts consists commonly of discriminating among such materials and listing which of them count as religiously normative. While the community operating the normative choice of materials aims at conceptual unambiguousness by adopting sometime a rule for fixing an in-or-out distinction, different religious attitudes, notions, and theological insights are preserved by the chaotic juxtaposition of such heterogenous texts. Revelation corpora constitutively give voice to a plurality of multifaceted religious experiences and understandings of seminal events, as attested by the different texts which a plurality of communities liturgically uses for keeping the memory of them alive.

I will make the case for my considerations by focusing on the Hindu tradition, and by assuming that my conclusions can be generalized to any historical tradition.[10]

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[10] Some may think that the Hindu tradition in particular and Eastern religions in general are incommensurable with Abrahamic religions by reason of that, while the former are more

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Let's have a look at some facts. The grounding text for most religions flourishing in the Sub-Asian continent are the hymns collected under the name of *Saṃhitā*. Such hymns are picked out from oral traditions coming to a definitive form along an extended period of time, and are devoted to a plurality of deities. Each of these entities presents a very complex nature, expressing a sum of different and sometimes opposing features (Macdonnell 1897; Klostermayer 1984). I confine my exemplification to the most important divinity of the first book of hymns, that is, the *Ṛgveda*. Indra is the elective Lord of the Gods, is a fearless warrior defeating the primordial beast which prevents the world from being ordered, is the controller of rainfalls, and is the giver of agriculture to human beings, among other things. Evidently, each of these features attests a peculiar experience of the power of Indra over the world, and, accordingly, expresses a peculiar theology which focuses on a distinctive trait. Such traits belong to a range of continuous representations providing competing and related precisifications of the meaning of the experiences related to the very same source (Bertini 2020). Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that different proximal communities used overlapping materials about Indra within slightly different but communicating epistemic contexts.

It is particularly relevant that prominent deities of the *Ṛgveda* progressively lost their prominency in later stages of the establishment of the revelation corpus (e.g., the *Sāmaveda* attests Agni, which is Indra's brother, as main character). Think to Agni's characterisation: he is a warrior too, is the Lord of fire, but its main relevant feature is to be the one who makes sacrifices effective, and sometimes is the divine officer of sacrifices, is individuated as the sacrifice itself, as also the efficient vehicle of this, that is, the soma. As such, the emergent relevance of Agni over Indra shows that a ritual theology of sacrifice overcame a theology of thanksgiving. It goes without saying that this fact implies an in-depth difference in religious attitudes, in the meaning of ritual acts and religious ideas, and in manners of living religiously.

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concerned with experiences than beliefs, the latter are more concerned with beliefs than experiences (according to such distinction, polytheist systems of beliefs are not to be considered religions at all, since mythologies differ from religions in terms of not being the subject of a historical revelation; a seminal examples of this attitude is Lévy-Strauss 1968; Lévy-Strauss1974). I provide detailed historiographycal arguments in support that any historical religion is internally pluralist from a doxastic viewpoint in Bertini 2016. I exemplified the claim that the revelation corpus of any historical tradition undergoes a historical negotiated construal which preserve and nourished a plurality of doxastic interpretation by giving an account of the pluralist origin of Christian theology in the second and third century debate on the *Gospel of John* in Bertini 2010 (my expertise as historian of theology is limited to the Christian tradition, and, for this reason, I suppose to have something rationally grounded to say on this topic alone). Finally, I argue for that Christianity and mythology epistemically work in the same manner in Bertini 2007.

As a consequence, such difference possibly rises doxastic conflicts. The next step in the establishment of the Hindu canon is the supplementation of the hymns with commentary materials from a multiplicity of Brahmanic schools, collected under the titles of *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka*. Finally, further commentaries added the corpus, that is, the *Upaniṣad*.

The evident conceptual heterogeneity and semantic ambiguity of this revelation corpus has promoted a massive interpretive work which originated both different schools of brahmanic exegesis (Larios 2017) and the generation of reactive religious movements as Shivaism, Vaishnavism, different Vedantin philosophies, as well as Jainism and Buddhism. In some cases these movements flow from integrating non-Vedic sources coming from local traditions within the brahmanic mainstream, in some others they evidently reject the centrality of the brahmanic authority to the advantage of exogenous traditions (Davis 1995; Sharma 2003; Sanderson 2009; Bisshop 2010; Long 2014). As a result, the outcome of these longstanding processes of canon establishment is that a complex multiplicity of different viewpoints shapes a very variable core of externally related fundamental materials, claims for themselves the status of a theological authority, survives the accidents of history, and attests what counts as a legitimate source of religious experience and what does not.

