

FIDEISM- A CRITICAL EVALUATION

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



**BY
CHANDANA DEKA
Roll No. 146141020**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
GUWAHATI 781039, INDIA**

January 2021

Declaration

I, Miss Chandana Deka, hereby declare that the matter embodied in this thesis entitled “Fideism- A Critical Evaluation” has been carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. V. Prabhu, Professor (Philosophy), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG). This work has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.



Chandana Deka

Guwahati

January 2021

Chandana Deka

Research Scholar

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Guwahati-781039, Assam

India

Certificate

This is to certify that the work contained in the thesis entitled “Fideism- A Critical Evaluation” by Chandana Deka (Roll No. 146141020), a student of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG), for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was carried out under my supervision. The results embodied in the thesis have not been submitted to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



Guwahati

January 2021

Prof. V. Prabhu

Professor (*Philosophy*)

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Guwahati-781039, Assam

India



This work is dedicated to my loving parents

Mrs. Uttara Deka & Mr. Dilip Kumar Deka

Acknowledgment

It is a great pleasure and privilege on my part to express my indebtedness and gratitude to those who have helped and provided me valuable advice in this academic venture.

This thesis is the result of five and a half years of hard work during which a lot of people have helped and accompanied me in numerous ways to see the light of the day. It is my pleasure that I now have the opportunity to express my gratitude to all of them.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. V. Prabhu, for his constant supervision and guidance, valuable suggestions, and engagement at every stage of this study, without which this study would have been an uphill task. I owe him plenty of gratitude for helping me stay focused on the right track of research. I am deeply grateful for getting the opportunity to work under his supervision and for his continuous encouragement and support throughout these years.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my Doctoral Committee Members, Prof. Archana Barua, Prof. Sukanya Sharma, and Dr. Bidisha Som, for their helpful insights, suggestions, and comments during the preparation of the thesis. I shall always be indebted to them for their encouraging words and sound advice, which gave me the confidence to finish my research work.

I am grateful to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IITG) for giving me the opportunity to pursue my research by providing me with an excellent and vibrant academic environment and for all the facilities required by a research student. The office staff of the Department of HSS, Parag Kalita, Durga Sharma, Rubul Gogoi, and Khanthai Mala Basumatary, have always provided ready administrative help. I am grateful to them for their kindness towards me.

I thank all my friends and fellow research students in the department for their help and support. I want to thank my friends Sambashiva, Bidisha, Devipriya, Momi, Halim,

Dwijasish, Dhriti, Leena, Nayan, Prerona, Namrata, Jimmy, Rekha, Dheeraj, Bikash, Ajay, Sreelakshmi, Chayanika, Subhalikha, Konku, Taposh, Mizink, Biswajit, Abhilasha, Smriti, Stuti, Tripti, Anshul, Nengneithem, Himadri, Tulika, Kashmiri, Nayanakhee, Bharat, and Arfan for their constant motivation, wonderful company, support, and encouragement. They are friends who turned into family and have always helped bring out the best in me.

I would also like to acknowledge my infinite gratefulness to some of my friends outside IITG. I would especially like to thank my friends Jahnu, Manash, Mubarak, Rishan, Nikhil, Arpana, Dhritiman, Kankana, and Manabendra, who have always been there to cheer me up and have always been my strength.

I want to express my love to my one and only sister, Dipanjali. She has always been my constant support and biggest strength. She has always been there as my shadow on all accounts. Lastly, but most importantly, I offer prayers to my wonderful parents. I am indebted to my Maa and Deuta, who have always stood by me and have continuously motivated me to work towards my dream no matter what. Their love and trust in me have enabled me to reach this final stage and dream further.

Chandana Deka

Table of Contents

Content	Page No.	
Declaration	i	
Certificate	ii	
Dedication	iii	
Acknowledgement	iv-v	
Contents	vi-vii	
Abstract	viii	
Chapter I	Introduction	1-10
1.1	Background of the Study	1
1.2	Objectives of the Proposed Research	8
1.3	Research Methodology	9
1.4	Layout of the Chapters	9
Chapter II	Fideism and Rationalism	11-21
2.1	Natural Theology Perspective	11
2.2	Philosophical Arguments	14
2.3	Rationalist Perspective	17
2.4	Critical Points Against Fideism	20
2.5	Conclusion	21
Chapter III	Fideism and Evidentialism	22-45
3.1	Challenges to Fideism from the Scientific Claims	22
3.2	The New Atheists' Position	24

3.3	The Argument from Religious Scriptures	29
3.4	The Advent and Advancement of Natural Theology	29
3.5	The Interpretation of the Critics of Atheism is Wrong	32
3.6	Tea Pot Argument	33
3.7	Conclusion	44
Chapter IV	Fideism: Individual vs collective	46-84
4.1	Introduction	46
4.2	A Socio-Religious Practice	51
4.3	Quasi-Religious Practices	58
4.4	A Religious Practice	70
4.5	Conclusion	83
Chapter V	Fideism and Pragmatism	85-106
5.1	Pragmatic Way Forward	85
5.2	Jamesian and Rortyan Versions of Pragmatism	85
5.3	Capability Approach	97
5.4	Supra-Evidential and Counter-Evidential Fideism	105
Chapter VI	Conclusion	107-112
	Bibliography	113-134

Abstract

This thesis attempts to critically evaluate issues related to fideism. Fideism as an idea upholds that in the issues of religion, reason has no or minimal place, and only faith matters. Some fideists hold that religious faith and reason are not compatible with each other. According to them, faith requires absolute certainty and personal commitment. That faith goes beyond rational justification. Therefore, it is not necessary to look for evidence or reason in religious beliefs. This stance puts fideism in a problematic spot many times. Fideism faces challenges from different philosophical positions, severely from rationalism and evidentialism. But fideism manages to deal with such challenges from the doctrinal dimension. The challenges to fideism concerning doctrinal dimension may be less or unsolvable sometimes. But the toughest challenge is how fideism deals with the other dimensions of religion, specifically the social and ethical dimensions of religious practices. I highlight these challenges in this thesis and contend that if fideism is to hold its position, it has to combat these criticisms without getting itself into dogmatism.

Chapter- I

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

Religion is an important subject matter of philosophy. Philosophy of religion deals with the study of religion that includes within its boundary arguments over God's existence, nature of religious language, religious practices, miracles, the problem of evil, and the relationship between religion and science and religion and values.

Philosophy of religion is a bona fide academic field that is as objective, rigorous, and systematic as possible. As such, it is not a dogmatic or parochial project but seeks to follow the best approaches to study religious concepts and beliefs. In this way, it seeks authentic intellectual engagement with religion in the arena of ideas (Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, & Basinger, 2007, p. 2).

Among the different topics within the subject of philosophy of religion, I choose to work on fideism. It falls under the philosophy of religion, as this concept is concerned with God, faith, and reason. I study how one can understand the idea of faith and reason in believing the deity. For most religious people, religion is a matter of faith. But some others opine that it is harmful to believe in anything that lacks evidence. So, the nature and extent of use of reason and faith in understanding God become a matter of disagreement in the philosophy of religion discourse.

The term fideism is originated from the Latin word *Fides*, meaning faith. Thus, Fideism is a school of thought that supports faith against reason in matters related to God. According to this view, one shouldn't ask for any shreds of evidence for religious beliefs. "Fideists hold that religious belief is based on faith rather than reason. Extreme fideists maintain that faith is contrary

to reason; moderate fideists argue that what must first be accepted on faith may subsequently find rational support” (Carroll, 2008, p. 2).

A contrasting view [to evidentialism] is fideism, best understood as the claim that one’s fundamental religious convictions are not subject to independent rational assessment. A reason often given for this is that devotion to God should be one’s ‘ultimate concern,’ and to subject faith to the judgment of reason is to place reason above God and make of it an idol (Carroll, 2008, p. 3).

Fideism tends to rely on faith rather than on reason or evidence. “This claim has been presented in many forms by theologians from St Paul to contemporary neo-orthodox, antirationalist writers, usually as a way of asserting that the fundamental tenets of religion cannot be established by proofs or by empirical evidence but must be accepted on faith” (Carroll, 2008, p. 3). Michael Peterson describes fideism as “the view that religious belief-systems are not subject to rational evaluation” (Peterson, 2003). Thus, one can see that fideism is associated with the idea that reason has no place in issues of religion, and it is faith that matters. Some fideists hold that religious faith and reason are not compatible with each other. According to them, faith needs complete certainty and personal commitment. That faith goes beyond rational justification. Therefore, one should not ask for evidence of religious beliefs.

Carroll and many other thinkers recognize that fideists agree on the incompatibility between faith and reason on religious issues. But they point out that no consensus or agreement exists to what level this disagreement between faith and religion is. While there is an agreement that faith and reason are incompatible, the extent of this incompatibility is not certain. Zagzebski, therefore claims a proper understanding of faith and reason is needed while discussing fideism. She says that fideism is an idea according to which faith and reason are not compatible. Faith and reason are separate. So there is a clash between faith and reason. This clash between faith and

reason cannot be solved without a clarification of both faith and reason (Zagzebski & Miller, 2009).

While the debate on employing reason or faith in understanding God is an important point of discussion in the philosophy of religion, it has its roots in the respective religions. It is not just philosophers who have been arguing for having reason in understanding religion; rather, it is sanctioned in many religions as well. Different religions have accepted faith and also reason in understanding religion and religious concepts. Similarly, different religions have accepted the idea of faith differently. Scriptures of different religions emphasize on faith and also on reason. This has given room for the philosophers and the theologians to argue for both faith and reason, quoting from the scriptures. Let us see how different religions like Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism understand the idea of faith and reason.

❖ **Faith and Reason in Judaism:**

Judaism is a monotheistic religion. Its foundational text is the Torah. Some Torah quotations that emphasize faith in understanding God are:

“And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very fraudulent generation, children in whom is no faith” (Deuteronomy 32:20).

“This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of MeribahKadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites” (Deuteronomy 32:51) (New International Version).

“And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith” (New Living Translation) (Genesis 15:6).

Quotes talking about reason and wisdom in verses of Torah,

How do we know, for instance, that we should not believe someone who claims God sent him to tell us to steal or fornicate, or that the Torah is no longer applicable, even if he bolsters his claim to prophecy by apparently performing miracles? It is because reason tells us to act morally and that truth is preferable to falsehood (340-Saadia 3:8).

“All commandments even statutes have reasons, and that the absence of reasons for the Torah (that we can understand), is a result of our own intellectual blindness” (Deuteronomy 22:6) (Nachmanides).

All the commandments have reasons. Every commandment from among these six hundred and thirteen commandments exists either with a view to communicating a correct opinion, or to putting an end to an unhealthy opinion, or to communicating a rule of justice, or to warding off an injustice, or to endowing people with a noble moral quality, or to warning them against an evil moral quality. Thus all [the commandments] are bound up with three things: opinions, moral qualities, and political civic actions (Maimonides) (Guide for the Perplexed 3:31).

❖ **Faith and Reason in Islam:**

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, “with 1.6 billion adherents, or 23% of the global population” (Hackett, Connor, Stonawski, & Skirbekk, 2015). Like Judaism, Islam is also a monotheistic religion. According to Muslims, Muhammad is the last prophet of God. Islam advocates that God is one and unique. The ultimate goal of people’s existence is to devote themselves to God (Study of Major Religions, n.d).

The primary scripture that Islam is based on is the Quran. According to the adherents, this text (Quran) is Allah’s (God) authentic word. Verses throughout the Quran point to the nature of the relationship between faith and knowledge. For example, in Surah al An’dm: “behold! In these things. There are Signs for people who believe” (6: 99). Then in Surah Yunus: “ut neither Signs

nor Warners profit those who believe not” (10: 101). And then again in al- ‘Ankabut.’ “verily in that is a sign for those who believe” (29: 24). These verses clarify that to understand Allah’s signs, one should have faith in Allah. For adherents to realize Allah’s signs, they should have faith in Allah. Faith is the necessary condition for knowledge in Islam (Kazmi, 1999).

Some of the quotes from the Quran where it is talking about reason,

“Surely the worst beasts in God’s sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not reason” (8:22).

“And He lays abomination upon those who do not reason” (10:100).

“Say: bring your proof if you are truthful” (2:111).

❖ **Faith and Reason in Christianity:**

In Christianity, it is believed that Jesus is the Son of God and Christ. The Bible is an assemblage of many established books consist of two parts. One is the Old Testament, and the other is the New Testament. There are some differences in Bible versions and editions throughout Christianity (Good News , 2011).

In the Bible, faith is defined as “believing God.” As mentioned in the Bible, Abraham is considered to be the primary believer of God:

“Abraham believed in the Lord, and God counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

“For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not given to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13).

Hence, those above-mentioned verses mention the definition of faith and how faith constitutes righteousness in God's sight. Throughout the Bible, we find the importance of such faith, which is the persistent theme of the New Testament-

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Quotations from some verses of the Bible about reason,

“Come now, and let us reason together, Says the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18).

“Put me in remembrance, let us argue our case together, state your cause, that you may be proved right” (Isaiah 43:26).

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17).

Thus, we can see how faith and reason are understood in these three Semitic religions, i.e., Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In the following section we shall look into how Asian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism understand faith and reason.

❖ Faith and Reason in Hinduism:

Quotations from some scriptural verses of Hinduism on faith

“When one has faith, then one thinks. No one thinks until he has faith. Only by having faith does one think. So [you] should really want to understand faith” (Chāndogya Upinasad, VII, xix).

“Men who put no Faith, in this law of righteousness (dharma), fail to reach Me and must return to the road of recurring death” (The Bhagavad Gita, IX).

Quotation from scriptural verse of Hinduism on reason:

“Know that I am the eternal seed of all contingent beings: Reason in the rational, Glory in the glorious am I” (The Bhagavad Gita, VII).

❖ Faith and Reason in Buddhism:

Quotations from Buddhist scriptures on faith,

“Just so, monks, the faith of the Brahman U.n.naabha is settled on the Tathaagata, rooted in him, established in him. It is strong, and cannot be uprooted by any recluse or Brahman, deva or Mara, Brahma or anyone else in the world” (Samyutta Nikaya 48.42).

“And which, are those elements that conduce to enlightenment? The faculty of faith, monks, conduces to enlightenment, the faculties of energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom conduce to enlightenment” (Samyutta Nikaya 48.54).

Quotation from Buddhist scripture on reason,

But whatever you are asked to believe, ask yourself whether it is true in the light of your experience, whether it is in conformity with reason and good principles and whether it is conducive to the highest good and welfare of all beings, and only if it passes this test, should you accept it and act in accordance with it (Kalama Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya).

1.2 Objectives of the Proposed Research:

Through these quotes, one can see the religious scriptures are supporting faith in religious issues; they also recognize reason in understanding religious matters. Thus, scriptures sanction faith and reason in the religious context. Theologians and philosophers take up the seed of having faith and reason in the religious context as sanctioned in the scriptures. They are debating for and against fideism.

New atheists, rationalists, empiricists, evidentialists have criticized the faith element everywhere and every time. Hence the purpose of my work is to critically assess the concept of fideism. The issue of faith has many layers. So, another aim of this thesis is to delineate the distinction between faith and blind faith. And, most notably, the consequences of holding into such faith. Religion is not always a personal affair. It is a primary social system. In the case of institutionalized religions, where many people follow a particular belief system, it shows religion's presence in the social context. Many religions coexist in a multi-religious and multicultural set-up, each with its own ideologies, practices, and rituals. One has to see how fideism will perform in such a pluralistic social set-up. I shall consider these questions in my thesis.

1.3 Research Methodology:

The research will be analytical and critical in nature based on materials that include the books and articles written on fideism and different religious Texts.

This thesis is shaped by the following chapters.

1.4 Layouts of the Chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter discusses the conceptual understanding of the idea of fideism and its relation to faith and reason. This chapter focuses on the key components in the idea of fideism, as found in different religious texts.

Chapter II: Fideism and Rationalism

In this chapter, I discuss the issues of faith and reason, particularly focusing on the aspects of discussion between fideism and natural theology. Arguments from theologians, fideists, and other rationalist philosophers on employing faith and reason with respect to religion will be discussed in detail.

Chapter III: Fideism and Evidentialism

In this chapter, I study the conflicts and arguments concerning faith in God and evidentialism. Recent challenges to fideism from scientific claims will be discussed. New atheists' comments on religion, the replies of the natural theologians are addressed in this chapter. The new atheists' position to disprove God's existence with the teapot argument will be discussed. In this chapter, I place the revealed and natural theologians on one side and the opponents to them on the

other side. Through this, I show that challenges to fideism are not only from natural theologians but also from anti-religious and atheists. Here, I claim that counter evidential fideism stands a better chance to defend its position compared with natural theologians while defending their position against atheists and other non-believers or evidentialists. Fideism provides a new dimension to this argument in totally rejecting evidence.

Chapter IV: Fideism: Individual Sphere Vs. Collective Sphere:

This chapter will discuss religion's practical issues- how religious practices impact human life's moral, social, and cultural aspects. Dealing with the question- to what level we can accept faith in religion at the social level, I shall discuss various socio-cultural and socio-religious issues.

Chapter V: Fideism and Pragmatism:

In this chapter, I shall look for a generalized solution in the fideistic approach by implementing a pragmatic outlook that might help fideism escape the allegations and make religion acceptable in the public sphere. This chapter focuses more on the public and private sphere debate of religion from James and Rorty's perspectives. Hence the notion of pragmatic rationality and how it can be linked to fideism will be discussed. Lastly, I shall argue from the standpoint of the capability approach in this chapter.

Chapter VI: Conclusion:

In this chapter, I shall summarize the arguments for and against fideism and develop my position based on my research findings. This chapter shall sum up the issues and outcomes that are involved in this research.

Chapter- II

Fideism and Rationalism

2.1 Natural Theology Perspective:

In this chapter, philosophical arguments from the natural theologians, fideists, and other rationalist philosophers on employing faith and reason on religion will be discussed. “Natural theology is concerned with obtaining knowledge of God through experience and reasoning” (Cruz & Smedt, 2014, p. 1). Natural theology inquiries into God’s existence and attributes without relying on revelation (Taliaferro, 2012, p. 1). While discussing the historical account of natural theology, Charles Taliaferro writes,

The story of natural theology begins where theology begins. For the Greeks the term theology originally referred to inquiry into the lives and activities of the gods or divinities. In the list of early natural theologians the names of Plato (428–348 bce), Aristotle (384–322 bce), and some of their descendants come first. They have developed significant arguments for the existence of God without relying on revelation ... In the West, Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), and Duns Scotus (1266–1308) are among the most celebrated contributors to natural theology (Taliaferro, 2012, p. 1).

Some Muslim philosophers also contribute to natural theology, “especially for cosmological theistic arguments,” for example, “Ibn Sina (or Avicenna, 980–1037)” (Taliaferro, 2012, p. 1). In the early modern tradition of philosophy, natural theology occupies a significant place. For instance, quoting C. Taliaferro again,

Some of the classics in the modern era, such as the Meditations by Descartes (1596–1650), An Essay Concerning Human Understanding by John Locke (1632–1704), Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous by George Berkeley, the Theodicy by Leibniz (1646–1716), the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion by David Hume (1711–76),

and the Critique of Pure Reason by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) all constitute major contributions to assessing reasons for and against theism, without making any appeal to revelation. The last two works are commonly thought to advance the most serious challenges to carrying out natural theology at all, but in point of fact, they still remain works in the tradition of natural theology, insofar as they reflect on the credibility of believing that there is a God, employing arguments that do not explicitly appeal to revelation. It is difficult to exaggerate the role of natural theology in the history of modern philosophy. The first substantial philosophical work published in English was a work in natural theology: The True Intellectual System of the Universe by Ralph Cudworth (1617–88) (Taliaferro, 2012, pp. 1-2).

On the different questions about God, fideism relies entirely on faith. On the other hand, natural theology tries to seek answers using the sources of evidence. Human beings share those sources of evidence with their common humanity. People use science, history, reason, etc., as the sources of evidence. Based on the distinction between believing in something depending on faith and assuming on something depending on reason, we can distinguish between revealed theology and natural theology (Brent, n.d).

Natural theology asks questions regarding God's existence. For instance: Does God exist? If He exists, what is He? If He exists, how to learn about Him? On the other hand, revealed theology concentrates on God's moral-personal qualities. Revealed theology focuses on the ones that would justify the worthiness of God. It also deals with inquiries such as why people should worship God and why one should obey His orders. Revealed theology is based on sacred texts, whereas natural theology forms its proofs based on the mind's data. On the questions of justification, natural theology does not accept the authority of Revelation (Gębura, 2014).

The division concerning revealed theology and natural theology has developed from the division between faith and reason in due course of time. In Augustine's writings, we find an explanation about faith and reason (Augustine, 1992). Augustine distinguishes between one's

stand on authority and one's stand on the demonstration. By authority, he means the authority of scripture. This distinction ultimately leads to faith and reason. The distinction between holding something by faith or commitment to text is revealed theology, and holding it by reason is natural theology (Brent, n.d).

St. Augustine emphasizes the human mind's ability to engage in logic and reasoning, although scripture was his ultimate guide in matters of faith. In Augustine's passionate search for God, Olson asks: Can we know and understand God depending on reason only? The answer is we cannot know. "If you understood him," Augustine asserts, "it would not be God" (Olson, 2010). Augustine has a balanced view of faith and reason. The other medieval thinker, St. Anselm, begins his great work entitled "Proslogion (Discourse on the Existence of God)" with these famous words: "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this I also believe, that unless I believed, I should not understand" (Hrozeincik, 2013). Anselm says that to make sense out of the Christian message, one really has to first embrace Christianity – to be moved by the Holy Spirit, who will "open the eyes" of the believer and bring about a greater understanding. However, it is clear that Anselm is not a pure fideist, as he develops the ontological argument, the only *apriori* argument among the traditional lines of evidence for theism. Anselm's exploration of the theistic evidence is for the purpose of a better understanding of God, despite his already well-developed faith; for Anselm, faith must precede reasoning (Hrozeincik, 2013).

Another notable medieval theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, articulates a classical position concerning the relationship between reason and revelation. According to Aquinas, people can know some truths about God through human reasoning and some other truths through God's revelation. We cannot ignore the worth of both kinds of truths. If people lack time, opportunity, or ability to verify the truth, they can accept those truths that are knowable by reason on faith. But

though these two kinds of truths originate from different sources, there is no point of disagreement between each other since “only the false is opposed to the true” (Aquinas, 2007, p. 92).

2.2 Philosophical Arguments:

In line with many of the medieval thinkers, some philosophers have also subscribed to the position of fideism in religion. One staunch supporter of fideism is Blaise Pascal. According to him, different proofs for God’s existence are not relevant. He asks skeptics to view faith in another way. Here Pascal is referring to faith in God. According to Pascal, skeptics should consider faith a cost-free choice where there is the possibility for reward. He does not argue more about God’s existence. He presents his argument as a “win/win situation” (Pascal, 2007). If someone believes in God, and God exists, that person wins. If someone believes in God, and God does not exist, that person has nothing to lose (Pascal, 2007). This is known as Pascal’s Wager. Blaise Pascal asks a question-

if you had to decide for or against belief in the Christian God with no evidence whatsoever- no reason either to believe God exists or to believe that he does not- what should you choose (Pascal, 2007, p. 101)?

Thus, Pascal builds his theory based on probability theory. He claims that the only rational option is to believe under certain conditions (Pascal, 2007, p. 101).

Another well-known advocate of fideism is Danish philosopher Soren Aaby Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Kierkegaard believes reason never supports faith, as faith is characterized by “absolute certainty” and “passionate personal commitment” (What is Fideism, n.d). Kierkegaard puts forward three arguments to prove his claim about the relationship between faith and reason.

Approximation argument- Kierkegaard asserts that we cannot prove things by arguments with complete certainty. He presumes some possible errors and misinterpretations in the supporting evidence or the reasoning. He believes that we cannot attain absolute certainty through rational argument. And since faith needs absolute certainty, it always goes beyond the evidence. Hence, faith cannot be supported by reason (What is Fideism, n.d).

Postponement argument- According to this argument, the probability of new data can invalidate formerly proved conclusions. So, if we need absolute certainty by establishing our faith in rational scientific inquiry, we would have to wait till we have all the data. Therefore, “in order to have the certainty that faith demands, one must choose to believe what cannot be acquired from scientific investigation” (What is Fideism, n.d).

Passion argument- This argument highlights the issue of personal commitment. For him, our evidence is imperfect at best, and so it involves risk in believing any conclusion. According to him, the most valuable faith is that which is against all known evidence. The risk factor makes this faith more valuable. He asserts that faith would be unnecessary if we could prove God’s existence with reason, evidence, or data (What is Fideism, n.d).

According to Kierkegaard, “the truth is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of infinity” (Kierkegaard, 2007, p. 122). For him, this definition of truth is the same as the expression of faith. “Without risk, there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual’s inwardness and the objective uncertainty” (Kierkegaard, 2007, p. 122).

C. Stephen Evans offers some arguments regarding Kierkegaard and his idea of fideism. According to him, “Kierkegaard is not an irrationalist” (Evans, 2008, p. 1021). He calls him a

“responsible fideist” (Evans, 2008, p. 1021). Responsible fideism tries to find the answers to some crucial queries: “Are there limits to reason?” and “How can the limits of reason be recognized” (Evans, 2008, p. 1021)? Kierkegaard’s version of the incarnation as “the absolute paradox” has similarities with Kantian antimony. “Faith in the incarnation both helps us recognize the limits of reason and also to a degree overcomes those limits” (Evans, 2008, p. 1021).

Ludwig Wittgenstein, an important analytic philosopher, holds that God’s existence need not be validated based on evidence and historical facts (Wittgenstein L. , 1967). Wittgenstein argues that the participants of religious language game can entirely understand religious beliefs. Wittgenstein contends that people commit a mistake by thinking of religious belief on the scientific model or fact stating beliefs (Wittgenstein L. , 2009, p. 168).

Sharing this view, Norman Malcolm holds that we should not treat religious beliefs as hypotheses as in science. According to him, religious beliefs take part in a different language game and form of life. Norman Malcolm asserts that- “Wittgenstein’s ideas on language games” that insist on their groundlessness are valid only for the language through which people express religious beliefs (Bottone, 2001, p. 9). While talking about religious beliefs, Malcolm is inferring to the attitude of religious people in general rather than the doctrinal aspect of a belief system. For instance, the Buddhists claim they do not believe in God (Bottone, 2001, pp. 9-10).

One more important thing plays a vital role in choosing what to believe and what not to believe. That is moral obligation. Some people consider moral obligations as irrelevant. But thinkers like William Clifford debate that it is not right to believe upon anything without “sufficient evidence” (Clifford, 2007, p. 104). If we believe in something which lacks rational support, that belief or action may harm or endanger others. For him, we should always look for adequate

evidence. We may believe another person's statement when it is based on reasonable ground. For that, we have to assume that he is speaking the truth (Clifford, 1886).

While responding to William Clifford, William James argues that "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence" (James W. , 2007, p. 110). Clifford firmly states that "religious beliefs will fail to meet this test" (James W. , 2007). In reply to Clifford, James debates for the "will to believe" or "the right to believe" and states that in some cases, there is an absence of strong supporting evidence that Clifford considers essentials (James W. , 2007). However, James approves this conclusion only when clear-cut objective evidence is unavailable. He is not in support of ignoring or denying the evidence if the evidence is available (James W. , 2007, p. 110).

Looking at the different ways of understanding and different sorts of justifications provided by theologians and philosophers on fideism, we can see that fideism tries to cushion religious beliefs against reason. Philosophers have tried to compare and differentiate fideism with different philosophical theories such as naturalism and skepticism.

2.3 Rationalist Perspective:

Fideism believes that religious understanding is ultimately grounded in faith and not on rational argument or scientific knowledge. On that basis, it can be contrasted with natural theology and rationalism. Rationalism can be defined in its strongest form as the position that religious belief must be verifiable according to universally accepted standards of rationality. It has also been seen that early modern rationalist thinkers also did approve that theology is an exercise concerned with validating God's existence without the help of scriptures and without banking on faith. For instance, Descartes says in the preface of his "Meditations" thus,

And, indeed, I have observed that you, with all the other theologians, not only affirmed the sufficiency of natural reason for the proof of the existence of God, but also, that it may be inferred from sacred Scripture, that the knowledge of God is much clearer than of many created things, and that it is really so easy of acquisition as to leave those who do not possess it blameworthy (Descartes R. , [1637] 1901).

As Descartes observes, they prefer to give faith equal or more importance than reason; still, they don't want to reject reason. Their attempts and arguments prove they employ reason. There are two arguments for God's existence accepted by theists traditionally: apriori arguments and aposteriori arguments. Both apriori and aposteriori arguments try to understand God's existence through reason and do not go for 'revealed' scriptural truths. Ontological arguments, teleological arguments, different versions of design arguments, and cosmological arguments are examples of how theologians justify their beliefs rationally. Apart from the arguments for God's existence, there are other religious doctrinal issues like the problem of evil, miracles and testimony, and religious experiences where theologians provide arguments and try justifying their points. We are not claiming that what those theologians said is right or their arguments are sound enough. But, at the same time, we cannot deny that they tried to understand through reason and arguments. We cannot belittle their efforts.

According to some thinkers, the most effective form of rationalism is evidentialism. Evidentialism argues that we can justify a religious belief by proportioning one's belief to the evidence for or against an assumed proposition. So, we can say that it is a theory about epistemic justification (Brich, 2012). Penelhum observes that fideism is a solution to the problem of epistemic justification. He states that specific religious beliefs seem resilient to traditional epistemic justification (Penelhum, 1989). Antony Flew also asserts that if one wishes to prove God's existence, then "we have to have good grounds for believing that this is indeed so. Until and

unless some such grounds are produced, we have literally no reason at all for believing” (Flew A. , 1992). According to him, these “good grounds” would be evidential in nature (Flew A. , 1992). Again, Evans contends that the limits to reason are reasonable for reason to acknowledge. According to Evans, “Faith enables human beings to move beyond the limitations of finite, fallen human reason” (Evans, 1998, p. 153). By affirming this statement, C. Stephen Evans presents his version of fideism. It is known as responsible fideism (Evans, 1998, p. 152). In his book “Faith Beyond Reason,” Evans’s theory perceives reason as imperfect in two crucial ways. One is that “reason has cognitive boundaries” (Butcher, 2013, p. 78). These boundaries indicate that “certain things cannot be understood or reasoned about” (Butcher, 2013, p. 78). The other one is, reason is infected by sin. According to Evans, pride and selfishness taint reason. Hence reason fails to “address all propositions or beliefs” (Butcher, 2013, p. 78). Such beliefs include religious beliefs about God.

With the help of this argument, “Evans opens the door to fideism as an alternative to what he calls rationalism—a position he characterizes as wrongly dependent on epistemic reason. There are a variety of models of faith. Evans suggests a model that he calls Biblical faith” (Butcher, 2013, p. 79). Another fideist Bishop understands faith in two ways. One is “faith-as-belief,” and the other is “faith-as-trust models” (Butcher, 2013, p. 79). By following Bishop, Evans describes faith as something constituted of belief, trust, and obedience.

Evans’s responsible fideism “begins with a commitment to religious realism and also to epistemic rationality” (Butcher, 2013, p. 79). Evans’s fideism is primarily understood with the ideas of faith and reason. But according to Butcher, Evan’s understanding of rationality is sometimes unclear (Butcher, 2013, p. 80). Evans does not consider rationalism as the right way to approach religious belief. According to his responsible fideism, “The reason one can remain

rational in this case isn't because one ignores reason, but because one discovers reason's flaws and boundaries, and thus (reasonably) moves beyond rationalism" (Butcher, 2013, p. 85). Evans's central focus is on religious faith. As discussed above, the account of the faith that Evans uses is the biblical faith. According to him, this faith has the capacity to see evidence and approach God. For Evans,

If reason is an agent-within-an-agent (a homunculus), yet faith is but a disposition of an agent, the juxtaposition between faith and reason is in some sense strained. However, if both are active within a human, each pushing the agent in a particular direction, then one can more readily sketch an account of faith versus reason (Butcher, 2013, p. 108).

This is how some fideists understand rationalism concerning fideism.

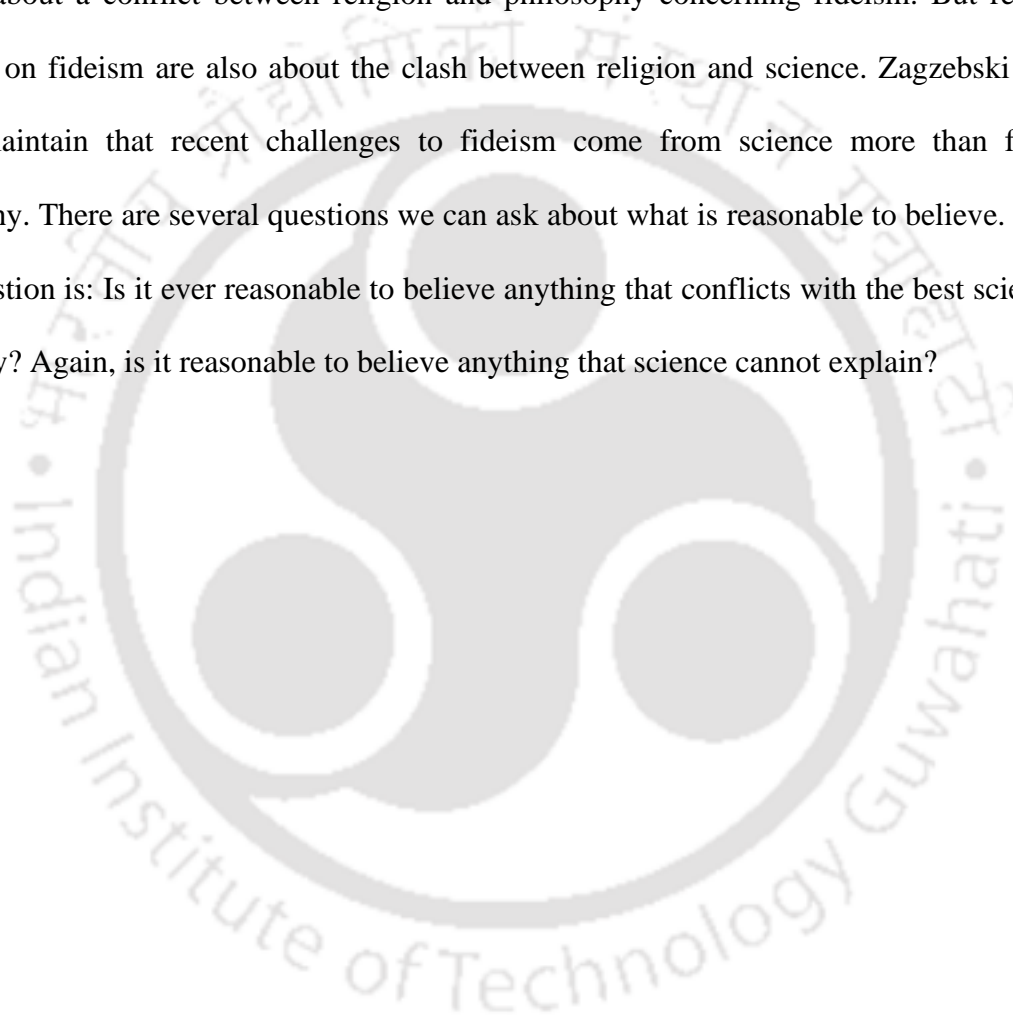
2.4 Critical Points Against Fideism:

While many support fideism, there are others who reject fideism from the theological and philosophical quarters. Roman Catholic Church discards fideism. Their official position is- "While the existence of the one God can, in fact, be demonstrated by reason, men can nevertheless be deluded by their sinful natures to deny the claims of reason that demonstrate God's existence" (Fideism, 2017).

Pope John Paul II, in his "encyclical letter Fides et Ratio (Faith and Reason) to the Bishops of the Catholic church on the relationship between faith and reason," writes that "God's existence is, in fact, demonstrable by reason, and that attempts to reason otherwise are the results of sin" (II, 1998). Peter Abelard and Lord Herbert criticize fideism. According to them, fideism is not the best theory. According to them, "If one does not attempt to understand what one believes, one is not really believing. 'Blind faith' is not true faith" (Fideism, 2017).

2.5 Conclusion:

While these sorts of challenges for fideists come from philosophical (including rationalists) and even from natural theologians, it is not that fideism faces challenges from those quarters only. It has been seen that earlier medieval theologians and philosophers were worried about a conflict between religion and philosophy concerning fideism. But recent concerns on fideism are also about the clash between religion and science. Zagzebski and Miller maintain that recent challenges to fideism come from science more than from philosophy. There are several questions we can ask about what is reasonable to believe. One such question is: Is it ever reasonable to believe anything that conflicts with the best science of the day? Again, is it reasonable to believe anything that science cannot explain?



Chapter- III

Fideism and Evidentialism

3.1 Challenges to Fideism from the Scientific Claims:

In the last chapter, I have discussed how fideism faces challenges from natural theology. But both the fideists and natural theologians do support God's existence. They find leading a religious life to be ethical and meaningful. In this chapter, I shall discuss the conflicts and arguments about faith in God and evidentialism. In this chapter, I place the revealed and natural theologians on one side and the opponents to them on the other side. Through this, I show that challenges to fideism are not only from natural theologians but also from anti-religious and atheists.

Thus, in this chapter, recent challenges for fideism from scientific claims will be discussed. New atheists' comments on religion and the natural theologians' responses are discussed in this chapter. The new atheists' position to disprove God's existence with the help of the teapot argument will be discussed. I shall provide arguments to refute the new atheists' position.

In the subsequent passages, I shall try to discuss by referring to this question- Is it possible to justify religious beliefs without evidence?

Fideism is against evidentialism. According to Plantinga, "it is possible to believe without evidence" (Craig, 2008). According to him, direct knowledge is possible. But in the 18th century, theological rationalism has been advocated by many Christians. They believe that belief in God should be justified on evidence and argument. Disagreeing with this view, Dodwell feels that

“evidence and argument could not be the way in which God intended us to know him because these are so uncertain, and they vary from time to time and place to place” (Craig, 2008). His view is in line with what we call Reformed epistemology, stating that Christianity is true outside of any argument and evidence only when God gives us a knowledge of Christianity’s truth. In other words, it can happen through immediate communication from God (Craig, 2008).

Now to define evidentialism, it is a theory about epistemic justification. “...it is a thesis about what it takes for one to believe justifiably, or reasonably, in the sense thought to be necessary for knowledge” (Mittag, n.d). It can be simply formulated in this way: “evidentialism: S is justified in believing P at t if and only if S’s evidence at t on balance supports P” (Feldman, 2009, p. 294). Evidentialism always looks for evidence and reason. On the other hand, fideism being the opposite view, tends to rely only on faith. Therefore, faith, reason, evidence are the issues that create tension between evidentialism and fideism. They are often viewed as rivals. Therefore, Pihlström writes,

evidentialists, engaging in something like “natural theology,” urge that religious beliefs (in particular, the belief that God exists) ought to be supported by religiously neutral evidence, reason and argument, whereas fideists, renouncing the project of natural theology, argue that the evidentialist’s requirement misconstrues the nature of religious belief, which, if genuinely religious, is held without evidence, reason or argument (Pihlström, 2002, p. 195).

The new atheists have also raised the question of justifying a religious belief based on evidence. The new atheists seem like following the evidentialist trend of looking for evidence in religious matters. While trying to justify religious beliefs without reason, fideists face critical challenges from the new atheists.

3.2 The New Atheists' Position:

New Atheists include thinkers like “Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Christopher Hitchens” (Taylor J. E., n.d). They criticize religious faith and religion. They hold that “belief in God is irrational and socially unacceptable” (Meister, n.d). Dawkins writes, “religion is a virus, indeed a type of mental illness” (Dawkins R. , 2006, p. 330). His central concern is whether religion is true. Dawkins suggests that religious belief is made less possible by Darwinian science. He says that religion presents a poor image of the world. “The universe presented by organized religion is a poky little medieval universe, and extremely limited” (Dawkins, 1996, p. 85). “In contrast, science offers a bold and brilliant vision of the universe as grand, beautiful, and awe-inspiring” (McGrath A. E., 2013). Dawkins states that religion avoids any human requirement to think. He remarks that science and reason prove their beliefs with evidence. In contrast, religious people stay away from facts and evidence. They live in an unreal world. Dawkins claims, “faith is the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence” (McGrath A. E., 2013, p. 84). For Dawkins, we should oppose all types of dogmatism grounded in faith. It is like that evil virus that infects human minds. According to him, religious faith is inconsistent with the scientific method. He says religion leads to violence. And if we eliminate it, this will be the best thing for human life (McGrath A. , 2005).

In similar lines with Dawkins, Harris says, “all reasonable men and women have a common enemy...our enemy is nothing other than faith itself” (Jennek, 2017, p. 10). According to Harris, religious faith causes conflict in the world. “Harris sees reason in a very unfavorable position in the battle against religion” (Jennek, 2017, p. 10). Harris states that instead of religion, only science should answer most questions related to morality as well as conflict or violence (Jennek, 2017, p. 10). In short, Harris regards religion as the primary source of violence and hate. For Harris, there

is an absence of a rationalized “interpretive method” (Silver, 2013, p. 16). This method may help people in reading, and most importantly, socializing religious zones between the religious authority and followers. Harris describes religion as an outdated worldview. “Harris suggests that scripture should be considered within more modern social and rational examinations as opposed to faith alone” (Silver, 2013, p. 17). Silver further writes, “for Harris, religion has contrasting potential from being a social system of open-mindedness and acceptance to a potentially reactionary and aggressive conservative form of religiosity” (Silver, 2013, p. 16). Harris states that only those beliefs which can be observed and tested should be regarded as real beliefs. Harris, in some cases, seems like suggesting the appointment of a pragmatic approach to scripture. He talks about society’s social welfare, which will be determined by the usefulness of religion (Harris, 2005).

Again, Hitchens explores some examples of how religion hampers the growth of human beings. He tries to look into all kinds of examples, such as - historical, theological, and behavioral. Hitchens criticizes almost all three major religions - Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, particularly posing ethical challenges to religion (Hitchens, 2007). He criticizes Hinduism based on the Hindu suttee system (*Sati* practice) that recommends widows’ ‘suicide’ (Walker, 2007). According to him, religion as such is bad, unwanted, and troublesome (Hitchens, 2007). Hitchens writes, “There are, indeed, several ways in which religion is not just amoral, but positively immoral. And these faults and crimes are not to be found in the behavior of its adherents (which can sometimes be exemplary) but in its original precepts” (Hitchens, 2007, p. 71). These include a lot of things such as- “presenting a false picture of the world to the innocent and the credulous, the doctrine of blood sacrifice, the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine of eternal reward and/or punishment, the imposition of impossible tasks and rules” (Hitchens, 2007, p. 71).

Another member of the atheists' group Dennett argues that religious beliefs need scientific analysis so that people can understand their nature in a better way. He denies the reasonableness of "belief in God" (Taylor J. E., n.d). According to him, "the concept of God is too radically indeterminate for the sentence 'God exists' to express a genuine proposition" (Taylor J. E., n.d). He wonders whether the believers of God really believe that God exists. "He thinks it more likely that they merely profess belief in God or 'believe in belief' in God" (Taylor J. E., n.d). He thinks that, according to the believers, belief in God is the right thing. Hence Dennett argues that "no theistic belief is reasonable or rational" (Dennett, 2006).

The new atheists' comments about religion may roughly be equated with what Geertz and Weber classify as 'traditional' religion. For them, religion can be classified as two different types: one is 'traditional,' and the other is 'rationalized.' The characteristic of 'rationalized' religion is abstract and logical as against 'traditional' religion (Wartono, 2012). For Geertz, in 'traditional' religion, there is a "cluttered arsenal of myth and magic" to be used whenever disaster strikes; the rationalized religion is "more abstract, more logically coherent, more generally phrased" (Geertz, 1973). But the new atheists do not subscribe to this distinction. They think that religion is dogmatic, inflexible, and rigid. What Weber and Geertz would have considered as rationalized religion might not be acceptable to the new atheists.

For instance, new atheist Harris has criticized the Abrahamic religions and wanted to eliminate Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. He is critical of belief in things for which there is no evidence, such as gods or deities. "Harris also argues that people who turn to violence because of religious reasons are not 'stupid' or uneducated; they suffer from something much more dangerous, namely, from faith" (Jennek, 2017, p. 19). Another atheist member Hitchens criticizes religion. He describes how religion is a human-made wish causing dangerous sexual domination

(Hitchens, 2007). Hitchens realizes that religion lacks justification and offers no explanation of anything important (Hitchens, 2007). Among the new atheists, Dawkins and Dennett focus on conflicts between science and religion, whereas Harris and Hitchens pay attention to the political, cultural, and psychological criticisms leveled against religion. Religion, though difficult to define, may be understood in two aspects: one is the discussions related to doctrinal aspects of religion, which generally can be brought under theology; the other is the practical and day-to-day affairs of religious practices that impact the moral, social, and cultural aspects of human life. The new atheists level criticisms against both these aspects of religion, though they do not make such distinctions. They target religion in its entirety. They use the same word religion to denote the theistic beliefs and the moral and cultural aspects of religion. However, I make a distinction within the new atheists' criticisms to exclude the moral, social, and cultural dimensions of religion from the theistic beliefs. In this chapter, I focus on their understanding of theism and argue that their understanding is wrong.

What is common in their criticism is that everyone talks about the absence of reason in theism. Dawkins claims that "faith is blind trust without evidence and even against the evidence" (Taylor J. E., n.d). He regards faith to be an evil element. He further states, "it does not require justification and does not tolerate argument" (Taylor J. E., n.d). According to Dawkins' earlier view, faith is irrational, whereas, in his latter description, he regards faith as evil, implying that it is at odds with rationality. Holding a similar view with Dawkins' earlier position, Harris calls religious faith an "unjustified belief in matters of ultimate concern" (Taylor J. E., n.d).

Philosopher Kai Nielsen criticizes the assumption of atheism. He argues that the atheist's understanding of rationality differs from the theist. Therefore, there is no mutually accepted ground of rationality to justify God's existence. Thus both theism and atheism can be rationally justified.

Atheists are wrong in assuming theists' position for god's existence as irrational (Nielsen, 1985, pp. 139-140) (Nielsen, 1977, p. 147).

Anthony Kenny writes,

Many different definitions may be offered of the word 'God.' Given this fact, atheism makes a much stronger claim than theism does. The atheist says that no matter what definition you choose, 'God exists' is always false. The theist only claims that there is some definition which will make 'God exists' true. In my view, neither the stronger nor the weaker claim has been convincingly established (Kenny, 2006, p. 21).

So, according to Kenny, neither atheism nor theism holds a stronger position. Craig also asserts that their assumed belief is mistaken. Thus, for these critics of atheism, the position claiming "there is no God" is the same as the position asserting "there is a God" (Craig, 2007). Both the positions are not strongly established. Both the assertion requires the same kind of justifications (Kenny, 2006).

In short, with respect to the atheists view on theism, the critics of atheists point out the absence of proof of the new atheists' position (Corlett, 2009) (Craig, 2007), the impossibility of proving atheists position (McCormick, 2008) (Garvey, 2010), and the possibility of proving God's existence (Markham, 2010). I bother about the new atheists' rigidity in holding on to their opinion with respect to their understanding of theism. They keep repeating that theism is irrational and inflexible as it is faith-based.

Again, it is true that theism employs faith. But it doesn't mean there is no scope for reason, or it doesn't mean reason was not employed in understanding God. Some schools of thought say there is no need for reason to understand the religion and religious matters. Fideism talks about faith in matters of religion. It is defined as a theory that argues that "faith does not need the support

of reason, and should not seek it” (Quinn & Taliaferro, 2000, p. 376). But even fideists are of different types, and all do not subscribe to faith without any reference to reason. While some fideists argue about faith without reason (Quinn & Taliaferro, 2000), other fideists emphasize faith in matters that go beyond reason (Carroll, 2008). So, even if we concede to the new atheists’ position that reason does not play a part in theism, we can, at best say, that it refers to one group of believers. And even in that group, not all will be blind to reason.

3.3 The Argument from Religious Scriptures:

Religious scriptures are considered to be the source of theistic thought of the respective religions. And no scripture totally shuns reason. Scriptures of different religions do give some room for reason despite them being religious works. I have pointed out the scope of reason in religious scripture in the first chapter. I quote a few passages from different religions to show that scriptural texts give place to reason, unlike the atheists’ claims. The Bible, in Isaiah 1:18, says, “come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18 KJV). Similarly, in James 3:17, the Bible says, “but the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17). In Islam, their scripture Quran sanctions the use of reason. Suggesting the use of reason, the Quran says, “say: bring your proof if you are truthful” (Quran, Al-Baqarah - The Cow - 2:111 (Sura: 2, Verse: 111). “Surely the worst beasts in God’s sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not reason” (Quran, Al-Jalalayn) (8:22).

3.4 The Advent and Advancement of Natural theology:

If there is no scope of reason in theism, then why should these scriptural texts talk about reason and use reason to understanding God? We cannot expect a text on theism to talk about all

issues only through reason. It may be talking about God's authority, revelations, and human affairs appealing to the believers' faith. What we need to concern about is if there is any scope for reason in these scriptures. We have to admit the answer as yes. We can claim the seed of having reason in the religious context is sanctioned in the scriptures. Are the atheists going to deny this?