The moral of the story is that the revelation corpus of the Indian sub-continent religions does not stand at the beginning of a historical trajectory as an unambiguous set of core beliefs which give voice to a worldview shared among coreligionists. Rather, a constitutive doxastic plurality is established within the corpus by means of a continuous negotiation of the meaning of texts and rituals and the addition of new revelation materials to the old ones, and emerges by an extensive interpretive work intended to cut off vagueness of understanding and potential religious disagreements over fundamental matters.

This being the case, a pluralist environment wherein overlapping framework assumptions and distinctive claims are blended into a cocktail of different doxastic systems, constitutes the core source of the Hindu tradition. This suggests that the religions flourishing in this religious context should not be considered as unified conceptual objects embodying and expressing opposite worldviews. Particularly, it does not make sense to characterise disagreements over apparently incompatible beliefs in terms of incommensurability, logical mutual disjunction, or similar. On the contrary, doxastic groups adhering to one or the other interpretation of the revelation corpus exhibits similarity by reason of reference to the same textual and ritual sources, exemplar narratives of religious experiences, and core interpretive

exegesis; and they exhibit differences by reason of distinctive approaches to the understanding and appropriation of such items.

Now, religious individuals commonly adhere in an explicit manner to a determined religion, which implies assenting verbally to a sets of core beliefs. However, even in case of explicit groups-belonging, intra-religious differences matter and are nourished by the impossibility of a complete access to the mass of historical interpretive works and of the total availability of the different experiences involved. My claim does not rely on considerations on the differences in epistemic capabilities plus the privateness of personal experiences: it does not oppose Wittegenstein's argument against private language, for instance. Rather, it assumes that any epistemic practices is public in nature, and applies such assumption to the domain of religious thinking. It is exactly such publicity which produces the anecdotal nature of religious experiences. Individuals are indeed in front to a body of evidence which is intractable by reason of its extensive lack of bounds. As a consequence, they react to such lack of bounds actualising one concrete epistemic opportunity among a plurality of meaning precisifications.

3.4. Investigating Differences

It follows from such a claim that religious disputes over controversial issues do have epistemic momentum, and do have vital relevance. Actually, if the revelation corpus of any historical tradition embodies internal doxastic differences in such a way that religious plurality is constitutive of historical traditions, the clarification of the meaning of religious beliefs appears to be an essential feature of faith. Concrete disputes between real individuals provide a context for such clarification. Such disputes are not logical controversies about the semantics of beliefs, nor neutral weighting of evidence which sustain the opposing beliefs. Rather, individuals should make an experience of the particular viewpoint of their opponent in order to benefit their arguments, reasons, and manner of qualifying the matter at stake (Bertini 2019c). Given the constitutive plurality of doxastic views within any tradition, religious beliefs are indeed constituted by an essential imprecision of their representational content. Vagueness is not here the outcome of a Quinean scenario charcaterised by paucity of evidence (Quine 2013). On the contrary, vagueness supervenes over religious beliefs by reason of the extreme abundance of evidential interpretations of their semantic ambiguity (Bertini 2020). Investigating such a vagueness is a necessary step to determine what individuals accept in assuming their beliefs. This means that they can learn the one from the other by comparing their different understanding of common points (this is what (3) asserts) as well as that they can pursue an in-depth account of their beliefs by excavating relevant

particularities (this is what (4) asserts). Consequently, disputes are essential to religious faith.

3.5. Higher-order Justification Practices

Claim (5) highlights what a pluralist attitude to the anecdotal nature of disputes and of acceptance of religious beliefs promotes. As seen, diversity in religion is a mixture of different perspectives on divergent points and fluctuating commonalities in proximal narratives and arguments. Others give us the opportunity of being acquainted with a concrete particular justification of a religious belief. On the one hand, doxastic opponents can enrich the evidential body for their belief when this concerns similar contents. Such enrichment consists of those particular reasons which may have remained ignored if a relevant controversy would have not made them explicit. On the other, a fruitful evidence-sharing process deepens the possession of criticism, objections, and favours rational responses about what remains outside the possibility of an agreement. Accordingly, the particularities of the epistemic encounters between individuals provide experiential substance to the evidential epistemic support.

3.6. The Flaws of the Kantian Approach to Pluralism

Essential to AP is the assumption of a realist epistemology. Its endorsement of the exclusivity of truth involves that religious beliefs do have semantic value in representational terms. As a consequence, AP accepts that a religious belief is true if its content conveys a bit of informative representation of how things stand. This marks the refusal of convergent or reductive approach to pluralism by reason of their commitment to antirealist readings of Kantian epistemology. I have already mentioned the most relevant reasons against such antirealist approaches in the previous section. Therefore, my line of defense for (6) is established.