In the first chapter, I have already discussed how the seed of having faith and reason in the religious context is sanctioned in the scriptures. The seeds of reason as present in the scriptures are taken up and used by the theologians in understanding the divinity without reference to any of the scriptures. Theologians like Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas use reason to understand religion. Though according to these theologians, faith is more important than reason; they never denied reason. They try to prove God's existence through arguments. This suggests they give reason its due within the scope of religious understanding. I have discussed the views of these theologians already in the second chapter. Even thinkers like Descartes do approve that theology is an exercise concerned with validating God's existence without the help of scriptures and without banking on faith.

But the new atheists conveniently sideline this entire group of natural theologians and their effort to prove God's existence. I am not saying they gave convincing proof of God's existence. Rather, I want to point out that many theologians made serious attempts to prove God's existence through employing reason and without reference to any revealed scriptures. Natural theology "is the program for inquiring by the light of natural reason alone into whatever truths of natural reason human beings might be able to find about God" (Brent, n.d).

In a sense, natural theology is making its attempt to 'prove' God's existence through natural reason. It doesn't go into the question of the possibility of God's non-existence; that is, atheists'

position. For the theologians, there are two possibilities: either they utilize natural theology, or if they fail in whatever way, they shall opt for revealed theology. That is why we find theologians who question the attempt to understand God by reason and go to the other position of accepting God through revelation and revealed scriptures.

We have seen that scriptures and theologians do allow and employ reason. The new atheists may think the reason that theologians employed cannot be considered as reason. In their understanding, reason is essentially tied to the evidence, which is obtained through sense experiences. But this position is not non-contentious. The rationalist school championed by philosophers like Rene Descartes does not believe in the certainty of knowledge obtained through sense experiences. He says, “what we know a priori is certain, beyond even the slightest doubt, while what we believe, or even know, on the basis of sense experience is at least somewhat uncertain” (Descartes, [1628]1988). But on the other hand, for the empiricist school of thought, reason, if at all any, should be based on sense experiences. John Locke says,

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience (Locke, 1854, p. 75).

The new atheists favor the empiricist tradition. Hence, they insist on evidence and sense-experiences. For them, anything that is without evidence is irrational. As mentioned, Dawkins asserts that “faith is blind trust without evidence and even against the evidence” (Taylor J. E., n.d). So, for them, faith in God’s existence is irrational, as it is without evidence. But one can see that the empiricist position may not help in getting certain knowledge. Empiricism is based on empirical evidence, and it is slippery. “Those who place it at the centre of their epistemology tend

to either give accounts that are too narrow to be realistic, or too underdescribed to do away with the slipperiness” (Garvey, 2010, p. 13). But McCormick opines that the impossibility of proving the new atheists’ position may even lead them to use faith to hold on to their position. And in that sense, science is as much a religious ideology as religion is (McCormick, 2008). But still, the new atheists take it as their task that they should not encourage people to hold on to faith. Dawkins says, “I do everything in my power to warn people against faith itself” (Dawkins R. , 2006, p. 306). So, on one side, they are not able to prove the non-existence of God. Still, they stick to that idea based on their faith. And they are hell-bent on asking people to shed their faith. If we follow McCormick’s criticism, we must accept all the new atheist group members as inflexible. The atheist people have been criticizing religion as a thing that talks about only faith. But in McCormick’s opinion, atheists also do need faith.

3.5 The Interpretation of the Critics of Atheism is Wrong:

Here at this point, we must admit that those who criticize new atheists are misinterpreting when they say that there is no God, according to atheists. The atheists actually mean to say that religion’s explanations or reasons are not sufficient to prove God’s existence. If there is some proper evidence for God’s existence, I think atheists will definitely accept the theistic approach to God’s existence. Now let’s see what the new atheist group actually talks about the existence of God. Richard Dawkins introduces “The Ultimate Boeing 747 Gambit” for God’s non-existence in chapter four of *The God Delusion*. He compares the doubtfulness of God’s existence with “the chance that a hurricane, sweeping through a scrap yard, would have the luck to assemble a Boeing 747” (Taylor J. E., n.d).

According to Dawkins, the God who can design a universe is a suspicious object that requires better clarification. Dawkins claims that the creation of the universe by an intelligent designer is a self-defeating hypothesis. By this, he means that though the intelligent designer tries to explain the existence of all doubtful complexity, it fails to justify its complexity.

According to Dawkins, God's hypothesis generates malicious lapse. Similarly, by following Dawkins, Harris also claims that the idea of the creation of the universe by God creates an infinite regress. The creator would have to have been created. Harris states that the absence of sufficient reason is enough to deny God's existence. Again, Hitchens calls God's hypothesis pointless. Emphasizing more on science, Hitchens claims, "science can now explain what theism was formerly thought to be required to explain, including phenomena such as the appearance of design in the universe" (Taylor J. E., n.d). Dennett also claims, "the concept of God is insufficiently determinate for it to be possible to know what proposition is at issue in the debate over God's existence" (Taylor J. E., n.d).

3.6 Tea Pot Argument:

I have discussed natural theology and how natural theologians could be able to escape from the challenges made by the new atheists regarding the use of reason in theological issues. Though the new atheists criticize religion and God's existence, they are not able to prove God's non-existence. But logically, denying the existence of something cannot be proven. But "a number of atheists claim that they can give positive reasons for denying the existence of God" (Everitt, 2004). One of the famously known arguments on this issue is the teapot argument, put forward by Bertrand Russell originally; this argument recently is taken up by new atheists like Richard Dawkins. Dawkins says, "you have to be agnostic about the teapot, but that doesn't mean you treat

the likelihood of its existence as being on all fours with its non-existence” (Dawkins R. , 2006). This argument proposes to claim the non-existence of God based on the analogy of the non-existence of a teapot (Garvey, 2010). Here, I contend that the analogical argument of teapot and God is misconceived.

Dawkins claims that “faith is blind trust without evidence and even against the evidence” (Taylor J. E., n.d). So, faith in God’s existence is irrational for him and the other new atheists, as it is without evidence. While the new atheists try to show there is no rational justification to have faith in God’s existence, they could not prove God’s non-existence. And more importantly, they may not be able to disprove God’s existence based on their understanding of evidence. New atheists accept this criticism. Dawkins says, “you can’t prove a negative (so far so good). Science has no way to disprove the existence of a supreme being (this is strictly true)” (Dawkins R. , 1999, pp. 2-3). But the new atheists opine that this does not mean that one should immediately be agnostic about God’s existence.

In this context, Dawkins retakes the teapot argument initially put forward by Russell. Russell comments about the teapot when he discusses his anti-religious stand. He says,

I ought to call myself an agnostic; but, for all practical purposes, I am an atheist...To take another illustration: nobody can prove that there is not between the Earth and Mars a china teapot revolving in an elliptical orbit, but nobody thinks this sufficiently likely to be taken into account in practice. I think the Christian God just as unlikely (Russell, 1969, p. 6).

According to Russell, one cannot prove God doesn’t exist. Simultaneously, “neither can one disprove the idea that there is a teapot orbiting the sun.” “He can’t. But the question is: is there any evidence for such” (Jackson, 2019)? Taking a cue from Russell, Dawkins states further,

“you have to be agnostic about the teapot, but that doesn’t mean you treat the likelihood of its existence as being on all fours with its non-existence” (Garvey, 2010, p. 10).

Dawkins maintains that while God’s existence cannot be disproved, it doesn’t mean that God’s existence can be maintained at the same level as God’s non-existence. For them, it is far more reasonable to think of the non-existence of God than the existence. In fact, according to them, an agnostic is as good as an atheist. The atheist’s argument, in Garvey’s words,

..consider the hypothesis that there is a teapot orbiting the sun somewhere in outer space. We can’t conclusively prove that there isn’t one, but we possess absolutely no evidence that there is. The reasonable conclusion is not merely to suspend judgment, but to conclude that there isn’t one. Similarly, we can’t conclusively prove that there isn’t a God, but we possess absolutely no evidence that there is. So, again, the reasonable conclusion is not merely to suspend judgment, but to conclude that there isn’t a God (Garvey, 2010, p. 9).

Garvey opines the absence of evidence from where the new atheists build their case of non-existence of God actually rests on a fragile base. For him, “empirical evidence is an extremely slippery concept” (Garvey, 2010, p. 12). Arguing further, he says,

the only thing that could count as evidence for the teapot orbiting the sun is that someone has seen it, it is in one way analogous to a situation where one person says: ‘there’s a postbox at the end of the high street’ and the other person says ‘no there isn’t, go and have a look’, and the first person goes and looks and doesn’t see one. If that person is reasonable, that will be the end of the argument (Garvey, 2010, p. 16).

While arguing primarily about the weakness of empirical evidence, which the new atheists claim to be the base for their claim of non-existence of God, Garvey also observes a major “difference between denying the existence of a teapot orbiting the sun and denying the existence of God” (Garvey, 2010, p. 16). Garvey questions,

When we say that there is no evidence for a teapot orbiting the sun, the most plausible interpretation is that no-one, as far as we know, has seen, or touched, etc., one. But when we say (those of us who do say it) that there is no evidence for the existence of God, is this what we mean (Garvey, 2010, p. 13)?

The new atheists try to strengthen their argument with the help of the very famous teapot argument; on the other hand, Wittgensteinian fideism tries to give a philosophical angle that can be used to counter the teapot argument. To define Wittgensteinian fideism,

...Wittgensteinian Fideism—is variously characterized as entailing one or more of the following distinct (but arguably inter-related) theses: (1) that religion is logically cut off from other aspects of life; (2) that religious discourse is essentially self-referential and does not allow us to talk about reality; (3) that religious beliefs can be understood only by religious believers; and (4) that religion cannot be criticized (Amesbury, 2017).

Generally, by Wittgensteinian fideism, we refer to Wittgenstein and some of his followers. According to Kai Neilson, “Wittgensteinian Fideism emerges from certain remarks made by Winch, Rhees, Hughes, Geach, Malcolm, Holmer, Dilman, Holland, Cavell, Cameron, Coburn, Mounce and D. Z. Phillips” (Nielsen, 1982, p. 65). Here I shall discuss the arguments from Wittgenstein and some of his followers. I strengthen the argument by taking a cue from Wittgenstein’s view on God and religion. I argue in line with Garvey that the existence of teapot and God’s existence cannot be discussed from the same framework. But hardly there is any reference to Wittgenstein in his work. And particularly when he comes up with an observation like this, “it may be thought that this ought to be obvious, but people can be wrong-footed on the question of God’s existence by approaching it as if it were a scientific question. I see the atheist’s teapot argument as an instance of just such wrong-footedness” (Garvey, 2010, pp. 21-22). Garvey’s observation only suggests how much a Wittgensteinian type of an approach is present here, though he didn’t explicitly refer to Wittgenstein. I strengthen this position from

Wittgensteinian literature, where Wittgenstein remarks about his understanding of religion and God. I articulate Wittgensteinian response to the new atheists' claim on God's non-existence and discuss the implications of this position.

It is now quite well accepted among scholars that Wittgenstein does not write elaborately on religion and religious issues. But the remarks he makes on God and religion and religious understanding carry significant meaning that can make one look at these issues from a different perspective. And there are Wittgenstein scholars who also follow this line of thought. Given this brief idea, let us focus on Wittgenstein's view on religion. The focus here will be to respond to the new atheists' position from Wittgenstein's perspective. The new atheists believe that God's existence need not be accepted as it cannot be evidentially substantiated. But according to Wittgenstein, evidence and historical facts cannot validate God's existence. In his words, "anything that I normally call evidence wouldn't in the slightest influence me ... a religious belief might in fact fly in the face of such a (sc. Well-established) forecast" (Wittgenstein L. , 1967, p. 56).

Dennett argues that religious beliefs need scientific analysis so that their nature may be better understood (Dennett, 2006). For him, faith in God cannot be rationalized. Some natural theologians also attempt to establish religious beliefs like scientific hypotheses, just like Dennett suggests. But Wittgenstein feels believers do not and need not use the "idea of God as scientists use a hypothesis" (Hudson, 1975, p. 57). The idea of God "is not something to test" (Hudson, 1975, p. 60). It is not subjected to any empirical verification. One does not look for any justification before clinging to a religious belief. According to Wittgenstein,

both the atheist, who scorns religion because he has found no evidence for its tenets, and the believer, who attempts to prove the existence of God, have fallen victim to the

'other' - to the idol worship of the scientific style of thinking. Religious beliefs are not analogous to scientific theories and should not be accepted or rejected using the same evidential criteria (Monk, 2012, p. 410).

According to Wittgenstein, “both the atheist, who scorns religion because he has found no evidence for its tenets, and the believer, who attempts to prove the existence of God, fall victim to the ‘other’-to the idol-worship of the scientific style of thinking” (Gilman, 2016, p. 506).

But according to Dawkins, we should use evidence to decide the truth in some questions. For instance, questions like- whether God exists or not. So, Dawkins presents the “God Hypothesis” (Dawkins R. , 2006, p. 31). He asserts this as: “there exists a superhuman, supernatural intelligence who deliberately design and created the universe and everything in it, including us” (Dawkins R. , 2006, p. 31). According to Dawkins, “if God does exist, then that fact would make a significant difference to the nature of the world in which we live – and that is potentially a scientific or historical matter – one in which evidence can be used to decide it” (Knight, n.d). Dawkins asserts that such a God is worthless if it can make no difference to the world.

A Wittgensteinian counter will be to accept the above position with a modification - a belief in God’s existence that makes no difference to the believer in the way he sees the world; then, it may not be worthy to say that he believes in the existence of God. The Wittgensteinian response would be of this sort as Wittgenstein holds that religious belief may not require scientific, historical, or philosophical truth to reinforce religious belief. Similarly, Pascal also observes in this context- “the most the philosophical arguments could prove, Pascal suggests, is the god of the philosophers—not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Amesbury, 2017).

We generally hold those beliefs that are well-grounded: those beliefs that rely on established facts and evidence. In the case of a commonsense belief, the firmness or intensity of a belief may be considered depending on the amount of empirical evidence given for it. Wittgenstein remarks he doesn't want those beliefs to be called religious beliefs. He says,

Suppose people who could accurately foretell the future predicted some sort of Judgement Day and I believed them. Even if their evidence for saying that it would occur was very sound, even if this event occurred just as they predicted, my belief in their forecast 'wouldn't be at all a religious belief' (Wittgenstein L. , 1967, p. 56).

Whereas in the case of religious belief, the firmness or intensity of a belief depends on how much the believer is ready to risk it. For Wittgenstein, the proof of a religious belief lies in the commitment with which a religious believer alters his life. To quote Wittgenstein in this regard,

Suppose somebody made this guidance for this life: believing in the Last Judgement. Whenever he does anything, this is before his mind. In a way, how are we to know whether to say he believes this will happen or not. Asking him is not enough. He will probably say he has proof. But he has what you might call an unshakeable belief. It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life (Wittgenstein L. , 1967, pp. 53-54).

Wittgenstein points out that the distinction between religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs "is not simply a matter of the believers affirming certain propositions and the unbelievers denying them, or vice versa" (Hudson, 1975, p. 174). For instance, in this case of the teapot analogy, the difference between the believer in the existence of teapot and the non-believer in the existence of teapot is that one accepts its existence, and the other denies its existence. But the same cannot be said in the context of believer and non-believer in the case of God. It is not that believer accepts the existence of God and the non-believer just denies it. There is a huge difference between how the believer sees the world and the non-believer sees the world. The difference lies in their

attitude. The difference in attitude classifies humans into believers and nonbelievers. “But believers and unbelievers, by contrast, think of things in different, rather than opposite, ways” (Hudson, 1975, p. 174). “Believers and unbelievers cannot contradict one another because they do not share the same form of life” (Hudson, 1975, p. 174). They appear to refute each other’s claim because they express different opinions about the same thing from different forms of life. This kind of denial is different from opposing one another. For instance, as an atheist or a non-believer, one does not credit anything to God. Therefore,

If someone says ‘God is wise’ we are entitled to presume that he thinks God exists; but, by the same token, if ‘God is not wise’ is intended as a contradiction, we are entitled to assume that the speaker also takes God to exist. The essential difference between believers and unbelievers is not that sort of difference. It is that the unbeliever refuses to participate in the believers’ form of life at all (Hudson, 1975, p. 175).

Wittgenstein and some of his followers do acknowledge that religion and science need not be seen in a similar fashion. A pragmatic understanding of religion can be found in Wittgenstein, as he gives importance to the ‘use’ meaning of language in his later work. He tries to describe all acts of communication in terms of a “language-game” that eventually denotes a “form of life” (Hudson, 1975). He treats religious utterances as a part of the language-game of religion. These utterances find their significance in that game alone. As aptly expressed by Hudson, Wittgenstein “...implicitly took discovering the meaning of language to be like understanding a game by watching it being played and inferring the rules inductively... He looked at what religious believers do with language and sought to learn from that” (Hudson, 1975, p. 153).

Wittgenstein has further developed the notion of language-game into the notion of world-picture. Wittgenstein does not think of religious pictures as analogies. He says: “when I say he’s using a picture I’m merely making a grammatical remark: (what I say) can only be verified by the

consequences he does or does not draw” (Wittgenstein L. , 1967, p. 72). According to him, the religious picture does not have any literal substitute. For instance, the picture of an aunt has a literal substitute for an aunt in the flesh. To put it in the words of Wittgenstein: “we learnt that pictures of God are not used like pictures of aunts” (Wittgenstein L. , 1967, p. 59).

Wittgenstein scholar D.Z. Phillips remarks that religion and religious pictures have a distinctive role to play.

For instance, if someone showed me the pictures of a rare animal as proof of the reality of the animal I would not be convinced, if I do not want to be, unless I see the real animal. Thus, my seeing the animal is the justification for the pictures of animal. But it would be a different story altogether If I come across people praising the Creator of heaven and earth and glorifying the Father of all of us. I would not look for any empirical justification to believe in their pictures. If we look for evidence for the religious pictures, the way in which we look for evidence in the case of animal, then we would be misunderstanding the grammar of the religious pictures. As a matter of fact, these are only religious perspectives. They do not refer to any object or phenomenon. The religious picture only suggests one a language in which it is possible to think about human life in a particular way. The religious pictures provide us with the required frame of mind (logical space) within which such thoughts can be entertained (Phillips, 1976, pp. 148-150.).

Throughout his later work, Wittgenstein attempts to show that the “utterances within religion must be understood as moves within a distinctive system of thought and language” (Hudson, 1975, p. 153). Evidence within this distinctive system would hardly be evidence elsewhere. Similarly, Wittgenstein scholars like Phillips opines that religious truths are of neither scientific nature nor metaphorical. They altogether belong to a different category. Similarly, according to Winch, “God’s reality is independent of what any man thinks” (Pinchin, 2005, p. 180). God’s reality is seen only in the context of religion (Pinchin, 2005, p. 180). “God has reality if and only if there are shared rules which determine what can and cannot be said about God”

(Pinchin, 2005, p. 180). Thus, “it is within the religious use of language that the conception of God’s reality has its place” (Winch, 1964, p. 309).

Apart from Wittgensteinian fideists, the term fideism is also associated with philosophers like Pascal, Kierkegaard, and James. I have already discussed their philosophical standpoints regarding faith and reason in the second chapter. “Like Pascal, James insists that when it comes to religion, we cannot avoid taking sides and incurring risks. James also agrees with Pascal that faith can be rational in the absence of epistemic justification—at least in certain circumstances” (Amesbury, 2017). And for Kierkegaard, faith is incoherent but not irrational. He very carefully distinguishes the content of religious belief from nonsense. For him,

The believer “cannot believe nonsense against the understanding, which one might fear, because the understanding will penetratingly perceive that it is nonsense and hinder him in believing it”; however, the believer “uses the understanding so much that through it he becomes aware of the incomprehensible”—i.e., of the logical limits of speculative thought— “and now, believing, he relates himself to it against the understanding” (1992, 568). By discriminating between those cases in which it is competent to judge and those in which it is not, philosophy thus plays a self-critical role: mindful of its own limits, it allows religion to be itself (Amesbury, 2017).

According to Kierkegaard, ‘evidence’ takes no part in supporting religious beliefs (Butcher, 2013). Fideist Evans draws this conclusion from Kierkegaard’s Philosophical Fragments (Butcher, 2013, p. 131). But Evans himself “does not argue that there is no evidence for God’s existence, nor does he argue even that the evidence is necessarily unavailable or underdetermining” (Butcher, 2013, p. 137). For him, reason is the main issue. Reason is incapable of justifying religious beliefs, such as – “whether there is evidence for God’s existence or the historical works of Jesus” (Butcher, 2013, p. 137). Therefore, this makes faith an essential factor of rational religious belief.

Two-level discussions are done in this chapter in the context of the new atheists' criticisms against the religion. I make a distinction among the religious followers as natural theologians and revealed theologians. Initially, I try to show the answers from the natural theologians' prospect, and I find that the problem still remains the same. So, I bring the revealed theologians' perspective – for example, the fideists' position against evidentialism.

Thus, we see how fideism is against evidentialism. But fideism can also work along with evidentialism. Fideism can be categorized as - supra- evidential and counter evidential fideism (Amesbury, 2017). Western fideist thinker Bishop argues that “supra-evidential in the sense that it defends the permissibility of reasoning on the basis of commitments that outrun what is warranted on purely evidential grounds” (Amesbury, 2017). He further states that unlike counter evidentialism, the supra evidentialism “cannot be shown to violate any epistemic obligations” (Amesbury, 2017). Bishop develops his own alternative, supra-evidential modest fideist religious epistemology in the second part of *Believing by Faith*. He presents and defends a conception of theistic faith as involving a commitment to taking faith-beliefs to be true in practical reasoning ‘without adequate support from one’s total evidence’ (Buckareff, 2009, p. 87). Such doxastic ventures can be morally permissible, according to Bishop. hence the fideism he endorses is supra-evidentialist. The ‘leap’ of faith is a human action, and hence must be morally justified; given other commitments, this leads Bishop to describe his fideism as ‘moral coherentist’ (Tollefsen, 2008, p. 758). This moral limitation on what is permissibly believed by faith results in a ‘modest’ view – nothing too outlandish will be a morally permissible candidate for fideistic belief (Tollefsen, 2008, p. 758). Bishop considers a strategy while defending supra evidential fideism. ‘Its key idea is that everyone inescapably makes faith-ventures of the kind the fideist holds to be morally and epistemically permissible’ (Buckareff, 2009, p. 89). Bishop considers this as the most promising

strategy. He concludes that we are left with a deadlock. “The situation we are faced with is one where the choice between theism and atheism is evidentially ambiguous, neither side being better off epistemically. Neither side is able to show that its opponents are taking an epistemically irresponsible position” (Buckareff, 2009, p. 89). “Bishop explores moral constraints on permissible faith ventures” (Buckareff, 2009, p. 89). He wishes for tolerance between supra-evidentialist fideists and hardline evidentialists. But he ends by considering some possible moral liabilities of hardline evidentialism. “He concludes that the big picture makes it intelligible that people fully committed to the epistemic goal may have a serious moral preference for supra-evidential fideism over the hard-line moral evidentialism that rejects religious faith-ventures” (Buckareff, 2009, p. 89).

On the other hand, Wittgenstein’s fideism is counter evidential. Wittgenstein’s view on faith, where his fideism can be regarded as counter evidential. Wittgenstein claims God’s existence need not be validated based on evidence and historical facts. Wittgenstein calls religious belief to be an autonomous system that does not require any scientific, historical, or philosophical system to justify its truth (Wittgenstein, 1980).

3.7 Conclusion:

Thus, we can see that the fideists’ argument for understanding religion and the existence and the reality of God differs from how the new atheists see.

New atheists’ evidentialist argument is that the existence of God lacks evidence. Whereas Wittgenstein states that a religious belief need not correspond to any phenomenon that can be verified empirically. However, Wittgenstein’s defense of religious belief as belonging to a different “form of life” - this direction of response may bring further issues. Wittgenstein mentions that a

religious believer is the one who is ready to risk oneself for the belief he has. Hudson also remarks similarly. He asserts, “he (believer) risks things for the sake of them, insofar as he does this sincerely, they change not only his understanding of life, but the value judgments he forms, the decisions he makes, and the deeds he does” (Hudson, 1975, p. 191). Even Pascal, Kierkegaard, James -all these primary fideist thinkers explain that religious beliefs can be justified without any support from evidence. Evans also argues for the importance of faith compared to reason in religious beliefs. It opens up the room for interpreting religious believers to be having a fundamentalist attitude, which is also taken by new atheists to allege that religion and religious believers are dogmatic and rigid (Dawkins R. , 2006) (Dennett D. , 2006) (Hitchens, 2007) (Harris, 2005).

Thus, this chapter shows that fideists may be doing better to argue against evidentialists, particularly the new-atheists type. They distinguish a religious form of life to be distinct from a non-religious form of life. Fideists hardly bother about evidence, unlike the natural theologians who argue with the atheists based on arguments and evidence. But for the fideists, a believer and an unbeliever are in two distinct forms of life. I shall see the repercussion of the fideists stance and its social and ethical implications in the next chapters.

Chapter- IV

Fideism: Individual Sphere Vs. Collective Sphere

4.1 Introduction:

In the last chapter, I have discussed the tension between fideism and evidentialism. I have argued in that chapter from the Wittgensteinian perspective. He focuses on the 'use' part of the religion where a religious believer is the one who is ready to risk oneself for the belief he has. Though I argued against the new atheists with the help of the Wittgensteinian position, I must say that Wittgenstein's notion of religion is too restricted and rigid at some points. It does not allow room for 'meaningful' articulation and social interaction between the members who are in that form of life and the members who are not. Therefore, Prabhu raises the question, "considering the society as a pluralistic whole, which we see in our daily life, comprising members of those who participate in a form of life and those who do not exist together, are we to get a congenial atmosphere between them" (Prabhu, 2003, p. 148)? Religion is not a personal affair alone. It is very much associated with the social system. People, when they follow religion, they follow a specific religion. They practice and perform those rituals specific to those religions. So, one has to see the socio-cultural and ethical implications of holding on to such religious practices.

There are six important dimensions of religion. They are- "the ritual dimension, the mythological dimension, the doctrinal dimension, the ethical dimension, the social dimension, and the experimental dimension" (Eliade, 2004, p. 7695) (Pals, 2006) (Silver, 2013) (Revelations, 2020). We can understand these dimensions based on exchange relations between humans and

supernatural beings. I have already discussed how fideism manages to deal with the doctrinal dimension. The challenges to fideism concerning doctrinal dimension may be less or unsolvable sometimes. Therefore, how fideism deals with the other dimensions of religion will be discussed here, specifically the social and ethical dimension related to religious practices. While dealing with this question, I focus on two topics.

- a) The problem of religion at the social level
- b) Pragmatic way forward for Religion

Fideists preferring faith over reason in the matter concerning believing in God have come up with many arguments. Be it Wittgenstein, Pascal, James, Kierkegaard, or Evans. They have argued in all possible ways to show the significance of faith rather than reason in religious matters. According to a traditional definition of fideism, “fideism is the view that truth in religion is ultimately based on faith rather than on reasoning or evidence” (Carroll, 2008, p. 3). This suggests that to establish the principles of religion, we must rely on faith. Empirical evidence cannot prove the principles of religion. Thus, fideism means that it does not depend on reason but faith. Rationalists, empiricists, and evidentialists have questioned this faith. I have already discussed their arguments in the earlier chapters.

Faith thus plays a significant role for the fideist thinkers. According to Oxford Living Dictionaries and Cambridge Dictionary, “faith is confidence or trust in a person, thing, deity or the doctrines or teachings of a religion” (Definition of faith in English, n.d) (Meaning of faith in English, n.d). Again Dictionary.com defines faith as “belief in God or in the doctrines or teachings of religion” and “belief that is not based on proof” (Dictionary.com).

In the context of fideism, when the fideists give importance to faith, one has to see the nature and extent of faith. Is it the faith of an individual without referring to any religion, but having faith on his own and believing in a God? Or does it mean that faith of an individual concerning a religion and believe in the scripture of his religion and believe in what it says? These questions will be answered if we find the answer to the following question- does fideism means belief in institutionalized religion or a personal God? Institutionalized religion is defined as “a belief system that has large numbers of followers and a set of rules that must be followed” (Merriam-Webster, n.d). In institutionalized religion, belief systems and rituals are established in an organized and formal way. According to William James, the important components of institutionalized religion are “worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity [i.e.] theology, and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization” (James W. , 1902, p. 30). The Abrahamic religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, are considered institutionalized. Even some schools of thought within Indian religions are also regarded as institutionalized religions, for example, Sikhism and Buddhism. The larger part of the discussion in fideism happens in the context of institutionalized religion - be it Christianity, Islam, etc. It means the faith of the individual or the group in the scriptural texts through which God's presence is revealed. Belief in scriptures means believing in what is written in the scripture. And scripture may contain not only the theistic aspects but also the socio-cultural and ethical aspects (Webb, 2002).

The belief each individual has about God or his personal God need not be proved by arguments or science – this is the position the fideists hold. But, in practice, when people follow a religion, they do practice the religious rituals and customs of that religion. They follow an institutionalized religion and practice that religious rites and rituals, often as a group or community, that may have implications in the social, cultural, and ethical realm. The subsequent

passages discuss certain aspects of religion and religious practices that have social, cultural, and ethical implications.

Faith in religion can be understood as a feeling of evidential confidence and knowledge of specific truths revealed by God. Simply, faith is a hope (Bishop, 2016). On the other hand, blind faith is “a faith like all the others where the believers choose to be blind to contradiction and errors within their own dogma” (Toit, 2009, p. 9). Fanaticism and extremism, and other religious excesses arise out of such kind of faith. The new Atheists refer to this faith. The fideists like James, Kierkegaard in their arguments, try to rationalize faith. According to James, sometimes we believe in something without investigating the truth. But “it is true that there are dangers and risks in promoting, allowing or encouraging the logic of faith (e.g., wishful thinking and self-deception)” (Pappas, 1992, p. 796). Pappas further states that though James is never blind to this, there are more risks involved in paralyzing our native capacities for faith (Pappas, 1992, p. 796). Fideists also talk about blind faith. For instance, Kierkegaard mentions blind faith, but that blind faith is essentially associated with the idea of sin in a Christian religious prospect (Makolkin, 2005, p. 23). Blind faith arises because of the fear of sin. This faith is not based on truth, rational and critical thoughts, but on escapism-mentality and the fear of sin, false teaching and interpretations (Toit, 2009, p. 9).

This is how some fideists understand faith and blind faith. From my understanding, according to them, the faith we require to know God is not blind. And some of the beliefs can be justified even without proper evidence. According to a section of fideists, God can be revealed through scriptures. Epistemologically – if they believe in God without reason through scriptures, it means that they believe in scriptures as well. This will lead to a circular argument, but it proves that they believe in scriptures. Hence it can be concluded that without believing in scriptures, they

can't believe in God. Again, if they believe in scriptures, they are to believe the people who 'wrote,' 'recorded' or 'documented' the scriptures as well – though scriptures are about the words of God, for instance, in Christianity, it is those apostles like St. Paul, St. Mathew who recorded those events in the Bible. So, Christians are to believe those disciples and apostles. In the case of religious faith, people at times simply believe what a religious leader or a guru tells them. People believe them without any evidence. People believe that the tradition or the teaching the preachers or leaders represent has the truth. For instance- some sects of Christians may go for faith-based healing, which may not be scientific. There are lots of evangelists who exploit the poor in the name of miracles. Again, in the Indian context, some godmen deceive ordinary people. As a result, people perform certain rituals and practices. Those rituals or religious practices impact the moral, social, and cultural aspects of human lives. This might stand as a challenge to fideism.

Herein I address the socio-cultural problem of fideists from three major concerns – the problem arising out of socio-religious practices, the problem arising out of belief in godmen and miracle, and the problem arising out of belief in scriptures. One can trace the criticisms leveled by evidentialists and new atheists often falling under these three categories. And certain religious practices are more problematic with respect to one particular religion. A certain religious problem may not be common to all religions. For instance, the religious issues associated with miracles are seen mostly in Christianity, while issues like terrorism and violence with Islam and social evil like *Sati* with Hinduism. These issues have raised the question of how we can accept or practice religion at the social level. The new atheists have questioned these issues. I have discussed how the new atheists have been quite critical about theistic aspects of religion. But their criticisms are not just confined to religious doctrines and unavailability of reason in theism. They also extend their criticisms against all aspects of religion that may include social and cultural aspects.

So, what will be the stand of the fideists in this context? If fideists do not want reason to be employed in godly matters, do they want reason and other secular concerns to be employed in such religious practice and interpretations? Or are they only the mute spectators? In this chapter, we shall see how fideism deals with those above-mentioned ethical challenges. Fideism manages to cope up with all the challenges with respect to religious doctrines. But will it be able to take care of all the challenges that arise concerning religious practices?

4.2 A Socio-Religious Practice- *Sati*:

Most of the new atheists generally tend to criticize the belief in religion, which essentially leads to unacceptable social practices. Therefore, they think that the entire case of faith in religion and scriptures should be stopped. All the criticisms leveled against the religious believers from the evidentialists, and the new atheists generally can fall under any of the above mentioned three categories- faith in scriptures, faith in super-natural, and faith in socio-religious practices, which are creating social problems. I have made this distinction because what is not given in the scripture can also create a problem. Scriptures may not have talked about a particular practice. But still, it can be considered as a socio-religious practice. One such practice is *Sati*.

This issue will be discussed by referring to Hitchens' argument (against the *Sati* practice) and my distinction between religious evil and social evil. Generally, people mistake social evils as religious evils and try to prove religion socially unacceptable. This point will be proved here. This discussion will help understand that scriptural verses of Hinduism never support the killing of a woman when her husband dies. The point of contention concerns Hitchens' remarks on Hindu practice called *Sati*. Hitchens writes, "Hindu child brides in India are flogged, and sometimes burned alive, if the pathetic dowry they bring is judged to be too small" (Hitchens, 2007, p. 51).

Hitchens, in his book, “God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything,” criticizes religion. Hitchens realizes that religion lacks justifications and offers no explanation of anything important. He describes how religion is a cause of dangerous sexual repression. Religion is based on wishful thinking. Hitchens realizes that religion lacks justifications and offers no explanation of anything important. The positions shared by Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, and Hitchens “constitute the background theoretical framework that is known as the New Atheism” (Taylor J. E., n.d). Along with Christianity, Hitchens has come up with his adverse opinion on other religions like Islam and Hinduism, particularly posing ethical challenges to religion (Hitchens, 2007). While criticizing Hinduism, he mentions the existence of Hindu murderers and sadists and a form of Hindu suttee (*Sati* practice) that recommends the ‘suicide’ of widows (Walker, 2007). Through these instances of religious practices, Hitchens claims that religion as such is wrong, unwanted, and troublesome (Hitchens, 2007).

There is a general tendency among the new atheists to discard whatever ideas or thoughts come out of religion. They think that religion as such is bad, unwanted as it is not rational, and highly dogmatic. This attitude has made them discard the entire episode of religion. Hitchens specifically talks about the social and cultural aspects of the effects of religion to claim that they are not only amoral but even immoral.

Among the new atheists, there are inconsistencies, sweeping generalizations in their understanding of religious issues. For instance, they talk about religion as dogmatic and irrational, but this may not be attributed to all religions, even among the new atheist group. For instance, Hitchens writes about Buddhist murderers and sadists’ existence, how Buddhist and Shinto priests trained the suicide bombers (Walker, 2007).

Hitchens talks about practices of the Hindu religion as well. I focus on his remarks on Hindu religious practices and extend our argument to other religions as well. Hitchens' basic premise is that there are religious practices that are harmful to society. Because religious followers are dogmatists, one has to discard religion to get rid of these practices. In one of the chapters of his book "God Is Not Great," he talks about the existence of a form of Hindu suttee that recommends the 'suicide' of widows. And he also states that "it was put down by the British in India for imperial as much as for Christian reasons" (Hitchens, 2007, p. 72).

In the case of Hitchens' comment on Hinduism, I refute his position based on the following few points. The first point is that I do not think the crux of Hinduism in particular and religion, in general, is to bring forth the social evils and sustain them in society. Some religious practices do have regressive methods when looked up from secular and human rights perspectives, but it does not mean that all such practices are regressive practices. I agree that practices like animal sacrifice, not allowing women to enter into a religious temple, denial of inter-religious marriages can be counted as regressive practices, and we strictly condemn those practices. Still, at the same time, there are practices like temples, religious institutes feeding the hungry and poor people. So, I do not subscribe to the view that religion, as such, is wrong and religious practices in their entirety are regressive practices. One should be blind and dogmatic not to see any positive effects of following a religion.

Hitchens claims *Sati* to be a religious evil; it may be true but not wholly true. It is more of a social evil than a religious evil. I make this distinction between religious evil and social evil to have better insight into this issue. If a 'bad' practice has its roots in the religious scriptures, then we say it to be a religious evil. If that practice has its roots in those times' social conditions, it is then a social evil. By making this distinction, I suggest that *Sati* as a practice is a social evil than

a religious evil. That is, hardly any scriptural texts of Hindus we come across show any support for this practice of *Sati*.

Rġ-Veda disproves the practice of the *Sati*. Referring to a widow who is with her husband on his funeral pyre, the extract from Rġ-Veda says: “rise up, abandon this dead man and re-join the living” (10:18:8). Again, Manusmriti says, “they were to receive the protection of the father in childhood, the husband after marriage, and the son on the death of the husband” (Jain, 2016). Yajnavalkya “viewed wives as gifts of the gods who should be respected and valued.” “Nothing about self-immolation” (Jain, 2016). Again, Jain states, “from the regional side, the occurrence of *Sati* seems to have been the highest in Rajasthan – unsurprising since defiance to the Islamic invaders was the fiercest in this region” (Jain, 2016). Meenakshi Jain states that in Bengal, no “*Sati* inscriptions from that period have so far been discovered” (Jain, 2016). To be more precise, “the Vedic testimony proves two things: (1) *Sati* already existed, and (2) it was disapproved of by the mainstream of the Hindu tradition” (Elst, 2013).

Hitchens maintains that the social evils that arise out of religion may be done away with only when we discard the religion. And similarly, people should shun their religious beliefs, and only then we can get rid of these practices. I want to point out that historically, this was not the case. I have already pointed out that social evils need not necessarily be religious evils. Even if it is so, it does not mean that people should discard their religious beliefs to get rid of these practices. People can abandon these practices, and still, they can hold on to their religious beliefs, for they do not think of religion as intrinsically evil. For instance, it is also true that there is explicit mention of the caste system’s practice in the Hindu scriptures. But that does not mean all Hindu people practice the caste system. We have witnessed great religious thinkers and reformers like Shankaracharya, Ramujacharya in the past, and social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar

Chandra Bidya Sagar, and Mahatma Gandhi were trying to make people aware of the ills of caste practices. Gandhi tries his best to challenge India's caste system and remove the roots of untouchability from Hinduism.

Gandhi holds that not every religious belief or practice carries eternal value. He says that some religious beliefs are without any value. "This religion," he says, "if it can be called such, stinks in my nostrils. This certainly cannot be the Hindu religion. It is through the Hindu religion that I learned to respect Christianity and Islam" (Mondal, 2018). He goes on to say that "the Sanatana Dharma (literally 'the eternal way of life,' used for Hinduism) would not be saved by defending every verse printed in the scriptures. It would be saved only by putting into action the principles enunciated in them – principles that were eternal" (Mondal, 2018).

Mahatma Gandhi has also taken an interest in the *Sati* custom. According to Gandhi, the Sati custom results from the blind self-importance of men. He argues that if a wife needs to prove her faithfulness, commitment, and devotion to her husband, the husband should also prove his loyalty and commitment (Gandhi M. , 1976, p. 153). She does not need to let herself burn on the funeral bed of her dead husband to prove her loyalty. But she can prove it by utilizing "every opportunity to add to her stock of knowledge and increase her capacity for cultivating renunciation and self-discipline" (Kaushik, 2018). To Gandhi, *Sati* is a useless exercise. Instead of restoring the dead husband to life, it takes away the wife's life. Gandhi believes that "*Sati* hood is the acne of purity. As purity cannot be attained or realized by dying but can be achieved only through constant striving, constant immolation of spirit from day to day" (Kaushik, 2018). This shows that to go against the evil practices of Hinduism, one need not necessarily shun that religion. Being a faithful follower of Hinduism, still, Gandhi goes against those evil practices of Hindu society. Being a true

follower of Hinduism and a fideist (I consider him a fideist because he tends to believe in God based on faith), Gandhi still goes against Hindu society's evil practices.

Finally, in this regard, the role of reformers is significant. The religious reformers understand that these and similar such practices were men made. The people who are the leaders of these reformative movements, most of them are either from Hindu families with a religious background or a true follower of religion; for instance, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Gandhi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and Swami Dayanand Saraswati. These people are not dogmatic. All of them preach against many Hindu religious rituals such as worshiping an idol, sacrificing animals in the name of religion, restricting women from reading Vedas, etc. Most importantly, in banning *Sati* practice and widow remarriage, these Indian reformers have contributed more.

This suggests that religious people are ready for reformation. This proves Hitchens' statement that religion, as such, is bad; it poisons everything, and religious people are dogmatic is wrong. And Being a fideist, Gandhi has not stopped himself from going against ill religious practices. He has employed reason and a secular interpretation whenever he feels the need for it. So, from a fideistic perspective, Hitchens' views about certain Hindu practices are misguided. I have also shown how the conclusions he draws from those practices are lopsided. But he doesn't stop with Hinduism. As a matter of fact, he talks more about other Abrahamic religions than Asiatic religions, perhaps with even more bitterness. I have confined myself to discuss his views on Hinduism. I think this is not the problem only with Hitchens; perhaps it is pronounced more in this chapter. Other new atheists hold on to more or less similar opinions on issues related to faith and God.

I have shown through the case of Hinduism that some of the opinions made by Hitchens are just partially true. I think it might be the same case with other religious practices and customs as well. People from their respective faiths may have umpteen number of examples to show that religious believers of their respective faith try hard to get rid of what they consider as a social evil without discarding their religion. Some may discard it, but it is not necessary to do it. The understanding of the new atheists about religion and religious practices are due to their narrowed perception of religion. Perhaps an open mind to look into both the merits and demerits will augur well in understanding rather than being dogmatic from either side – to see only the merits or to see only the demerits may lead to misunderstanding in the guise of understanding.

The practice of *Sati* is not actually available in the Hindu scriptures. But the new atheists consider it as a sort of socio-religious custom. I conclude that this is not a religious issue. It is a socio-cultural issue. Therefore, religion need not be blamed for this particular practice. I have discussed earlier that even if *Sati* were a religious issue, people are ready to fight against that. For instance- Gandhi and other reformers' contributions. So, the accusation of the new atheists in this regard is wrong. Now I want to take another issue- a quasi-religious issue- an issue arising out of religion and also sanctioned in scriptures. An issue which is having a social context and at the same time also some reference to it is available in scriptures. The case of *Sati* is actually a social issue in the guise of religion. So, the allegations are unnecessary. But in the case of miracles, there are scriptural verses mentioning miracles. In that case, the fideists may find it difficult to answer the critics.

4.3 Quasi-Religious Practices- Faith Healing and Miracles:

Faith-based healing is associated with the idea of miracles. Faith-based healing is often considered as one form of alternative medicine (Village, 2005). But I contend that not all forms of faith-based healing can be appropriated. In faith healing, it is believed that with the help of prayer and other rituals, disease and disability can be healed. The whole process sidesteps empirical evidence (Village, 2005). According to most scientists, faith-based healing is not a proper science but pseudoscience (Mahner, 2013, p. 30) (Sadri, 2010, p. 641).

In Hinduism, some 'godmen' and 'baba' proclaim to be faith healers (Haraldsson, 2013). In Islam, also, some people perform exorcisms (Haokip, 2007, pp. 53-54). But this faith-based healing is performed mostly in Christianity. The Church and the Saints actively participate in the healing process (Village, 2005). But not all the time, faith-based healing has worked. Hence it faces a lot of criticisms. According to many scientific claims, there is no scientific evidence available to claim that diseases can be cured by faith healing (Ateeq, Jehan, & Mehmood, 2014, p. 298).

One review published in 1998 looked at 172 cases of death among children treated by faith healing instead of conventional methods. They estimated that if conventional treatment had been given, the survival rate for most of these children would have been more than 90 percent, with the remainder of the children also having a good chance of survival (Ateeq, Jehan, & Mehmood, 2014, pp. 298-299).

Etienne Vermeersch, a Belgium philosopher, coins a new term, Lourdes effect, to criticize the magical thinking and placebo effect possibilities (Vermeersch, 1992). He uses this new term to ridicule the miracles which people consider as supernatural gifts to human beings. According to

many skeptics, the figure of mortal accidents on the road to and from Lourdes¹ is much higher than the 67 suspected miracles of faith healing that has come to light in 2005 (Vermeersch & Betz, 2006).

Complete dependence on faith healing, ignoring proper medical solutions can harm people. It may affect a person's health. There is evidence for the higher fatal rates of children. There are examples where the patient mistakenly thinks themselves cured and keep themselves away from good medical treatment. There are instances where some people died due to faith healing by their church. In Britain, the evangelical churches tell some HIV patients to stop their medications as, according to the church, they are cured of HIV (Mikelberg, 2011). As a result, those people lost their lives.

These types of issues put fideism in a difficult position. When people follow a particular religion based on their faith, they often overlook the reason. The problem here is – people trusting their faith do not take proper scientific and medical treatments for their disease. If the medical field says there is no treatment for a disease and the patient starts believing in God for a miracle to happen that can save her life - I do not consider this as blind belief as all possible ways to get rid of the disease are considered, but they are not working. Then as the last hope, one prays to God. This type of faith, I believe, is acceptable. But not the other one where you pray to God for the cure when proper scientific methods are available. The above-mentioned examples have shown that there may be ill-effects, sometimes leading to death even, of holding on to a faith that may not have a rational explanation. Religion needs to be freed from pseudo-faith-based healers. I consider such beliefs as superstitions. Superstition is a belief or practice that arises from a lack of knowledge

¹Lourdes is considered a special place to visit because prayers and services are believed to bring real blessings to the pilgrim

and a misunderstanding of science or causality (Gandhi M. , 2017). It is not based on reason and knowledge. Hence it is not rational.

The belief that we hold based on blind faith leads to superstitions. Alice Gardner says: “we group together as superstitions- a number of beliefs, habits and fancies, tribal and individual, which we regard as not being founded on reasonable conceptions of the world and of human life, necessities and obligations” (Lesser, 1931, p. 617). Faith-based healing is most of the time can be considered as superstition as it is not founded on reasonable grounds. But the fideists’ understanding of superstition is completely different from this general idea of superstition. For instance, Wittgenstein never tries to compare religious truth with that of scientific ones. According to him, if we attempt to develop one’s religious foundations in terms of scientific understanding, it will only lead to religious superstitions (Wittgenstein, 1978).

Most of the fideists accept miracles. In Christianity, the saints perform miracles. Therefore, to focus more on the fideistic position to hold on to such beliefs, the next part of the discussion will include the theoretical understanding of miracles and magic. In the philosophy of religion, miracle, and magic both are faith-based notions. Fideists accept only miracles and deny magic. Miracle occupies a significant place in theology. It is generally understood as an unnatural phenomenon associated with God. Augustine and Aquinas and some other theologians have spoken about both miracles and magic. But most of them have differentiated magic from miracles and tend to support miracles than magic. They seem to be more confident about miracles than magic. Augustine speaks several times of “the crimes of magicians,” and he defends the Christian miracles. Fideists like Evans interpret miracles in a different sense to avoid this inconsistency, but still, the Church accepts miracles!

I contend that their difference in stand stems from ethical consideration and not due to epistemological consideration, as they claim. This has led to their inconsistent position, that is, of accepting miracles and denying magic. I argue that miracles and magic are not different and contend that it is difficult for both revealed and natural theologians to hold to support miracles and deny magic.

A miracle is such an event that cannot be explained by known laws of nature (Świeżyński, 2012, p. 90). Scriptures like the Bible or Quran, assert that devotees can take this as a fact when miracles occur. The term 'miracle' used in discussions generally refers to "any unexpected events from the unanticipated passing of a difficult examination to the rediscovery of a lost item of great value to the rapid and total recovery from a bout with cancer" (Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, & Basinger, 2007, pp. 1-3). But when a miracle is used in a particular religious sense, what people have in mind is that it is not only a supernatural event that happens, but it happens because of some divine activity. In simple words, a miracle happens due to the involvement of divine power or deity (Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, & Basinger, 2007, pp. 1-3).

St. Augustine is the first Christian to formally discuss miracles (Harrison, 2006, p. 495). Augustine claims the whole nature to be God's miracle. To him, people can understand miracles concerning their influence on the spectator. Augustine states that a miracle is such an affair "that is difficult or unusual above the hope or power of them who wonder" (Harrison, 2006, p. 496). Another theologian Thomas Aquinas follows Augustine. Aquinas points out that miracles contain the element of elicit wonder (Harrison, 2006, p. 497). He says, "those things are properly called miracles which are done by divine agency beyond the order commonly observed in nature" (Aquinas, 1975).

According to the theologians, a miracle is an event that is known to be caused by supernatural causes. This event is different from other events that happen in the normal sequence of events. This event happens with the intervention of Divinity in the natural order. These events are regarded as unusual and splendid. Thus, Aquinas defines miracles as “beyond the order commonly observed” (Levine, 2005).

Likewise, the boundaries of miracles can also be understood from a different perspective that we can state from Augustine’s thoughts. Although Augustine approves Christ’s miracles as a symbol of his divinity, he considers miracles uncertain in their implication. But in the later period of his time, Augustine favorably views miracles by associating miracles with sainthood (Harrison, 2006, p. 496).