3.7. Diversity Does not Imply That You Have not Anything in Common with Others

Finally, the assessment of reasons in support of the claim that any historical tradition is constitutively a pluralist environment is a justification for the dissatisfaction with versions of non convergent or non reductive pluralism on the marketplace.

4. Three Epistemic Reasons for AP

I will conclude by a very succinct reference to three epistemic reasons which sustain the assumption of AP. First, external viewpoints are sources of epistemic benefits, mainly related to enlarging the evidential body and furnishing corrective means for

bias and explicit cognitive prejudices (Dormadandy 2019). Someone who reasons from a perspective alien to our own can make us perceive something on which we are not focused when isolated in a first person reasoning. Second, individuals adhering to a different tradition may be recipient of great esteem for their exemplarity, of cognitive admiration for their being acutely versed in doctrine and knowledge, and of enthusiastic acknowledgement for their capabilities in handling ideas stimulating an insightful understanding. In such a case, their testimony in support of a determined view is a reason for evaluating their arguments, and make them playing a role in the assessment of our belief. Third, differences in pursuing an epistemic task may be the subject of informative interest because of their achievements in fields of inquiry with which we are not ready to engage directly. Considered together, these three epistemic reasons encourage individuals to search together in face of a persistent disagreement by reason of the fact that alternative standpoints originate better understanding on the matter of the controversy, and, accordingly, more justified beliefs on its content. As such, they are therefore supportive of strategies as AP.

Now, while literature abounds about the first and the second epistemic reasons, it seems there is something to say about the third one. I will move from some biographical details. I have been enthusiastically playing rugby for many years in my life. After my retirement, I became a coach, and I have subsequently trained both female and male teams. Anyone who has lived the world of rugby knows that you cannot ever be freed from it; it is not by chance, I suppose, that French language refers to people playing rugby as *rugbyman* (and not rugby player). Actually, if you have played rugby, you never stop to be a *rugbyman*: rugby conveys a culture, is a way of life in a substantial sense of the term, and grounds relationships to your team-fellows which will last forever. To make a long story short, rugby is a fundamental part of my life, and has much contributed to the development of my identity as a human being.

However, I like many other sports too, although I do not practice them. Particularly, I have an in-depth esteem for a lot of things which I can found virtually in any sport activities. I appreciate athletes for the abilities which are actualised and enjoyed in performing their disciplines; I am moved on epical fights for winning a match; I appreciate loyalty and commitment necessary to achieve results. Naturally, each sport actualises its particular system of rules, athletic gestures, and specific values; briefly, each sport substantiates a particular world. All sports constitute then specific experiential realms, overlapping in their features for certain respects, opposing each others for other ones. Is this a reason for thinking that a rugby player, a swimmer or a tennis player have nothing to learn the one from the other? Or that

they should practice their sport by ignoring that other physical activities can accomplish strongly exciting, instructive and valuable results?

A positive answer to these question sounds odd. Sports have something in common and specific particularities. However, they can all be enjoyed, and some experiences peculiar to one of them can be fruitfully integrated in others, notwithstanding differences. The admiration for individuals performing a sport are often the medium which introduces us to that world, and give sometimes interest in learning how to perform it. This sport analogy points exactly at what I mean by the third epistemic reason in support of AP:

> 1. I can appreciate domains of inquiry which fall outside my training, expertise and direct interest, in few words, that fall outside my previous experiences;
>
> 2. Respectable individuals engaged with such domains promote an interest towards their experience;
>
> 3. I can learn from them notwithstanding our differences;
>
> 4. I can learn from them if I am ready to make the relevant experience.

For example, I can understand why tennis is valuable and instructive on sport values in general when I begin playing tennis: reading a book on tennis does not help here. An experience orientated by someone who knows the matter is essential. It is after this experience that reading becomes properly an indispensable mean to increase competence and understanding. Naturally, I cannot play all sports, and I could be legitimately disinterested for some of them. However, there are not principled reasons for denying that I can increase my experience of my own sport by acquiring knowledge of other ones: they can provide understanding of facts similar to both and they can be appreciated even if they do not have much in common with my own one, because they can actualise something whose outcome are of high value.

Religious diversity can be approached by a standpoint not faraway from such a one. AP asks to consider this possibility: learning from those others we encounter in our life who are capable to induce us an interest towards their experience; accepting that we can have enough in common to achieve a better understanding of our faith and a more refined justification for our beliefs; acknowledging that others may actualise something different from and exotic in respect to what we believe, but, nonetheless, expressive of dignity and truth.

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