Generally, magical practices include works like “divination, astrology, incantations, alchemy, sorcery, spirit mediation, and necromancy” (Middleton, Jolly, & Gilbert, 2016). “The term magic is also used colloquially in Western popular culture to refer to acts of conjuring and sleight of hand for entertainment” (Middleton, Jolly, & Gilbert, 2016). Magicians perform magic. It is not necessary for anybody who practices magic must belong to any religion. It is such practice that is done by human beings to acquire success or to harm enemies. In this regard, Middleton, Jolly, and Gilbert further state,

The purpose of magic is to acquire knowledge, power, love, or wealth; to heal or ward off illness or danger; to guarantee productivity or success in an effort; to cause harm to an enemy; to reveal information; to induce spiritual transformation; to trick; or to entertain. The effectiveness of magic is often determined by the condition and performance of the magician, who is thought to have access to unseen forces and special knowledge of the appropriate words and actions to manipulate those forces (Middleton, Jolly, & Gilbert, 2016).

While the theologians talk about miracle as a supernatural event that happens through Divine interventions, they do not have a similar opinion on magic. Compared to the idea they have on miracles, they have a more confusing idea of magic. They are not able to clearly dictate what magic is – is it human’s deceit? Is it supernatural? Is magic real? Is it merely illusions? For instance,

Christian theologians like John of Salisbury. He says,

The magicians, so-called on account of the magnitude of their evil deeds, are those who, by divine permission agitate the elements, strip objects of their forms, often predict the future, disturb men’s minds, despatch dreams, and slay by mere force of incantation. Magic thus includes prediction of the future as well as transformation of nature and bewitching of human being (Thorndike, 1915, p. 109).

– one can see that he gives magic almost the similar status like a miracle as he talks about “divine permission,” capable of making actual ontological changes “strip objects of their forms” and engage in supra-epistemological functions like “predicting the future” and similar such performances (Thorndike, 1915, p. 109). Another theologian Hugo of Saint-Victor, gives a brief description of magic in his ‘Didascalicon.’ In that description, Hugo says,

Magic is not included in philosophy but is a distinct subject, false in its professions, mistress of all iniquity and malice, deceiving concerning the truth and truly doing harm; it seduces souls from divine religion, promotes the worship of demons, engenders corruption of morals, and impels its followers’ minds to every crime and abomination (Thorndike, 1915, p. 111).

Here, one can see the shift in the way they understand magic. On the one hand, he describes magic as ‘deceiving,’ essentially trying to show that magic is an act of illusion. He doesn’t want to give magic a status as given by John. Hugo condemns magic as an unsocial event in every

respect since law, religion, and learning all denounce it. And he also claims that it is more or less untrue and unreal (Thorndike, 1915).

Aquinas believes that “the magicians make use of herbs and other physical bodies to accomplish their magical acts” (Thorndike, 1915, p. 113). Acts in the form of “invocations, supplications, and adjurations” are performed by magicians. Along with those herbs, they also “employ figures and characters, sacrifices and prostrations, images and rites, carefully observed times, constellations, and other astrological considerations” (Thorndike, 1915, p. 114). After those deeds result like these can be witnessed- “hidden treasure is found, the future is revealed, closed doors open, men become invisible, inanimate bodies move and speak, and spirits of rational beings are called and answer questions” (Thorndike, 1915, pp. 113-114).

Aquinas again is not clear if he accepts magic as real as miracles. One can see from the above quote that he acknowledges certain things that can happen through magic like “closed doors open, men become invisible, inanimate bodies move and speak” (Thorndike, 1915, p. 114), which are not possible in the ‘normal’ world of experiences. But Aquinas also comments that “It is not true then that the magic arts are sciences, but rather that they are certain fallacies of the demons” (Thorndike, 1915, p. 114). Does this statement mean that those acts are fallacies, meaning not real, and cannot happen actually? But he says they are “fallacies of the demons,” meaning that they can be real but done with demons’ help. One can see the ambiguity among the theologians in understanding the ‘true’ nature of magic. But for them, no such ambiguity existed with miracles. Evans also tries to differentiate magic from miracles. He states that miracles are not magical tricks. He writes,

It is not necessary, of course, that a special act of God always produces an obvious exception to the laws of nature. Suppose for example that a crucial bolt of an airliner

is about to fail, and that, in response to prayers for the safe keeping of those on board, God miraculously focuses the bolt. To all outward appearances the flight is uneventful; nevertheless, the safe arrival of the plane is a miracle. Such a miracle would be hard to detect and thus would lack some of the features of miracles that function as signs. On our definition such an act on God's part would still qualify as a miracle. Such a possibility provides another reason for not identifying miracles with signs. Obviously the miracles of a religion such as Christianity are not merely bizarre events or stunts. They have a function and purpose and usually that function is a revelatory one. But it seems possible for there to be signs that are not strictly miracles, and miracles which are not strictly signs (Evans & Manis, 2010, p. 128).

From the writings and the arguments of most of the theologians, including Aquinas, Augustine, we can claim that all seem to have faith only in miracles than magic. One can see how modern philosophers started looking at miracles. Theologians tentatively believe magic as sorcery, deception, trick, and concealment and as against the laws of nature and as those acts may not be possible in our world of experiences. In the same vein, the modern philosophers more strongly discard the possibility of miracles. According to Hume, “a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature” (Świeżyński, 2012, p. 90). Even modern philosophers who believe in God are not ready to accept miracles. Spinoza doesn't accept miracles. “Pantheist Spinoza held creation to be the aspect of the one substance, i.e., God, and, as he taught that miracles were a violation of nature, they would, therefore, be a violation of God” (Herbermann, Pace, Pallen, Shahan, & Wynne, 2005, p. 816). Locke and Kant have the same opinion as Spinoza (Herbermann, Pace, Pallen, Shahan, & Wynne, 2005, p. 816). And almost all other philosophers down the line believe that miracles are contrary to nature and hence cannot be accepted.

While the medieval theologians are questioning if magic can be real, why they don't question miracles? One answer could be they believe in God's existence, and since God is said to be performing miracles, we cannot question them. But the author claims that there are ethical considerations as well in such an understanding. Even though the medieval theologians have

understood magic in a different sense, they are all in agreement on one issue, that is, the negative aspects of magic. Aquinas accuse the practitioners of magic as criminals. They do “illicit deeds, adulteries, thefts, and homicides, and that at best, magic does not aid man in science or virtue but in trivial matters like the discovery of stolen goods” (Thorndike, 1915, p. 114). Hugo says that magic does result in harm. John says magicians are called so because of their account of the magnitude of evil deeds. From Augustine’s thought, a clear distinction between magicians’ wonders and miracles of the saints can be understood. Magicians’ wonder activates the powers they control for their selfish ends, whereas the miracles of the saints arouse powers subject to God for God’s universal purposes. Theologians have put miracles in the positive light and magic in the negative light. Augustine speaks several times of “the crimes of magicians” (Thorndike, 1908, p. 50).

They believe that while miracles are performed for the common good or with selfless motives, magic is primarily performed with selfish motives, personal benefit brought out by evil means. So, the trouble for them to accept magic is primarily an ethical one. But they are not ready to accept that proposition. Instead, they try to question the epistemological and ontological basis of magic. This has created troubles for them as the later philosophers started criticizing the possibility of miracles as well, maybe abiding with the similar logic of theologians that they used to comment on magic. Markus states thus in this regard, “the essential ground for the distinction between miracles worked by saints and those worked by magicians seems to be the end for which they are respectively performed- God’s glory and the public good, against their own, selfish and private ends” (Markus, 1994, p. 380).

Subbotsky has raised some obvious points about magic. I develop another argument based on Subbotsky's "distinction between magical thinking and magical beliefs" (Subbotsky, 2014, p.

2). He states that,

in the modern view, magical causality affecting or creating physical objects directly through the effort of thought, will, wishes, or words (mind-over-matter magic); affecting people's lives and health through prayer, magic spells, and rituals, or by promising reinforcement in the afterlife (communicative magic); and harming or helping people by manipulating the objects that those people were in contact with, such as their hair, clothes, or shadow (contagion magic) are just a few kinds of magical events. In addition, he distinguishes magical thinking from magical beliefs (Subbotsky, 2014, p. 2).

Subbotsky treats magical thinking and magical beliefs to be two distinct concepts. He develops this distinction like this,

Magical thinking operates with concepts of impossible objects, without ontological judgment being made about the objects, whereas a magical belief incorporates ontological judgment about the impossible objects of the belief, namely, that these objects exist or (in the case of a disbelief) don't exist in the real world. Consequently, magical thinking unfolds only in one's imagination, perception, or thinking; in contrast, the belief in magic implies that magic might have real world effects. In that regard, every person who watches a movie with magical effects or has a dream where magical things happen is involved in magical thinking without necessarily having explicit magical beliefs (Subbotsky, 2014, p. 2).

I claim that miracles are not different from magical thinking. If theologians want to distinguish miracles from magic, they can distinguish miracles from magical thinking. Miracles and magical beliefs are similar notions as they incorporate ontological judgments about the impossible object of the belief.

Now let us figure out the main commonalities between miracle and magic.

A. Both are scriptural.

Scriptural verses talking about miracles:

“He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes” (Deuteronomy 10:21) (New International Version).

“He said, if you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you” (Exodus 15:26) (New International Version).

Scriptural verses talking about magic:

“And the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer, and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery” (Revelation 18: 23) (English Standard Version).

“He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger” (Chronicles 33:6) (New American Standard Bible).

B. Both violate some laws.

According to Hume, “miracle is a violation of the laws of nature” (Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, & Basinger, 2007, pp. 1-3). And “in the modern view, magical causality comprises events that violate known physical, biological, and psychological principles and conventions”

(Subbotsky, 2014, p. 1). Thus, both are similar ideas sharing the same feature of violating some laws and having their foundation in the scriptures.

This is the theoretical understanding of why theologians accept miracles and deny magic. Christian believers fail to stand firmly against the ethical challenge that emerges because fideists accept miracles and deny magic. They are taking the side of miracles as, according to them, magic can harm people, and it is evil. When they accept one concept and deny the other similar concept, they head towards an inconsistent zone. I have pointed out that one reason for this inconsistency is moral consideration that might have been the demand at that point in time. They observe that magic is performed for selfish, evil deeds, whereas miracles are performed for the good of the people.

In India, there are so many spiritual leaders, self-proclaimed godmen. It is challenging to differentiate between real religious spiritualists and pseudo spiritualists (in the Indian context). This pseudo spiritualist section can deceive the common people who don't use reason. This is actually happening in India right now. According to a report published by Hindustan Times on 11th September 2017, "The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP), the apex body of Hindu sadhus, released on Sunday what it said was a list of fake saints even as it demanded a crackdown on rootless cult leaders" (Kumar, 2017). The list includes the name of such fake spiritualists: "Asaram Bapu (Asumal Sirumalani), Sukhbinder Kaur (Radhe Maa), Sachchidanand Giri (Sachin Datta), Gurmeet Singh of Dera Sacha Sauda, Om Baba (Vivekanand Jha), Nirmal Baba (Nirmaljeet Singh), Ichchadhari Bhimanand (Shivmurti Dwivedi), Swami Asimanand, Om Namah Shivay Baba, Narayan Sai, Rampal Acharya Kushmuni, Brahaspati Giri, Malkhan Singh" (Kumar, 2017). The report says,

The move by the ABAP, which is an umbrella organisation of 13 recognised akharas, or monastic orders, came against the backdrop of a series of controversies surrounding self-styled godmen, including Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh who has been convicted of rape. Releasing the list --- which includes Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, Haryana cult leader Rampal, rape accused Asaram and his son Narayan Sai, the group's president, Swami Narendra Giri, said: We appeal to even the common people to beware of such charlatans who belong to no tradition and by their questionable acts, bring disrepute to sadhus and sanyasis (Kumar, 2017).

These people are accused of deceiving people with their magic tricks and miracles. Here, one can see the mainstream religious and spiritual heads deny the authenticity of those above-mentioned spiritualists. The primary reason is due to their immoral conduct. But the issue of whether they can perform supernatural feats needs to be discussed. Though Indian spiritualists claim to perform miracles, it is often questioned, and more importantly, it was not considered as an essentialist aspect of spirituality. For instance, Ramakrishna Paramahansa once interacted with a yogi who claims that he can walk on water. Ramakrishna suggested why he need to spend so many years of penance to do this feat. He could very well pay some money to the ferryman and cross the river. This narration spells out two aspects on this issue – one is whether somebody can do miracles? The second is that if it is considered as an essential element of a spiritualist? In the Hindu context, the answer can be in the negative. But still, many people believe in those spiritualists and godmen. This shows a gap between what religion prescribes and what people follow.

4.4 A Religious Practice:

The main concern of this chapter is to focus on the socio-cultural aspect. We know that matters related to religion do not confine only to the transcendental aspects of religion but also impact and influence the socio-cultural and ethical aspects. So, I have discussed *Sati*. The new

atheists thought it to be a religious practice. But I conclude it to be a social practice. Therefore, the belief in religion holds. Then I have discussed the issue of miracles, which is semi-social and semi-religious. Miracles and faith-based healing are socio-cultural and at the same substantiated by scriptures. This issue puts fideists in a difficult position. Finally, I am going to discuss a primary religious issue, which is supported by scripture. That issue is Islam and terrorism. In all these three issues, the new atheists are targeting religions. The new atheist Dawkins calls Islam “greatest force for evil today” (Wilford, 2017). In his book “God Is Not Great,” Hitchens directly targets Islamic adherents who recite *Allah Akbar*, meaning “God is great.” Dennett calls Islam a parasitic brain worm (AustralianNeoCon1, 2012). According to all the new atheists, rigid religious adherents are doxastically irrational (Baldwin, 2012). Baldwin states,

Accordingly, Jews, Christians, and Muslims are blamed for social, economic, and political conflicts and violence, oppression and war, in the Middle East and beyond. The basic idea is that these religious institutions inculcate irrational beliefs and overzealous attitudes, thereby causing believes to be deeply offended by people who reject their beliefs, which in turn leads to armed conflict and violence (Baldwin, 2012).

Among all the new atheist group members, Harris’ criticism of religion is notable. He equates Islam with violence in many instances. According to Harris, religion creates conflict in the world. And among religions, he is a strong critic of Islam. According to him, Islam is the most violent religion in the 21st century. For him, Islam is eviler than Christianity and Judaism. His following quote proposes: “as a source of objective morality, the Bible is one of the worst books we have. It might be the very worst, in fact—if we didn’t also happen to have the Quran” (Harris, 2006). Harris further writes, “Islam, more than any other religion human beings have devised, has all the makings of a thoroughgoing cult of death” (Harris, 2005). According to Harris, people

should eliminate the taboo around religion to become open to public criticism (Jennek, 2017). The attitude of Sam Harris towards Islam is too rude.

Harris states,

The problem is not that religious people are stupid. It's not that religious fundamentalists are stupid. I happen to think that you can be so well educated that you can build a nuclear bomb, and still get--and still believe that you will get the 72 virgins in paradise--that is the problem. The problem is that--religion--because it has been sheltered from criticism as it has been--allows people--perfectly sane, perfectly intelligent people--to believe en masse, what only idiots or lunatics could believe in isolation (Jennek, 2017, pp. 19-20).

In the article: “Sleepwalking Toward Armageddon,” Harris reviews the vital message of the Quran as “hatred of infidels” (Jennek, 2017, p. 23). In his book “End of The Faith,” he states, “A cult of death is forming in the Muslim world — for reasons that are perfectly explicable in terms of the Islamic doctrines of martyrdom and jihad. The truth is that we are not fighting a ‘war on terror.’ We are fighting a pestilential theology and a longing for paradise” (Harris, 2005).

In an episode of “Recode Decode with Kara Swisher,” Harris recently says, “although he disavows anyone in his audience who would use his work as justification for bigotry, he still believes that we need to have a tough conversation about violent jihadism and a ‘culture of acceptance’ from regular Muslims” (Johnson, 2019). Harris also says, “Islam has problems and points of conflict with modernity and secular culture and civil society, and a value like free speech that Mormonism doesn’t have, or the Anglican Communion doesn’t have, or Scientology” (Johnson, 2019).

In the book “Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue,” Sam Harris and Maajid discuss whether Islam is a religion of peace or not. While asking a question to Maajid, Harris states,

... You want to convince the world—especially the Muslim world—that Islam is a religion of peace that has been hijacked by extremists. But the problem is that Islam is not a religion of peace, and so-called ‘extremist’ are seeking to implement what is arguably the most honest reading of faith’s actual doctrine. So your maneuvers on the stage tonight- the claims you made about interpretations of scripture and historical context in which certain passages in the Quran must be understood- appear disingenuous (Harris & Nawaz, 2015, p. 2).

Harris describes religion as an outdated worldview with obsolete social outlooks of supporters. He proposes that “scripture should be considered within more modern social and rational examinations as opposed to faith alone” (Silver, 2013, p. 17).

Critics have claimed that the attitude of Sam Harris towards Islam is too rude. So many thinkers have criticized Harris’ opinion. On Harris’ criticism of religion, Glenn Greenwald states that his opinion is not generally a critique of religion; Harris’s strenuous effort is to show Islam as the supreme threat (Greenwald, 2013). Harris once says that “we are not at war with terrorism. We are at war with Islam.” Harris’ exact words are,

It is time we admitted that we are not at war with “terrorism”; we are at war with precisely the vision of life that is prescribed to all Muslims in the Quran. This is not to say that we are at war with all Muslims, but we are absolutely at war with millions more than have any direct affiliation with Al Qaeda. Every person living in a western democracy should read the Quran and discover the relentlessness with which non-Muslims are vilified in its pages. The idea that Islam is a “peaceful religion hijacked by extremists” is a dangerous fantasy—and it is now a particularly dangerous fantasy for moderate Muslims to indulge (Harris, 2011).

Here, though Harris says that he is not at war with all Muslims, he immediately points out that he is “absolutely at war with millions more than having any direct affiliation with Al Qaeda” (Greenwald, 2013). Further, he points out his primary apprehension that Islam is violence-ridden. So, if we follow the criticism of Atran and other critics of Sam Harris, we must accept the point that what Harris declares about Islam or any religion either being compatible or incompatible with extreme political violence is pointless. As Atran states,

people make religious beliefs – whether Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and so forth – compatible with violence or non-violence according to how they interpret their religious beliefs. And how people interpret religious injunctions (e.g., the Ten Commandments) and transcendental aspects of political ideologies almost invariably changes over time (Atran, 2013).

Atran rules out the possibility of anything inherently problematic concerning religion; rather, he highlights the socio-cultural aspect. This may be true, but ruling out scriptures’ effect on those types of acts is contentious. Atran is nullifying any role of religious scriptures. The significance of religious scriptures should not be denied.

About suicide bombing cases, Harris, in his book “End of The Faith,” considers suicide bombing as a Muslim phenomenon. Even people from other religions could also practice suicide bombing or other terrorist means with the hope of getting a straightforward ticket to heaven (Harris, 2005).

Our primary concern should be that there should not be any biased conclusion to build stereotypical statements about a particular religion and wrongly identify the religion and religious followers with which they may disagree.

I do acknowledge that killing is mentioned in the Quran. Verses where Quran endorses violence, are as follows. “Kill the idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them, and blockade them, and watch for them at every lookout...” (Quran 9:5). “And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter... and fight them until fitnah is no more, and religion is for Allah” (Quran 2:191). Most of the fideists believe that God can be revealed through scriptures. They have faith in scriptures like they have faith in God. Every fideist should condemn those scriptural verses where the killing of other people is mentioned. This kind of faith has the power to lead people to commit unethical deeds. What would be the responsibility of a fideist in this context? If fideism keeps supporting such faith, then being a fideist in a multicultural setup will be problematic. By mentioning this point, I do not agree with Harris either. He has generalized everything against Islam without discussing the positive aspect of Islam. The Quran also talks about peace and against violence. Quran states,

Perhaps God will place affection between you, and those who are your enemies for God is powerful, and God is forgiving and merciful. God does not forbid you from being kind and equitable to those who have neither made war on you on account of your religion nor driven you from your homes; indeed God loves those who are equitable (Quran 60:7–8).

Quran clarifies that Muslims can fight only against those who attack them and persecute them for their faith. But those who don't follow Islam and live peacefully with them and show no aggression are to be treated kindly and rightfully. Another verse of the Quran, which is the ideal 'peacemaking' verse, states, “and if they should incline to peace, then incline to it [yourself] and place your trust in God; for He is all-hearing and all-knowing” (Quran 8:61). Al-Tabari, interpreting this verse, states, “God addressed the Prophet and counseled him to abandon warfare

when the adversary inclines to peace either through entry into Islam, payment of the poll tax (jizya), or through the establishment of friendly relations. Such reciprocity is mandated for the sake of peace and peacemaking” (Al Tabari, Tafsir al- abar, 6:278).

It is true that in some places, the Quran mentions violence. But we cannot also ignore that, as per the instruction of the Quran, the main aim of those defensive wars was to protect the weak and innocent people who wanted to follow Islam. What they believe in, they were not fighting for any land or property or power (Desai, 2009). Quran says: “don’t use the weapon in the war for violence only. A weapon is meant for self-defense. It is not meant for violence” (Holy Quran- 2-190-). If violence is mentioned in Quran, similarly, passages related to peace are also mentioned in the Quran. The new atheists like Harris have a selected reading of the Quran and conclude that the Quran is inflicted with violence. In the Quran, nowhere violence is categorically and unconditionally accepted. According to many thinkers, Quranic Ethics is to refrain from fighting and engaging with peacemaking. They discuss more specifically the issue of whether it is ever permissible to attack an opponent. Some modern and modernist Islamic intellectuals have assumed a continued assessment of the traditional jurists’ numerous stances. Mainly on the issue of whether it is ever acceptable to initiate an attack on an enemy. They suggest a close reading of the Quran and other very early sources. So Afsaruddin states,

This perspective—which relies on the invocation of the principle of Naskh (abrogation) for its validity—has been severely criticized by a variety of modern and contemporary Muslim scholars, including Sobhi Mahmassani, ‘Ali Jum`a, Abu Zahra, Wahba al-Zuhayli’ (Afsaruddin, 2016).

Like Harris, other critics of Islam also cite any number of passages from the Quran to criticize Islam. For instance- a quotation from the Holy Quran states, “and kill them where

wherever you find them” (2:191). But Islamic Scholars claim that if people read the whole passage, then the meaning is different. Quran is allowing to fight if and only if the opposition initiates it.

The full passage reads as follows,

Perhaps one needs to be a Muslim to discern nuance in the above passage, but the implication that one could reasonably derive remains largely the same, if not more ominous. It essentially offers the instruction to kill your enemies wherever you defeat them, expel your enemies from the places that you were once expelled from. Only fight them once they initiate the fight, but if they do fight, kill them. This is the consequence for being a disbeliever (kāfir in Arabic). At this point one might rationally wonder, what causes a person to incur the designation of ‘disbeliever’ (Barnes, 2020)?

There are thinkers and theologians among the followers who do not subscribe to violence, as given in the Quran. Those thinkers and followers have a liberal interpretation of the text. Again, thinkers and scholars like Abu Zayd, Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Amina Wadud, Irshad Manji are prominent. According to Abu Zayd, “the Quran is not only a text, but a discourse that engages in debate, argues, accepts, and refuses. It can cope with modernity and face its challenges” (Hashas, 2013, p. 357). These adherents need to do, to “rethink the Quran,” “without relinquishing their spiritual power” (Hashas, 2013, p. 357). Another Liberal Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri is a famous Pakistani Sufi Scholar and a politician who issued the first fatwa called “Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings” against Islamic terrorism. In 2010, Qadri issued his 600-page fatwa in Denmark, in which he says that “Terrorism is terrorism, violence is violence and it has no place in Islamic teaching, and no justification can be provided for it, or any kind of excuses or ifs or buts” (Holst, 2011). Amina Wadud has convincingly argued that patriarchy influences the interpretation of the Quran and the practices of Muslims. Patriarchy has restricted the realization of the Quranic message of equality and justice (Wadud, 2015).

The number shows that violence cannot be equated with the mainstream Islamic religion. If we support Harris' argument and accept that most of the people practicing terrorism belong to the Islam religion, we must also keep some points in mind. Firstly, those terrorist groups consist of fewer members than the total number of people who follow Islam. For example, the Al-Qaeda "group has about one thousand members in Algeria, according to the State Department, and smaller numbers in the Sahel region, which includes areas in Chad, Mali, and Mauritania. It also has cells in Libya, Nigeria, and Tunisia" (Laub & Masters, 2015). In the Af-Pak region, the number is around 800 (Hoffman, 2018), in the Arabian Peninsula: 6,000–8,000, In Syria: Tahrir al-Sham 7,000–11,000 (Ali, 2019). In total, this militant group has 30000 to 50000 members. Though all of them belong to Islam, we cannot conclude that Islam invites conflict. According to the pew research center demographic analysis, adherents of Islam are among the world's largest religions. "Globally, Muslims make up the second largest religious group, with 1.8 billion people, or 24% of the world's population" (Hackett & McClendon, 2017). And not everyone is engaged with violence. Most of them are living peacefully with other religions. The fact is no religion supports terroristic violence. Therefore, no terrorist is a follower of any religion.

If we notice carefully, most terrorist attacks happen in Islamic countries, and only Islamic people get injured. So it is also not true that they are harming only people from other religions. Let us take examples of some major terrorist attacks namely: Saudi Arabia (November 20, 1979), Lebanon (September 20, 1984), Indonesia (January 21, 1985), France (December 1985 – September 1986), Israel (July 7, 1989), United States (February 26, 1993), Philippines (December 11, 1994), Algeria (December 24, 1994), Algeria (January 30, 1995), India (July 20, 1995), Egypt (April 18, 1996), Saudi Arabia (June 25, 1996), Tanzania (August 7, 1998), United States (September 11, 2001), India (December 13, 2001), Indonesia (October 12 2002), Saudi Arabia

(May 1,2003), Spain (March 11, 2003), Saudi Arabia (April 21, 2003), Saudi Arabia (June 8, 2003), Saudi Arabia (August 3, 2003), Russia (September 1–3, 2003), India (November 26, 2008), Pakistan (May 28, 2010), Pakistan (July 1, 2010), Nigeria (December 25, 2011), Iraq (December 17, 2012), recently in 2018, 11 countries became the victims of terrorist attack which are- Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Somalia, Burkina Faso, France, Nigeria, Libya, Indonesia, Belgium, Pakistan (ITVERP, 2020). If we look carefully, these are the places where most of the Islamic people live.

The violence of this sort is common among other religions as well. Another point is that even if we assume that Islam gets engaged with violence, we also have to assume that it's not only in Islam that violence happens by the name of religion. Even other religions also do engage in violence knowingly or unknowingly sometimes. Even the so-called religion of peace Buddhism also has been witnessed as engaging in violence.

Recently in an article “Monks with Guns,” Michael Jerryson writes,

On 16 October 2015, a head monk at the prestigious Marble Temple in Bangkok posted on his Facebook page his outrage over the latest attacks on Buddhist monks in southern Thailand. Phra Apichart Punnajanto argued that the situation required a violent response: for each Buddhist monk who is attacked, Buddhists should burn down a mosque. Punnajanto was not the first monk, nor the last, to justify violence for Buddhism (Jerryson, 2017).

But not only Buddhism or Hinduism, but even people also have talked about the violence from Christianity. Harris comparing the Muslims of today to the Christians of the past says, “Christians have abused, oppressed, enslaved, insulted, tormented, tortured, and killed people in the name of God for centuries, on the basis of a theologically defensible reading of the Bible” (Lang, 2007).

So, it would be wrong to equate a particular religion with violence or terrorism. It is not reasonable to argue that Islam means threat or terrorism. Islamic scripture, no doubt, mentions war or killing, but it also mentions peace. Harris and other atheists have always talked about the negative elements that are to be found in scriptures. Why Harris and other atheists are overlooking that peace part?

This takes us to an important aspect of discussion within the context of multiculturalism. In the multiple pluralistic societies where we live, it is crucial to see how one individual or group reacts and interacts with other individuals and groups. Often a callous interaction of one group upon 'other' shall result in massive damage to the 'other' group, mainly when the 'other' is a minority or marginalized group. In this context, we have to see the new atheists' identification of violence with Islam. They think their understanding and interpretation is right, setting aside the outsider and insider distinction, and accordingly, they identify Islam with violence. In the politics of recognition and representation, it is important to notice who recognizes and how one is represented and who has the authority to represent one. If the new atheists recognize Islam as a violent religion, it can best be understood as one of the interpretations. In the context of representation, Thomassen claims two strategies of representation by which the authority of representation can be questioned. One strategy is to argue that one can be considered non-contingent and true representation among multiple representations, while other representations can be contingent and partial representation. The other strategy is to consider that all representations are contingent, and hence, there is no superiority of one interpretation over the other (Thomassen, 2011).

Seen in this light, it suggests that new atheists' interpretation can at best be one of the multiple representations that are contingent and partial. This partial and contingent representation

actually leads to misrecognition, particularly when one doesn't know or is ready to accept that theirs is a partial representation. The perils of misrecognition are aptly brought out in the recent literature on misrecognition. Taylor remarks, "a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion if the people or society mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor C. , 1994). Taylor further suggests, "misrecognition shows not just a lack of respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred" (Taylor C. , 1994).

Similarly, Honneth also talks about the shortcomings of misrecognition. Honneth provides a more constant explanation of misrecognition, calling it "the withdrawal of social recognition, in the phenomena of humiliation and disrespect" (Nancy Fraser & Honneth., 2003, p. 134). Fraser goes further to remark that to encounter misrecognition "is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued by others' attitudes, beliefs or representations" (Fraser, 2000, p. 113); instead, it is to be "denied the status of a full partner in social interactions, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (Fraser, 2000, pp. 113-114). Young makes a similar line of observation. He says, "without recognition—and by encountering misrecognition—marginalized groups can suffer, as such interactions often painfully fill their discursive consciousness ... making them feel noticed, marked, or conversely invisible, not taken seriously, or worse, demeaned" (Young, 2011, pp. 133-134).

Wendy Martineau, in the article, "Misrecognition and cross-cultural understanding: Shaping the space for a fusion of horizons" opines,

Misrecognition can help cultivate patterns of mistrust and alienation, in which identities are likely to become more narrowly defined, and in which cultural groups are likely to become more insular. Dialogue that takes place against conditions of mistrust and mutual hostility is unlikely to be fruitful and can lead to people talking at 'cross purposes' (Martineau, 2012, p. 164).

Islam is a faith-based religion. The followers of Islam keep faith in Quran and try to follow each and every word of it. Most of the time, they follow the translated versions of the Quran, where things have been sometimes interpreted differently than the actual scripture. In doing so, followers commit mistakes at times. So, this is a sort of challenge to fideism as all the religious practices and rituals performed by the followers of Islam are justified on the basis of faith. The new atheists pointing out those mistakes of a certain section of followers and coming up to the conclusion that the whole Islam religion is violence based is wrong. In this chapter, I have argued against Harris' such position against Islam and come to the conclusion that the new atheists created a kind of misrecognition in the context of Islam.

From the above discussion, one can see the ills of misrecognition that can happen to a group. Unfortunately, this sort of misrecognition is created and perpetuated by these new atheists in the context of Islam. I have shown that many of their claims are factually not correct. Even their theoretical understanding and interpretation of religious texts are at best can be taken as partially right, and at worst, it may be treated as an ill-intentioned understanding with the sole purpose of creating panic and fear among the different cultured people closing all doors of understanding. Though understanding other cultures and religious and cultural practices is a challenging task, it is not impossible. I presume the new atheists to be open-minded and do not expect them to associate Islam with violence, which we think is a form of misrecognition, and this will lead the followers of that religion to feel isolated, insecure, and excluded, though undeservingly.

4.5 Conclusion:

I have discussed some socio-cultural problems arising out of socio-religious practice, people-related issues, and religious scriptures that impact human beings' lives. Discussing Hitchens' argument against the *Sati* practice, I have shown how social evil is sometimes misunderstood as religious evil. There is a clear difference between religious evil and social evil. Then recognizing Gandhi as a fideist, I have concluded that fideist also raises voice against certain ill religious practices without reason. Further, I discussed faith-based healing without proper investigation, trusting the pseudo spiritualists with their wrong motives to deceive people, and accepting miracles without any proper evidence makes the fideistic position more difficult to uphold in the public sphere. The fideists look inconsistent while accepting one similar concept and denying the other. I have shown how both miracles and magic are of the same kind. Situations have changed. Contexts have changed. Science and technology have advanced. The Christian idea of good and bad are now subjects of discussion. In this changed context, should they still stick with this inconsistency? Will not theology then keep facing challenges as a subject of biased ideas? Some modern theologians want to get out of this inconsistency through a different interpretation of miracle (Evans & Manis, 2010, p. 128). Still, the Church seeks miracles for 'beatification' and 'canonization' (Benedict-XVI, 2006).

Then I have discussed and argued against Harris' position of Islam and pointed out why and where he went wrong by citing different arguments from different thinkers. Being one of the interpretations of Islam, Harris' position also stands as a challenge to fideism. Harris' and other similar thinkers' position poses a difficult ethical challenge to fideism.

In summary, this chapter discusses a social issue, quasi-social issues, and a religious issue regarding the new atheists' criticisms against religious believers. In the first case, the allegations made by the new atheists look unnecessary. They criticize Hinduism based on the *Sati* practice. I prove their allegation to be wrong by arguing *Sati* as a social practice. Secondly- miracles and faith healing, which are mentioned in the scriptures. Therefore, I have discussed these issues under the quasi-social issue. These practices put fideism in an inconsistent position. That is a serious problem for the fideists. More so with respect to the multicultural setup in the context of Islam. In the first issue, I defend religion, but there is a problem in the second issue even if people try to defend it. And finally, in the case of Islam, even though Islamic scholars keep saying that their scripture also talks about peace, other religious and cultural people like new atheists may not be ready to accept that. From the discussion of these three issues as pointed out by the new atheists, I am trying to answer that these individual instances actually point us to a general understanding of how religion should act in a public sphere. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter- V

Fideism and Pragmatism

5.1 Pragmatic Way Forward:

Religion, though difficult to define, may be understood in two aspects: one is the discussions related to doctrinal aspects of religion, which generally can be brought under theology; the other is the practical and day-to-day affairs of religious practices that impact the moral, social, and cultural aspects of human life. In the first three chapters, I have discussed how Fideism could take care of the challenges emerging out of theological aspects and, in the fourth chapter, the difficulties that fideism faces in the case of religious practices. In the last chapter, while dealing with three different issues from three different religions, I have argued against the new atheists' challenges. Still, those arguments and justifications are concerning specific problems. We cannot generalize those justifications and solutions to all the difficulties arising out of religious practices. So, there is a need for a generalized solution in the fideistic approach, which might help it to resolve the allegations and make religion acceptable in the public sphere. Can pragmatism be that solution? Here, I propose that implementing a pragmatic outlook could help fideism in justifying religious beliefs and practices. Hence this chapter focuses on the notion of pragmatic rationality and how it can be linked to fideism.

5.2 Jamesian and Rortyan Versions of Pragmatism:

In the tradition of pragmatism concerning religion, different philosophers have offered different arguments. James, Rorty, Betty, Wittgenstein are such philosophers. In this chapter, my

focus will be on the public and the private affairs debate concerning religion. Hence, I shall first discuss both Jamesian and Rortyan versions of pragmatism.

William James' argument plays a noteworthy part in the pragmatic understanding of religion. But his argument is regarded as a middle-ground option. But this tradition gains new strength in philosophy in general and in the philosophy of religion in particular, partly because of the latest work of Hilary Putnam and other neo pragmatists (Pihlström S. , 2002, p. 196).

Pragmatism seeks to overcome the artificial tension between evidentialism and fideism, arguing that religious belief does not need supporting evidence in the sense in which scientific theories need such evidence but it can nevertheless be "tested" and thus rationally defended, not in a scientific research laboratory, nor by means of a priori philosophical demonstration, but, to use Putnam's apt phrase, in the "laboratory of life" (Pihlström S. , 2002, p. 196).

This suggests that a religious belief can be pragmatically rational, though no general philosophical proof of its rationality can be given. In most of his religious writing, James has profound sympathy for any religious belief that brings some "vital good" to the believer. James discusses the goods of saintliness and mysticism. L. Stafford Betty writes about James,

he has a profound sympathy for any religious belief that brings some "vital good" to the believer. "Vital good" encompasses what social scientists today call "life satisfaction" – the feeling of being loved, the ability to achieve meaningful goals, the sense that life is on the whole worth living. "Vital good" includes psychological wholeness, moral sensitivity, and material success in life. But more especially for James it includes the goods of saintliness and mysticism (Betty, 2001, p. 70).

James shows an example of Saint Mother Teresa who is an inspiration to her society. So, he argues that Divine beliefs are true because they yield vitally good results. James's notions of God, immortality, and morality are based on free will (Betty, 2001, p. 70). James says, "the

ultimate philosophy must not be too strait-laced in form, must not in all its parts divide heresy from orthodoxy by too sharp a line” (Betty, 2001, p. 70).

We could find both stronger and weaker versions of James’ the will to believe and his overall fideism in the four essays in “The Will to Believe.” In his past, James had scientific training. He has always been a supporter of the achievements of science and has enormous respect for the scientific attitude of objectivity. But at the same time, he feels that scientists rarely understand their own obligations. James’ emphasis on the volitional aspects of science has led to much misunderstanding. Madden writes,

However, he felt that scientists rarely understand their own commitments or the limited scope of scientific objectivity and that, because of the awe in which scientists are held by the public, they often succumb to the temptation of making unwarranted pronouncements on religious, moral and philosophical issues (Madden, 1979, pp. xiii-xiv).

James criticizes the “idols of science.” According to him, scientists are taking a leap of faith (Madden, 1979, p. xiv). In Madden’s,

He argued that science is the impersonal structure of reason and experience untinged by volitional or affective elements that the Cliffords and Huxleys would have us believe. The scientist is making a “leap of faith” when he believes that the knowing mind and the reality-to-be-known are in sufficient accord to make knowledge possible and to make sensible the very phrases “knowing mind” and “thing known” just as he is when he assumes that the future will be like the past when he extrapolates his statements of lawfulness. Moreover he felt that even in testing an explanatory hypothesis, the scientist has faith that is on the right track until the result of the testing show his faith to be misguided (Madden, 1979, p. xiv).

Though James points out the volitional aspects of science, yet he never denies the objectivity of science. He tries to defend religious faith and morals by arguing that religious faith

is neither more nor less lacking in objectivity than science is. James is a pluralist in his metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, and religious views (Slater, 2011, p. 90). Regarding this plurality, he writes,

commands us to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us. Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sick-rooms have their special revelations (James W. , 1899, p. 264).

“Religious ambiguity, the temperament thesis, and psychological fideism are three sources of this Jamesian pluralism” (Axtell, 2017, p. 1). James’ psychological fideism states that faith tendencies use available evidence. They leap from ought to is (Axtell, 2017). James sometimes also tries to “hedge the license to indulge in private over-beliefs” (Axtell, 2017, p. 4). But “rarely does he discuss the sway of collective beliefs, testimonial traditions replete with revered scriptures, and institutionalized or politicized religiosity” (Axtell, 2017, p. 4). That causes his risk-averse account. And his position remains weak compared to his faith venture’s council of courage (Axtell, 2017). Though James’ account of descriptive or psychological fideism is complex, it helps him defend his over-belief as personal answers to personal demands. James says, “the greeting of our whole nature to a kind of world conceived as well adapted to that nature” (James W. , 1988, p. 414).

He considers his psychological fideism as strong support for his views, similar to Millian pluralism (Axtell, 2017). According to Mill, "that mankind are not infallible; that their truths, for the most part, are only half-truths; that unity of opinion, unless resulting from the fullest and freest comparison of opposite opinions, is not desirable, and a diversity not an evil, but a good"

(O'Rourke, 2003, p. 108). Mill and James both hold this claim “as it is useful that while mankind are imperfect there should be different opinions, so is it that there should be different experiments of living” (Axtell, 2017, pp. 10-11). James position goes beyond Locke’s claim. According to Locke, “since unity of religious belief is an unrealistic expectation, we should extend tolerance and civility to those whose religious views differ from our own” (Axtell, 2017, p. 11).

James agrees with Thomas Jefferson in saying, “it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no god” (Axtell, 2017, p. 22). But James does not pay much attention to the distinction “between religious commitments as contributing to personal perfection and as potentially leading to oppressive use of state power” (Axtell, 2017, p. 21). So, Axtell criticizing James writes,

Granting the function of religion in many people’s paths towards personal perfection, we should also grant that the beliefs of my neighbors may indeed do me harm: this depends largely not on what the true believers believe, but on how they think of and treat outsiders, and on how, if they could have their way, they would have their own beliefs impact the public sphere. So when it comes to how James use his descriptive account of faith tendencies to support the right to believe, I find myself wishing that his approach was substantially more risk aware, more geared towards censure of religious orientations that motivate moral and epistemic injustices towards outsiders to the faith. James’ concern with motivating the strenuous mood might indeed be thought frightening in an age of growing Islamist ideology. When the risks involve moral harms and epistemic injustices to others, the actor may not be the best judge, after all (Axtell, 2017, p. 22).

Therefore, James’ risk-averse account might be dangerous. Sometimes risk can cause moral harm and might lead to injustice to a particular section of people. If we strengthen James’ criticism and cautious aspect of his ethics of belief, there may have good consequences of justice. According to Axtell, that should be our primary focus instead of stressing one’s private right to be the chooser of other’s risk.

Holding an opposite view of James's pluralistic view concerning religion, Rorty argues against theistic belief's desirability. Derek R. Nelson examines and compares William James' pragmatic view with Richard Rorty's pragmatic understanding. Theistic belief occupies a significant place in James' pragmatic philosophy. On the other hand, according to Rorty, pragmatic philosophy and theistic belief are not compatible at all. He writes, "theism is permissible for James because it is commensurate with his view of philosophy as *inquiry*. Theism is impermissible for Rorty because it is incommensurate with his view of philosophy as *conversation*" (Nelson, 2009, p. 495).

Let us discuss elaborately Rorty's pragmatic position concerning the private-public sphere. According to the notion of pragmatic rationality, religious belief can be rationally acceptable. The Rortyan pragmatic rationality or any other notion of pragmatic rationality is challenged by evidentialism. According to evidentialism, a belief can be regarded as rational when it is supported by proper evidence. A belief that lacks evidence or justification or some class of reason is irrational. So, according to this definition, religious beliefs are irrational. Pragmatic rationality has a reply to this challenge. According to Rorty, a religious belief is not irrational if it is just addressed in private projects and lacks propositional content (even if religious belief has no evidence as support). In other words, Rorty claims that only in abandoning the propositional content and conditions of truth, it is possible to excuse religious belief from evidence and justification (Novoa, 2017).

Rorty's reply to the challenge of evidentialism is that although religious belief may lack scientific evidence, yet religious belief is not irrational; it satisfies some conditions or demands (Novoa, 2017). So Rorty offers two solutions proposing some demands. Those solutions are- 1. Rorty demands that religious matters should not be put in Public Square (Rorty, 1994). He rejects

that in Public Square, the religious argument takes place. If it is done, it may cause violence. 2. Rorty, as a holist, holds that the content of a belief depends on a big inferential network, in which belief plays an inferential role (Novoa, 2017).

Rorty writes: “[t]he main reason religion needs to be privatized is that, in political discussion with those outside the relevant religious community, it is a conversation-stopper” (Rorty, 1994, p. 171). In effect, if a speaker appeals to religious belief in a debate with someone who would not accept this belief without proof, the conversation ends. Because the main aspect of the public square is the justification, Rorty rejects that, in the public square, the “religious argument” takes place (Novoa, 2017). A religious argument has premises accepted by religious people whose conviction is not put in doubt. Instead, an argument in the public square must be made with premises that can be put in the discussion even if these premises have been acquired in religious contexts. So Rorty says: “the arguments that take place there, political arguments, are best thought of as neither religious nor non-religious” (Rorty, 1994, p. 172). Then, a religious belief is not irrational only if it is practiced at home and never is put as an authority in a public discussion, even if it is not supported by evidence.

Rorty considers the notion of conversation complex. He differs from James on this point regarding conversation. According to James, inquiry sets the limits for answering the religious question regarding ‘conversation’ and whereas, building solidarity is Rorty’s idea of the justification of belief (Nelson, 2009, p. 501). Regarding Rorty’s stand in conversation, Nelson writes, “he hopes for a democratic community wherein Socratic conversations proliferate, and while uniform agreement may not necessarily ensue, no differences of opinion so intractable as to bar solidarity with one’s fellows could ever arise” (Nelson, 2009, pp. 500-501). This does not require any religion. By Socratic conversations, he means, “... the Socratic virtues – willingness

to talk, to listen to other people, to weigh the consequences of our actions upon other people – are *simply* moral virtues...We are not conversing because we have a goal, but because Socratic conversation is an activity which is its *own end*” (Nelson, 2009, p. 500).

According to Thayer, James's pragmatism can be adequately understood only in the light of the conflict between new knowledge and old values (with their associated traditional beliefs). Therefore, James' pragmatism sometimes seems more confusing and controversial. His theory of truth, “has the confusions it has largely as a result of its design as a religious apology for those who want their cake and to eat it too, who want both their science and their traditional, unmodified religion and morality” (Greenlee, 1969, p. 604). On the other hand, according to Rorty, religion is a conversation stopper when since the common ground is missing between theists and atheists. Hence our Social practices and arrangements should not be based on religion. Therefore, Rorty is not anti-religious but would say that it is not pragmatic. Rorty's attacks on theism are weak on most philosophical grounds, and are inconsistent on his own.

Rorty perceives that religious beliefs have no place in pragmatic philosophy (Rorty, 1995). Regarding the extent of the permissibility of religion, James and Rorty hold a different opinion,

James has said that theism is permissible, since when there is insufficient cognitive 'evidence' to draw on in forming a belief on which we must decide, we come to our decision based on non-cognitive factors. Rorty has said that theism may not be allowed in the public square for all sorts of reasons, none of which has anything to do with anything like 'the evidence' (Nelson, 2009, p. 503).

Both Rorty and James differ regarding the opinion about 'the evidence.' Rorty states, “it is never an objection to religious belief that there is no evidence for it. The only possible objection to it is that it intrudes an individual project into a social and cooperative project, and thereby offends against the teachings of [Mill's] *On Liberty*” (Rorty, 1998, p. 119). Rorty suggests,

James should not have made a distinction between issues to be decided by intellect and issues to be decided by emotion. If he had not, he might have wobbled less. What he should have done instead was to distinguish between issues that you must resolve cooperatively with others and issues that you are entitled to resolve on your own. The first set of issues are about conciliating your habits of action with other human beings. The second set are about getting your own habits of action to cohere with each other sufficiently so that you acquire a stable, coherent self-image (Rorty, 1998, p. 121).

Further, Rorty argues,

Pragmatism does allow us to make another distinction, one that takes over some of the work previously done by the old distinction between the cognitive and the non-cognitive. The new distinction is between projects of social cooperation and projects of individual self-development. Intersubjective agreement is required for the former projects, but not for the latter (Rorty, 1998, p. 119).

From the above two quotations, we can see that Rorty suggests a substitute to replace “a cognitive/non-cognitive distinction with a public/private one” (Nelson, 2009, p. 503). This satisfies both theists and atheists’ needs. But Derek clearly mentions that “theists, under Rorty’s solution, will be free to argue all they want to over dogmatic matters in their own sphere, but should leave those beliefs (or at least the articulation of those beliefs) behind them” (Nelson, 2009, p. 503). Simply, we cannot “keep a democratic political community going unless religious believers remain willing to trade privatization for a guarantee of religious liberty” (Rorty, 1999, p. 169). Finally, Derek says that, in his opinion, “James’ argument for theism in *The Will to Believe* and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* defends a position scarcely worth defending, and Rorty’s attacks on theism are indefensible on most philosophical grounds, and are inconsistent on his own” (Nelson, 2009, pp. 503-504). In James’s case, the unsatisfying thing is- James is ready to accept that both the theist and the atheist may hold their respective beliefs. Derek says, “that is well and good as long as our two differing positions do not grossly interfere with each other on some grave

matter. In my reading of James, however, there seems to be no possible recourse when conflict is real and pressing” (Nelson, 2009, p. 504). He further questions- “how could James resolve the dispute between, say, a Darwinian neo-pragmatist like Rorty, who supports abortion on purely secular grounds, and your average pro-lifer, who opposes it on purely religious grounds” (Nelson, 2009, p. 504)? According to Derek, the unsatisfying point in Rorty’s arguments is that he is committed to his “anti-foundationalism and anti-representationalism” that Rorty starts to look extremely relativistic (Nelson, 2009, p. 504). Among other things, Rorty's thought is epistemologically anti-representationalist. He talks about a version of philosophy according to which knowledge tries to acquire a set of habits of action to cope up with reality. He assumes that we will not be interested to practice epistemology or ontology in future. According to Rorty “Realism and anti-realism are non-philosophical non-problems” (Nelson, 2009, p. 499). With his anti- representationalism, his anti-foundationalism is linked. Rorty denies the foundationalist position of a justified belief which must be based on observation, rational intuition or introspection (Nelson, 2009, p. 499).

Therefore, Derek questions- “is religion really a conversation stopper” (Nelson, 2009, p. 504)? Similarly, different arguments have been put forward against Rorty’s point of public/private sphere, for instance, by Stout, Wolterstorff, and Weithman.

Stout criticizing Rorty for his public-private debate of religion, writes, “I, on the other hand, see religion, in its public as well as its private manifestations, as an ever-changing mixture of life-giving and malignant tendencies.” Rorty never considers anyone who holds religious convictions as irrational. For him, if we take religion into the public square, it causes the democratic discussion to break down. Even Stout offers a diplomatic view about religion though he at first regards religion as something with malignant tendencies. He writes,

I, on the other hand, see religion, in its public as well as its private manifestations, as an ever-changing mixture of life-giving and malignant tendencies. I welcome into public conversation any fellow citizens who share the desire for justice and freedom, be they religious or not. Because my proximate goal is to befriend all such people, the only forms of religious ideology I am interested in denouncing are the ones that wittingly or unwittingly block the path to justice and peace. I have no critique to offer of religion as such, and have trouble seeing why a pragmatist would want to make sweeping remarks either for or against such a thing. It seems to me that such remarks are no more useful than saying that sport, politics, or art is, on the whole, a good or bad thing. None of these things is about to go away, and all of them provide ample opportunities for the expression of good and bad motives and for the production of good and bad consequences (Stout, 2007, p. 3).

We can draw a connection between Rorty's pragmatic rationality and theism. Like other theists, Rorty believes that religious belief does not require any evidence or justification. Stout talks about theistic pragmatists. He points out, "what Dewey and Rorty have done is to show us what pragmatism about norms looks like when construed anthropocentrically" (Stout, 2007, p. 30).

According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, "there is something deeply arbitrary about saying that theists may not hold a belief for purely religious reasons, since those reasons are not held in common with all people, but a Darwinian neo-Pragmatist may hold a position completely antithetical to a theist's without being accused of thereby 'stopping' the conversation in its tracks" (Nelson, 2009, p. 504). Derek shows an example of democracy where "as long as a conversation about a topic can begin and endure for at least some interaction between interested parties, democracy's interests are served. In fact, one might even say that democracy is fundamentally based on a kind of conversation-stopper: a vote" (Nelson, 2009, p. 504)!

But Rorty, in a recent essay agrees,

Instead of saying that religion is a conversation-stopper, I should have simply said that citizens of a democracy should try to put off invoking conversation-stoppers as long as

possible. We should do our best to keep the conversation going without first citing unarguable first principles, either philosophical or religious. If we are sometimes driven to such citation, we should see ourselves as having failed, not as having triumphed (Wolterstorff, 2003, pp. 148-149).

There is another pragmatist argument that critically assesses Rorty's position. Though he is not a well-known thinker, I want to discuss his argument regarding pragmatic rationality. Novoa states that the defender of religious belief must either argue that religious belief needs support from certain reasons or try to show that the evidentialism is false (Novoa, 2017). There is a difference between evidence that supports science and evidence that supports religious beliefs. Evidence that supports science is public, and evidence that supports religious belief is private. Novoa points out that though with the evidence supporting religious beliefs, it is possible to show that evidentialism is false, yet he at the same time states that it is necessary to establish others' patterns of rationality to make religion acceptable in the public sphere (Novoa, 2017).

Novoa argues that Rorty's solution has some practical problems. According to him, Rorty's demand that religion should be a private affair that lacks conditions of satisfaction. Novoa states,

How can we demand to religious believer to have his beliefs (and his norms and habits of action) only inside his home? What type of actions could encourage a private belief in this sense? If beliefs are habits of action, it seems that it is pragmatically untenable to demand to a set of beliefs to be in isolation and in a private place. The point is that it is very difficult to conceive that religious belief does not have an influence on a person's public life. If religious beliefs are the glasses with which a believer sees the world, how can he take them off when he leaves home? Love for the neighbor of a Christian, for example, would be impracticable (Novoa, 2017).

Novoa brings Clifford's argument to strengthen his position. Clifford states,

No real belief, however trifling and fragmentary it may seem, is ever truly insignificant; it prepares us to receive more of its like, confirms those which resembled it before, and

weakens others; and so gradually it lays a stealthy train in our inmost thoughts, which may someday explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character forever. And no one man's belief is in any case a private matter which concerns himself alone (Clifford, James, & García, 2003, p. 292).

Novoa states that ideas like the reincarnation of the soul, the immortality of the soul, the state of Nirvana, God's existence, angels and demons, the life after death, etc. are the ontological assumption of religion. Novoa argues that what Rorty accepts is not acceptable for the majority of believers. He comes up with the point of human capabilities. According to Novoa, when a religious belief satisfies the list of human capabilities, no conversation stopper emerges because the moral framework is the ground on which all conversation is possible. So Novoa feels that religion need not be a conversation stopper as long as it does not compromise capabilities. This is what he calls pragmatic rationality.

5.3 Capability Approach: in the Light of Novoa, Martha Nussbaum, and Amartya Sen:

Novoa mentions Martha Nussbaum's ethics of virtues or capabilities, which is Inspired by Aristotle. Novoa writes,

Nussbaum proposes a moral framework that, on the one hand, does not appeal to metaphysical sources and, on the other hand, can avoid moral relativism. This ethical approach tries to achieve a transcultural scope without metaphysical compromises. The strategy of Nussbaum consists in identifying several human areas –that in some sense can define human beings- and, then, associating a capability or virtue to each area identified. These capabilities or virtues must be encouraged and no search of private projects can undermine the capabilities of anyone (Novoa, 2017).

Novoa further mentions about the list of human areas and virtues of Nussbaum. The list includes- morality, the human body, practical reason, the capacity of pain and pleasure, cognitive skills, affiliation with other human beings, relation with other species and nature, individuality,

and so on. And the capabilities related to these areas are- to live, to live with dignity, being able to avoid unnecessary pain to have health, being able to have several relationships with other people, being able to organize and to plan the own life, being able to hold some relation with nature, being able to live our own life, and so on (Nussbaum M. , 1992, p. 222).

Novoa does not have his own list of capabilities. Novoa shows a list which is formed by Nussbaum. But he at the same time opts out some areas from Martha Nussbaum's list, such as appeal to any non-human feature. He puts God, reason, and the world in the non-human authority. His exact words are-

...this moral framework must be consistent with certain pragmatist thesis. In particular, if this criterion of rationality wants be "pragmatic," then this framework shouldn't appeal to any non-human authority (v.g. God, the Reason, the World, and so on). Indeed, the only source of normativity and authority must be the human practices that encourage democracy. Otherwise, the criterion would be non-pragmatist (Novoa, 2017).

Novoa's argument is that,

A religious belief is pragmatically rational if and only if it is consistent with an ethics of capabilities, regardless if this belief is supported by epistemic evidence. A belief that undermines the capabilities of other people is an irrational belief. From this point of view, a fundamentalist that, looking for his individuality and his right to believe by faith, undermines the life or health of other people is an irrational man. Why is this person "irrational"? Because, looking for fostering some human area, this person is undermining the very human life. This is a practical contradiction (Novoa, 2017).

In his argument, he proposes this moral framework as the normative criterion of rationality. And the main base of it is that it does not appeal to any non-human feature. It is limited only to human features. So, my concern is how we understand God-human or human-nature relationship; how it takes shape is a matter of concern. First, Novoa states that the pragmatic rationality of a

religious belief is not based on any epistemic ground, but it is based on ethical ground. At the same time, he ignores the ethical claim for the equality of intrinsic value across human and non-human nature, contradicting his own argument.

Novoa's concluding argument is that,

Further, this criterion allows believing in religious matters without evidence, only if, when a person believes, no human capability is violated. When a religious belief satisfies the list of human capabilities, no conversation stopper emerges, because the moral framework is the ground on which all conversation is possible. In this way, Rorty's concern can be solved, and the religious belief can be public and cognitive (Novoa, 2017).

Thus, we can see that Novoa's pragmatic rationality is based on the capability approach. The comparison between James and Rorty's pragmatism shows us that both the stances are not satisfactory. So, my last investigation is to see whether the capability approach can be the way forward. The capability approach is the primary basis of Nussbaum's philosophy. Both Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have developed the capability approach in recent years. Nussbaum aims to develop a position that can be used as a social reform tool sensitive to cultural differences. Nussbaum's project is "based on a universalist account of central human functions, closely allied to a form of political liberalism [that she holds to be] a valuable basis from which to approach the problems of women in the developing world" (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). Nussbaum wants "to discover and justify a list of fundamental constitutional principles that can be the basis for an international human rights movement" and develop "a tool adequate to measuring human development across cultures" (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143).

As stated by Nussbaum, the capabilities approach "holds that there are certain functions that are of central importance in human life" (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). "This approach is

contrasted, on the one hand, with forms of subjective welfarism, which simply ask whether a person feels satisfied and, on the other hand, with forms of Platonism, which measure development by transcendent good, wholly independent of people's desires" (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). "Nussbaum's approach attempts to walk the middle ground with an approach that is based upon Aristotle's understanding of appropriate human functioning" (about which Novoa also has mentioned in his argument) (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). This view holds, "[w]e see the person as having activity, goals, and projects- as somehow awe-inspiringly above the mechanical workings of nature, and yet in need of support for the fulfillment of many central projects" (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). The capabilities approach examines if people can fulfill these significant projects. Nussbaum then generates a list of capabilities, based upon years of cross-cultural discussion, for being a fully realized human being (McCreynolds, 2002, p. 143). In the above-mentioned Novoa's argument, I have already talked about that list of the capability approach.

Apart from Nussbaum's list, different philosophers and economists have put forward different lists of human capabilities. For instance, Economist Amartya Sen has also talked about human capabilities. For Sen, "the idea of 'capability' (i.e., the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings — what a person is able to do or be) can be very helpful in understanding the opportunity aspect of freedom and human rights" (Sen A. , 2005, p. 153). He thinks that the idea of capability has captured the "opportunity aspect" or "opportunity freedom." In contrast, it has not captured —the "process aspect" or "process freedom"—which covers freedom to choose and non-intervention (Sen A. , 2005, p. 153). Sen claims that these aspects of freedom have the tendency to overlap (Sen A. , 2002, pp. 585-586). Sen interprets capability concerning "positive freedom" in his earlier works (Sen A. , 1984, pp. 310-316). But in his recent work, he hardly uses this division concerning positive and negative freedom. The critic of Sen's

work, Sugden, argues that Sen seems to have in thoughts the idea of “negative freedom” which integrates the “harm principle” (Sugden, 2006, pp. 46-48) That is freedom from intervention till it does not harm others. This is known as “process freedom” in Sen’s writings (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 28). The broad interpretation of the capability approach includes within its limit both opportunity and process freedom. On the other hand, “a justified criticism of a narrow interpretation of the capability approach is that it cannot adequately or completely capture a range of concerns—including those relating to a wide range of rights” (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 26). In other words, the critical point that the capability approach is not effective in allowing adequately negative or process freedom can be leveled at a narrow interpretation of the capability approach. In his later writings, Sen also argues that “this is a weakness of the capability approach in the context of human rights” (Sen A. , 2005, pp. 155-156). For critic Sugden, that point shows a drawback of the capability approach. Qizilbash writes,

The criticism shows the weakness of a narrow version of the capability approach even if it is thickened to include a democratic, public reasoning approach to evaluation. One must conclude that Sen’s work may be more defensible in the face of Sugden’s critique if interpreted in a broad way. There are certainly problems with the capability approach on a narrow interpretation, if it is supposed that everything that is important can be captured within the approach. But Sen clearly does not think that everything that is important can be. It is for this reason that he refers to his claims about capability and functioning as an ‘approach’, or ‘perspective’ rather than as a ‘theory’. It is for the same reason that Sen now regularly argues that the scope of the capability approach is restricted (Sen 2004, 2005, 2009) and that its claims should be suitably modest. The term ‘capability theory’ is more appropriately applied to some close relations or developments of Sen’s views, such as Martha Nussbaum’s variation on the approach (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 28).

Qizilbash argues further,

Within a narrow version of the capability approach a specific functioning (such as smoking or eating junk food or drug taking) would be evaluated in public reasoning. If the opportunity to smoke (or eat unhealthy food), is not, after such reasoning, promoted,

and it appears that public policy may restrict liberty, then again public reason would decide on the value of the opportunity to smoke (or eat unhealthy food) as against other opportunities. Essentially, the issue becomes one of addressing or making decisions when there are conflicts of freedoms (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 30).

From the above discussion, it can be stated that Sen talks about addressing public reasoning and a democratic approach.

Sen explicitly suggests that such public reasoning might address problems associated with the parochialism of local beliefs. By bringing in a range of voices, public reasoning might broaden the perspectives of those participating in it—including those whose views may have in some way been restricted or conditioned by their disadvantaged position (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 32).

We can improve the role and importance of “public reasoning” with the help of public discussion and debate. Hence, the effective decisions about the list could be helpful for social decision making. Sen states that there are some limitations of theoretical reasoning. It is not capable of providing various societies with a list of functionings for social decision making. Most importantly, in the case of public decision-making purposes, which would essentially be acceptable to people with different views (Sen A. , 2004, p. 78). And even if we suppose that “one settled on one list in some context, the list or weight given to different functionings might change over the years as any society’s priorities, or indeed the challenges it faces, might change” (Sen A. , 2005, pp. 159-160).

Sudgen’s critic of Sen’s work gets motivated by Sen’s idea of adaptation. In this context, “the exercise of public reasoning potentially addresses the problem of adaptation since it might ‘raise the consciousness’ of those who might have adapted” (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 32). Society does not always tell people what is good or bad for them. But protects liberty and identifies different

freedoms and liberties. But if those freedoms and liberties (for example, freedom from interfering in someone's private sphere) conflict, the society must interfere. "Whatever decision is taken some freedom must be sacrificed. Sen's point would be that the decision should be taken in a democratic way" (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 31). "If democratic deliberation or reasoning endorses an opportunity or freedom promoting restriction on liberty (and this is seen as paternalistic), then Sen's approach (thick view) would also presumably endorse that restriction" (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 32). Therefore, Qizilbash questions, "would a democratic society decide to promote (or equalise or protect) opportunities even if some people—who have adapted or are ill-informed—do not see them as valuable? The answer to this question is clearly 'yes'. If this is all Sugden wishes to claim he is quite right" (Qizilbash, 2011, p. 32).

There are some religious beliefs that society decides to promote, but at the same time, those beliefs are not favorable for a specific section—for example, Islam's marriage laws. According to Islam's religious beliefs, men can marry more than one time and have multiple spouses. There is a section called second or subsequent marriages mentioning the rules of marrying more than one woman (Marriage and Divorce (Muslim), n.d, p. 264). But the same law is not applicable in the case of women. This is going against women's rights and equality. Again, another religious belief is that- the practice of self-flagellation for religious purposes. It was common in ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, but it truly found its form during the 13th and 14th centuries (Abbott, 2016). "Holy Spirit Marriage-This is rampant in the Johane Marange church in Zimbabwe. A man points to a girl during church service and claims that in a dream God gave her a girl to be his wife" (Muzvare, 2018). Thus, some people give their daughters to men even before birth. Albino- "the murder of albino children for ritual purposes. This has happened a lot in Tanzania. It is believed albinos bring bad luck to communities" (Muzvare, 2018). In India, women are not allowed to enter

some temples. “In Hinduism, male gods are incomplete without their female consorts. But women are deemed unclean when they menstruate and, hence, kept out of kitchens and temples like Sabarimala” (Purie, 2018). The religious practices and beliefs mentioned above are not satisfying any capabilities of some sections of people, such capabilities associated with human areas are - to live with dignity or to avoid pain or to be able to live, organize, and plan their own life and have a healthy life.

In conclusion, I want to state that Sen or Martha Nussbaum's capability approach has critical points. Sugden tries to polish his critical account of the capability approach by examining Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach. He considers Martha's approach as complete development of Sen's views. But the problem is with the list of capabilities that are not clear in any approach. There is no constant list of capabilities. Even Martha, commenting on her list of capabilities (as her focus is on feministic issues), points out that “the list contains many items that women over the ages haven't wanted for themselves and some that even today many women don't pursue” (Nussbaum M. , 2000). Therefore, the capabilities list seeks to change “not just other people's preferences about women, but more controversially, against many preferences (or so it seems) of women about themselves and their lives” (Nussbaum M. , 2000). Even the list, which is Novoa following, is not a standard one. Human areas are not clearly defined in Novoa's list, and hence the criteria set forth by Novoa have to be revised. Novoa's criteria are too general. What he considers capabilities are not a standard one. Here I am just showcasing the problem with the list of capabilities. Novoa says religion can be put in public discourse unless it crosses the physical violence line. There are issues here as well. Does physical violence refer to violence inflicted on others or one's own self as well? And then the issue of verbal violence. For instance, if someone criticizes a particular religion or passes comments on a follower of another religion – will this not

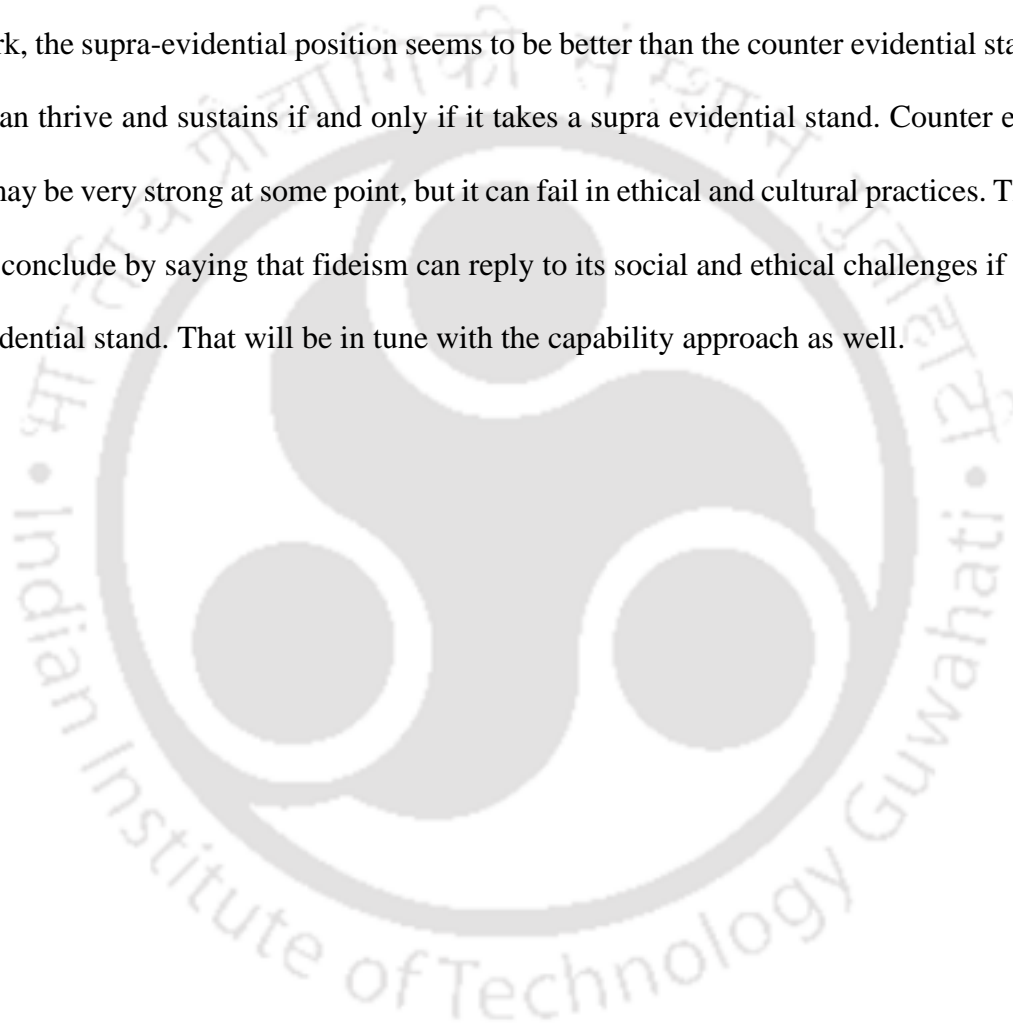
be considered as verbal violence as that believer might get offended. So Novoa should have taken into consideration the verbal violence aspect. Despite many critical points, I still opine that pragmatic rationality and the human capability approach can bring hope for religious beliefs in the public sphere if suitably revised. There are issues with capabilities and the list, but there are still some aspects of capabilities that one can accept without much contention.

5.4. Supra-Evidential and Counter-Evidential Fideism:

Fideism can really take care of rationalism and evidentialism on the philosophical and the argumentative side. But at the socio-cultural and ethical level, being a fideist is not so easy. It may tend to come up with irrational beliefs that may have larger implications in society. But there is a chance for the capability approach along with the pragmatism to pave the way for religion at the social level. But these approaches need revision. Does that mean fideism fails? My answer would be 'yes' and 'no.' When we understand fideism as counter evidential; then my answer will be 'yes'; that is, fideism may fail. But when we try to understand fideism as a supra evidential fideism, it will not fail. It will try to take care of the problems that fideism faces at the social level. I believe counter-evidential fideists like Wittgenstein and others may face tougher challenges to practice religion in the public sphere, but the supra-evidential fideists like Evans may be able to accommodate religion in the public sphere. Not only Evans but some schools of Indian philosophy also talk about supra evidential fideism (S. Radhakrishnan, 1940).

The cultural and ethical ramifications of holding onto two different versions of beliefs, counter and supra evidential fideism, will be different. When people fail to distinguish between faith and blind faith, it always makes room for superstition. This superstition is different from what Wittgenstein calls superstition. In the Indian scenario, if we hold onto the Wittgensteinian fideism

(though I argued against the new atheist earlier with the help of the Wittgensteinian argument), then there are high chances of leading towards blind faith and dogmatism. To prevent such types of results, the permissibility of reason is needed. Supra evidential fideism looks more convincing than counter evidential fideism. Fideism faces challenges. But that does not mean that fideism has to be shunned out, particularly concerning the socio-cultural issue. In the socio-cultural framework, the supra-evidential position seems to be better than the counter evidential stand. Still, fideism can thrive and sustains if and only if it takes a supra evidential stand. Counter evidential fideism may be very strong at some point, but it can fail in ethical and cultural practices. Therefore, I want to conclude by saying that fideism can reply to its social and ethical challenges if it takes a supra-evidential stand. That will be in tune with the capability approach as well.



Chapter- VI

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the thesis revisits the research objectives in light of what we have discussed in the last five chapters about some of the thesis's key objectives. The research objective of the thesis is- to critically assess the concept of fideism. The issue of faith has many layers. So, another aim of this thesis is to delineate the distinction between faith and blind faith. And, most notably, the consequences of holding onto such faith. Religion is not a personal affair. Many religions coexist in a multi-religious and multicultural set-up, each with its own ideologies, practices, and rituals. The thesis aims to see how fideism will perform in such a pluralistic social set-up.

This thesis's overall idea is to deal with faith and reason issues and critically discuss fideism's challenges. In the first chapter, this thesis raises the question of why there is always a tension between faith and reason; the thesis shows that the seed of having faith and reason in the religious context is sanctioned in the scriptures. This chapter shows how the major religions such as Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism talk about faith and reason in religion. It is clearly written in those religious scriptures that we cannot ignore the importance of reason in religion.

The second chapter delves into the philosophical challenges to fideism. I have discussed different positions of fideists from the angle of natural theology and medieval thinkers. St. Augustin, St. Aquinas, St. Anselm to Pascal, Wittgenstein, James, Kierkegaard, Bishop, and Evans

have argued differently for the importance of faith and reason. From these thinkers' arguments, though it is quite clear that faith matters in religious issues, reason has its own place in religion. The primary challenge to fideism is from- natural theology. Natural theology holds an utterly contrasting view than fideism. The whole point of difference between fideism and natural theology is regarding the use of reason and faith. Even early modern rationalist thinkers also did accept that theology is an application associated with validating God's existence without the help of scriptures and without backing on faith.

In the third chapter, I have studied the conflicts and arguments concerning faith in God and evidentialism. This thesis delves into the scientific challenges and discusses fideism from scientific claims. New atheists' comments on religion and the replies of the natural theologians are discussed in this chapter. The new atheists call religious faith and its believers dogmatic. But I have argued that not only were philosophers influenced by the early thinkers and their philosophical ideas, but scientists as well owe their debt to previous thinkers and philosophers. The new atheists stand on the shoulders of the previous thinkers, theologians, and philosophers. The new atheists are free to accept their conclusions or reject them. But they cannot claim there is no effort from religious people to employ reason in understanding religious doctrines. If they still defend that religion is rigid, irrational, and inflexible, can't we accuse the new atheists of these same accusations?

I have placed the revealed and natural theologians on one side and the opponents to them on the other side. Through this, I showed that challenges to fideism are not only from natural theologians but also from anti-religious and atheist people. Fideists, unlike natural theologians, take a different route while answering the criticisms leveled against religion by atheists and non-believers. Dealing with the question- Is it possible to justify religious beliefs without evidence? I argue against the teapot argument with the Wittgensteinian perspective and point out the new

atheists' dogmatic attitude toward understanding theism. Here, I show that counter evidential fideism stands a better chance to defend its position compared with natural theologians while defending their position against atheists and other non-believers or evidentialists. Fideism provides a new dimension to this argument in totally rejecting evidence.

While in the third chapter, I have addressed the tension between fideism and evidentialism from the Wittgensteinian perspective, yet that perspective has some restrictions. Wittgenstein's position is useful only in personal affairs. Wittgenstein's philosophy does not allow social interaction between the members in that form of life and those who are not. So, this chapter has tried to see to what extent we can accept or practice religion at the social level. Here I have discussed the socio-cultural and ethical implications of holding on to some religious practices. In other words, how religious practices impact human life's moral, social, and cultural aspects. How fideism deals with the other dimensions of religion has been discussed here, precisely the social and ethical dimensions of religious practices. Dealing with the question- to what level can we accept religion at the social level? I have discussed that fideism's challenges concerning doctrinal dimension may be less or unsolvable sometimes. I have focused on two topics. One is religion's problem at the social level, and the other one is the pragmatic way out for religion. However, the second topic has been discussed in the fifth chapter. Under the discussion of the first topic- I have discussed some socio-cultural problems arising out of socio-religious practice such as *Sati*, problems arising out of belief in godmen and miracle, and the problem arising out of belief in scriptures (for instance, terrorism). In other words, I have discussed a social issue, quasi-social issues, and a religious issue regarding the new atheists' criticisms against religious believers. Firstly, discussing Hitchens' argument against the *Sati* practice, I have shown how social evil is sometimes misunderstood as religious evil. There is a clear difference between religious evil and

social evil. Then recognizing Gandhi as a fideist, I have concluded that fideist also raises voice against certain ill religious practices without reason. Secondly- the quasi-social issues, namely, miracles and faith healing, which are mentioned in the scriptures. Faith-based healing without proper investigation, pseudo spiritualists with their wrong motives to deceive people, and accepting miracles without any proper evidence makes the fideistic position harder to accept in the public sphere. The fideists look inconsistent while accepting one similar concept and denying the other. Theologians like Augustine and Aquinas have talked about both miracles and magic. But most of them have differentiated magic from the miracle and tend to support the miracle than magic. Augustine speaks several times of “the crimes of magicians,” and he defends the Christian miracles. In his book: “The Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith,” fideist C. Stephen Evans has argued that miracles are not magical tricks. Discussing different thinkers’ positions on miracle and magic, I have tried to understand the theologians’ reason behind accepting miracles only. I have shown why fideists consider them different. I have argued that miracles and magic are not different and contend that it is difficult for fideists to support miracles and reject magic.

Then I have discussed and argued against Harris’ position of Islam and pointed out why and where he may be wrong by citing different arguments from different thinkers. Harris’ position also stands as a challenge to fideism. The new atheists come up with allegations against the religious practices and rituals that have moral implications. Harris and Hitchens level scathing attacks on the social and cultural practices that arise out of religion. They also talk about the moral and ethical implications of following those practices. For instance, their criticism leveled against Islam as terror-prone. Their comments about Hindu social practices like *Sati* and many other criticisms leveled against other religions like Christianity all demand serious reflections. I have paid attention to the social and ethical implications of these criticisms. Harris targets Islam. I have

argued against Harris' position in the light of misrecognition and multiculturalism. I have shown the ills of misrecognition that can happen to a group. Even the new atheist position creates this sort of misrecognition in the context of Islam. I have shown that many of their claims are factually not correct. Even their theoretical understanding and interpretation of religious texts are at best can be taken as partially right, and at worst, it may be treated as an ill-intentioned understanding with the sole purpose of creating panic and fear among the different cultured people closing the doors for understanding. Though understanding other cultures and religious and cultural practices is a challenging task, it is not impossible.

But these problems concern specific religions. So, the way out of these problems cannot be generalized. Therefore, I have brought the concept of pragmatism. In the tradition of pragmatism concerning religion, different philosophers have offered different arguments. James, Rorty, Betty, Wittgenstein are such philosophers. But in the fifth chapter, I have focused mainly on the public and the private affairs debate about religion concerning Jamesian and Rortyan versions of pragmatism. I have discussed James' pragmatic stand in the context of religion and its comparison with Rorty's notion of pragmatic rationality. Rorty holds a different view than James and points out some weak positions of Jamesian pragmatism. Derek compares both these positions. For Rorty, religion is a conversation stopper. It shouldn't be practiced in public. On the other hand, James talks about the permissibility of religion in public. Derek argues that both these accounts are disappointing.

Therefore, as a way out, I come up with the capability approach. I have discussed the arguments of Novoa concerning pragmatic rationality, followed by Amartya Sen's and Martha Nussbaum's capability approach and its list. Though Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have tried to develop the capability approach theoretically and practically, it could not escape some criticisms.

Despite many critical points, I still opine that pragmatic rationality and the human capability approach can bring hope for religious beliefs in the public sphere if suitably revised.

In conclusion, I point out that fideism can really take care of rationalism and evidentialism on the philosophical and theistic aspects, but still, at the socio-cultural and ethical level, being a fideist is not so easy. It may tend to come up with irrational beliefs that may have serious implications in society. When people fail to distinguish between faith and blind faith, it always makes room for superstition. In counter evidential fideism, then there are high chances of leading towards blind faith and dogmatism. To prevent such types of results, the permissibility of reason is needed. In that context, supra evidential fideism is more convincing than counter evidential fideism. But when we try to understand fideism as a supra evidential fideism, it stands better to cope with social and ethical problems. Though Athens does not have anything to do with Jerusalem, still Jerusalem can't be totally left out as it may give rise to dogmatism, superstition and lead us to compromise on our values like freedom and equality.

Bibliography

Books and Book Sections:

- Aquinas, T. (1975). *Summa Contra Gentiles, III, chapter 93-103*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Aquinas, T. (2007). The Harmony of Reason and Revelation. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & D. Basinger, *Philosophy of Religion* (pp. 92-96). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Augustine. (1992). Confession. In H. Chadwick, *Confession* (p. xxix). Oxford University Press.
- Axtell, G. (2017). James on Pragmatism and Religion. In J. Goodson, *William James, Moral Philosophy, and the Ethical Life: The Cries of the Wounded* (pp. 1-31). London: Lexington Books.
- Bishop, J. (2016). faith. In E. N. Zalta, *The {Stanford} Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Clifford, W. (1886). The Ethics of Belief. In L. Stephen, & F. Pollock, *Lectures and Essays*. London: Macmillan and co.
- Clifford, W. (2007). The Ethics of Belief. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & D. Basinger, *Philosophy Of Religion* (pp. 104-110). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Clifford, W., James, W., & García, L. V. (2003). *The Will to Believe: A Debate on the Ethics of Belief*. Madrid: Tecnos.

- Cruz, H. D., & Smedt, J. D. (2014). *A Natural History of Natural Theology: The cognitive science of theology and Philosophy of Religion*. USA: MIT Press.
- Dawkins. (1996). A Survival Machine. In J. Brockman, *In The Third Culture* (pp. 75-95). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dawkins. (1996). A Survival Machine. In J. Brockman, *In The Third Culture* (pp. 75-95). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dawkins, R. (2006). *The God Delusion*. UK: Bantam Press.
- Dennett, D. (2006). *Breaking the Spell: religion as a natural phenomenon*. New York: Penguin.
- Desai, M. (2009). *Islam and non violence*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Descartes. ([1628]1988). Rules for the Direction of our Native intelligence. In J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch, *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings* (pp. 1-4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Descartes, R. ([1637] 1901). The Meditations of Descartes (Letter to the very sage and illustrious the dean and doctors of the sacred faculty of theology of paris). In J. Veitch, *René Descartes, The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes*. M. Walter Dunne: M. Walter Dunne.
- Eliade, M. (2004). *Encyclopedia of Religion*. USA: Macmillan Library Reference.
- Evans, C. S. (1998). *Faith Beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account (Reason and Religion)*. Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

- Evans, C. S., & Manis, R. Z. (2010). *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*. USA: InterVarsity Press.
- Everitt, N. (2004). *The Non-Existence of God*. London: Routledge.
- Flew, A. (1992). The Presumption of Atheism. In R. Geivett, & B. Sweetman, *Contemporary Perspective on Religious Epistemology* (p. 25). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gandhi, M. (1976). Some knotty questions. In V. B. Kher, *Social Service, Work & Reform*. (Vol. 2). Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Haraldsson, E. (2013). *Modern Miracles: The Story of Sathya Sai Baba: A Modern Day Prophet*. White Crow Books.
- Harris, S. (2005). *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Harris, S., & Nawaz, M. (2015). *Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue*. USA: Harvard University Press. doi:10.4159/9780674737044-001
- Hasker, W. (1995). Evidentialism. In R. Audi, *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Herbermann, C. G., Pace, E. A., Pallen, C. B., Shahan, T. J., & Wynne, J. J. (2005). Miracle. In C. G. Herbermann, E. A. Pace, C. B. Pallen, T. J. Shahan, & J. J. Wynne, *Encyclopaedia of Sects and Religious Doctrines* (Vol. 3, pp. 1-960). New Delhi: Cosmo Publication.

Hitchens, C. (2007). *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve (Hachette Book Group USA).

Hudson, W. (1975). *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief*. USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jain, M. (2016). *Sati: Evangelicals, Baptist Missionaries, and the Changing Colonial Discourse*. Delhi: Aryan Books International.

James, W. (1902). Lecture II: Circumscription of the Topic. In W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. USA: Arc Manor LLC.

James, W. (1988). Manuscript Lectures. In F. H. Buckhardt, F. Bowers, & I. Skrupskelis, *The Works of William James*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

James, W. (2007). The will to believe. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & D. Basinger, *Philosophy Of Religion* (pp. 110-118). New York: Oxford University Press.

James, W. (1899). *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. New York: Henry Holt and Company 1.

Kenny, A. (2006). *What I Believe*. London & New York: Continuum .

Kierkegaard, S. (2007). Truth Is Subjectivity. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & B. David, *Philosophy of Religion* (pp. 118-122). New York: Oxford University Press.

Locke. (1854). *Locke's essays. An essay concerning human understanding. And A treatise on the conduct of the understanding. With the author's last additions*. Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell Publishers.

- Madden, E. H. (1979). Introduction. In W. James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (pp. 1-490). USA: Harvard University Press.
- Mahner, M. (2013). Philosophy of pseudoscience reconsidering the demarcation problem (Online-Ausg. ed.). . In M. Pigliucci, & M. Boudry, *Philosophy of pseudoscience reconsidering the demarcation problem (Online-Ausg. ed.)*. . Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Markham, I. S. (2010). *Against Atheism: Why Dawkins, Hitchens, and Harris are Fundamentally Wrong*. USA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McGrath, A. E. (2013). *Dawkins' GOD: Genes, Memes, and the Meaning of Life*. USA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Monk, R. (2012). *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. New York: Random House.
- Nancy Fraser, & Honneth., A. (2003). *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso.
- Nielsen, K. (1982). Wittgensteinian Fideism: I. London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-16959-7_4. In K. Nielsen, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. Modern Introductions to Philosophy*. (pp. 65-100). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nielsen, K. (1985). *Philosophy and Atheism: In Defense of atheism*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000). *Women and Human Development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Rourke, K. (2003). *John Stuart Mill and Freedom of Expression*. London: Routledge.

- Pals, D. L. (2006). *Eight Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pascal, B. (2007). The wager. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & B. David, *Philosophy of Religion* (pp. 101-103). New-York: Oxford University Press.
- Penelhum, T. (1989). *Faith*. New york: Macmillan.
- Peterson, M. (2003). *Reason and Religious Belief*. New york: Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, M., Hasker, W., Reichenbach, B., & Basinger, D. (2007). Exploring the philosophy of Religion. In M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach, & D. Basinger, *Philosophy Of Religion* (pp. 1-3). New york: Oxford University Press.
- Phillips, D. (1976). *Religion without Explanation*. UK: Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pinchin, C. (2005). *Issues in Philosophy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Quinn, P. , & Taliaferro, C. (2000). *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. New york: Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Rorty, R. (1998). Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism'. In M. Dickson, *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law and Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Russell, B. (1969). Religion. In B. Feinberg, & R. Kasrils, *Dear Bertrand Russell: A Selection of his Correspondence with the General Public 1950 – 1968* (pp. 1-171). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- S. Radhakrishnan. (1940). *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sadri, H. (2010). *From Atoms to Galaxies: A Conceptual Physics Approach to Scientific Awareness*. USA: CRC Press.
- Sen, A. (1984). *Resources, Values and Development*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sen, A. (2002). *Rationality and Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taliaferro, C. (2012). The project of natural theology . In W. L. Craig, & J. P. Moreland, *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (pp. 1-663). UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In C. Taylor, K. A. Appiah, J. Habermas, S. C. Rockefeller, M. Wlazer, & S. Wolf, *Multiculturalism* (pp. 25–74). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Toit, M. D. (2009). *Blind faith*. Lulu.com.
- Wadud, A. (2015). The Ethics of Tawhid over the Ethics of Qiwwamah'. In Z. Mir-Hosseini, M. Al-Sharmani, & J. Rumminger, *Men In Charge? Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition* (pp. 256-274). London: Oneworld Publications.
- Webb, W. J. (2002). *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. United Kingdom: Authentic Media.
- Wittgenstein. (1978). Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief. In C. Barret, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Oxford, England: Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein. (1980). Culture and Value. In P. W. G. H. von Wright (ed.), *Culture and Value* (pp. 1-94). UK: Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1967). Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief. In C. Barrett, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (pp. 1-72). California: University of California Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (2009). Lectures on Religious Belief. In L. Zagzebski, & T. D. Miller, *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary* (pp. 168-174). United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Young, I. M. (2011). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. doi:10.7312/blau17412-114

Zagzebski, L., & Miller, T. D. (2009). Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary. In L. Zagzebski, & T. D. Miller, *Readings in Philosophy of Religion: Ancient to Contemporary* (pp. 1- 652). United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Journal Articles:

Ateeq, M., Jehan, S., & Mehmood, R. (2014). Faith Healing; modern health care. *The Professional Medical Journal*, 295-301.

Baldwin, E. D. (2012). Religious Dogma without Religious Fundamentalism. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 85-90.

Betty, L. S. (2001). Going beyond James: A pragmatic argument for God's existence. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 49, 69-84.

- Bottone, A. (2001). The Fideism of the Wittgensteinians. *Metalogicon*, XIV(1), 9-24.
- Brich, B. D. (2012). Faith Seeking Understanding : Mormon Atheology and The Challenge of Fideism. *Mormonism at the Crossroads of Philosophy and Theology: Essay in Honor of David L. Paulsen*, 47-68.
- Buckareff, A. A. (2009). Permissible Faith Ventures. *Sophia*, 85-90.
- Carroll, T. D. (2008). The Tradition of Fideism. *Religious Studies*, 44(1), 1-22.
- Corlett, A. J. (2009). Dawkins' Godless Delusion. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 125-138.
- Dawkins, R. (1999). Snake Oil and Holy Water. *FORBES ASAP*, 1-3.
- Evans, C. S. (2008). Kierkegaard and the limits of Reason: Can there be a responsible fideism. *Soren Kierkegaard and philosophy today (apr-dec)*, 1021-1035.
- Feldman, R. (2009). Evidentialism, Higher-Order Evidence, and Disagreement. *Episteme*, 6(3), 294-312.
- Fraser, N. (2000). Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review* , 3, 107-120.
- Garvey, B. (2010). Absence of Evidence, Evidence of Absence, and the Atheist's Teapot. *Ars Disputandi*, 10, 9-22.
- Gębura, B. (2014). Two Criticisms of Natural Theology. *Philosophical Issues in Science*(54), 127-154.

- Gilman, J. E. (2016, December 16). The metaphysics of belief: a Wittgenstein and Collingwood convergence. *Religious Studies*, 53(4), 497-520. doi:10.1017/S0034412516000354
- Greenlee, D. (1969). Review: On Pragmatism. *Journal of the History of Ideas* , 603-608.
- Haokip, K. (2007). Increasing Knowledge about Divine Healing Within the Leadership of an Immigrant Asian Baptist Church. *ProQuest*.
- Harris, S. (2006). The Myth of Secular Moral Chaos. *Free Inquiry*, 26(3).
- Kazmi, Y. (1999). Faith and Knowledge in Islam: An Essay in Philosophy of Religion. *Islamic Studies*, 38 (4), 503-534.
- Harrison, P. (2006). Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 75(3), 493-510.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640700098607>
- Lang, J. (2007). Letter to a Christian Nation- By Sam Harris. *Reviews in Religion & Theology*, 14(2), 214-218. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9418.2007.00336_9.x
- Lesser, A. (1931). Superstition. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 28(23), 617-628.
- Makolkin, D. (2005). Going beyond Faith: Kierkegaard's Leap into Ultimate Reality. *Ultimate Reality and Meaning*, 28(1), 21-29.
- Markus, R. (1994). Augustine on Magic :A Neglected Semiotic Theory. *Revue des Études Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, 40(2), 375-388.

- Martineau, W. (2012). Misrecognition and Cross-Cultural Understanding: Shaping the Space for a 'Fusion of Horizons'. *Ethnicities*, 12(2), 161–177.
- McGrath, A. (2005). Has Science Eliminated God? Richard Dawkins and the meaning of life. *Science & Christian Belief*, 17(2), 115-135.
- McReynolds, P. (2002). Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach: A Pragmatist Critique. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 16(2), 142-150.
- Nelson, D. R. (2009). Inquiry, Conversation And Theistic Belief: William James And Richard Rorty Get Religion. *The Heythrop Journal*, 50(3), 495-507.
- Nielsen, K. (1977). Review of the Presumption of Atheism by Antony Flew. *Religious Studies Review*, 3(3), 137-161. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-0922.1977.tb00129.x>
- Nussbaum, M. (1992). Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism. *Political Theory*, 20(2), 202-246.
- Pappas, G. F. (1992). William James and the Logic of Faith. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 28(4), 781-808.
- Pihlström, S. (2002). Pragmatic and Transcendental Arguments for Theism: a Critical Examination. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 51, 195–213.
- Prabhu, V. (2003). Understanding Religious Beliefs: Wittgenstein's Perspective. *Pondicherry University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(1), 135-150.
- Qizilbash, M. (2011). Sugden's critique of Sen's capability approach and the dangers of libertarian paternalism. *International Review of Economics*, 58(1), 21–42.

- Rorty, R. (1994). Religion as Conversation-Stopper. *Common Knowledge*, 3(1), 1-6.
- Rorty, R. (1995). Is Truth a Goal of Enquiry? Davidson Vs. Wright. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 45(180), 281–300.
- Rorty, R. (1999). Religion as a Conversation Stopper. *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 168-174.
- Sen, A. (2004). 'Dialogue. Capabilities, Lists and Public Reason: Continuing the Conversation. *Feminist Economics*, 10(3), 77–80.
- Sen, A. (2005). Human Rights and Capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 151–166.
- Slater, M. R. (2011). William James's Pluralism. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 65(1), 63-90.
- Subbotsky, E. (2014). The Belief in Magic in the Age of Science. *Sage Open*, 4(1), 1-17.
doi:10.1177/2158244014521433
- Sugden. (2006). What We Desire, What We Have Reason to Desire, Whatever We Desire: Mill and Sen on the Value of Opportunity. *Utilitas*, 18(1), 33–51.
- Świeżyński, A. (2012). The Concept of Miracle as an "Extraordinary Event". *Roczniki Filozoficzne Annales De Philosophie*, 60(2), 89-108.
- Thomassen, L. (2011). (Not) Just a Piece of Cloth: "Begum", Recognition and the Politics of Representation. *Political Theory*, 39(3), 325-351.
- Thorndike, L. (1908). The Attitude of Origen and Augustine Toward Magic. *The Monist*, 18(1), 46-66. doi:10.5840/monist190818132

Thorndike, L. (1915). Some Medieval Conceptions of Magic. *The Monist*, 25(1), 107-139.
doi:10.5840/monist191525138

Tollefsen, C. (2008). Believing by Faith: an Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief - John Bishop. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 58(233), 758–762.

Vermeersch, E. (1992). Het paranormale ter discussie (English title: "The paranormal questioned"). *Studiumgenerale*, nr 9107, 81-93.

Village, A. (2005). Dimensions of belief about miraculous healing. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 8 (2), 97–107.

Winch, P. (1964). Understanding a Primitive Society. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1(4), 307-324.

Wolterstorff, N. (2003). An Engagement with Rorty. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 129-139.

Journal in Periodical:

Olson. (2010, May 1). Augustine's Confessions and the Harmony of Faith and Reason. *Catholic Answers Magazines*, 21(3). Retrieved January 2, 2017, from <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/augustines-confessions-and-the-harmony-of-faith-and-reason>

Reports:

❖ Dissertations

Butcher, M. P. (2013). *Fideism, Evidentialism, and the Epistemology of Religious Belief*. Loyola University Chicago, Program in Philosophy. Chicago: Loyola University Chicago .

Retrieved December 11, 2018, from Loyola ecommons:

http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/508

Hashas, M. (2013). *On the Idea of European Islam: Voices of Perpetual Modernity*. LUISS University. Rome: LUISS University. Retrieved from <https://eprints.luiss.it/1237/1/20130603-hashas.pdf>

Jennek, R. (2017). *Sam Harris on Religion in Peace and Conflict*. UPPSALA UNIVERSITET, Department of Theology. UPPSALA UNIVERSITET. Retrieved August 15, 2018, from <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1110381/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Silver, C. F. (2013). *Atheism, Agnosticism, and Nonbelief: A Qualitative and Quantitative*. The University of Tennessee. Chattanooga, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Retrieved from <https://scholar.utc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1536&context=theses>

❖ Project

Hackett, C., Connor, P., Stonawski, M., & Skirbekk, V. (2015). *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*. Pew Research Center.

❖ Newspaper Articles

Ali, Z. (2019). *Syria: Who's in Control of Idlib?* BBC News. Retrieved August 3, 2019, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-45401474>

Kumar, K. S. (2017, September 11). *Ram Rahim, Asaram, Radhe Maa on list of 14 'fake godmen' released by Hindu seers' group*. New Delhi: Hindustan Times. Retrieved July 6,

2020, from HindustanTimes: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/hindu-seers-group-releases-names-of-14-fake-godmen-ram-rahim-asaram-in-list/story-3VTyvYjRaXG3XUf5PdYLyH.html>

Mikelberg, A. (2011, November 27). *Six HIV patients die after church tells them to stop taking meds because they were healed by God: report*. New York: New York Daily News.

Retrieved November 23, 2020, from New York Daily News:

<https://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/hiv-patients-die-church-tells-stop-meds-healed-god-report-article-1.983069>

Wilford, G. (2017). *Radio Station Cancels Richard Dawkins Appearance Over Islam Tweets*.

USA: Independent. Retrieved November 3, 2020, from

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/richard-dawkins-islam-muslims-islamophobic-row-twitter-tweets-atheist-kpfa-us-university-of-california-berkeley-free-speech-ann-coulter-milo-yiannopoulos-a7854751.html>

Other E Sources:

Abbott, G. (2016, December 6). *Flagellation*. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from Encyclopædia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/flagellation>

Afsaruddin, A. (2016, March). *Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History*. Retrieved January 21, 2019, from Oxford Research Encyclopedias:

<http://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-46>

Amesbury, R. (2017, Fall). *Fideism*. Retrieved Oct 1, 2019, from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fideism/>

Atran, S. (2013, June 16). *Here He Goes Again: Sam Harris's Falsehoods (This View of Life)*. Retrieved July 21, 2018, from umaincertaantropologia: <https://umaincertaantropologia.org/2013/06/16/scott-atran-the-best-predictor-in-the-sense-of-a-regression-analysis-of-willingness-to-commit-an-act-of-jihadi-violence-is-if-one-belongs-to-an-action-oriented-social-network-such-as-a-neighbor/>

AustralianNeoCon1. (2012, Dec 5). *Islam as a Parasitic Mind Virus - Daniel Dennett on Religious Memes*. Retrieved November 3, 2020, from You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxoWlOu8Ba0>

Barnes, C. (2020). *The Attacks on New Atheists*. Retrieved November 4, 2020, from Atheist Republic's Blogs: <https://www.atheistrepublic.com/blog/c-barnes/attacks-new-atheists>

Benedict-XVI. (2006). Letter to the Participants of the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. vatican.va. Retrieved April 9, 2019, from http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20060424_cause-santi.html

Brent, J. (n.d). *Natural Theology*. Retrieved Dec 1, 2018, from Internet encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/theo-nat/>

Craig, W. L. (2007, May 28). *Definition of Atheism*. Retrieved December 10, 2018, from Reasonable faith: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/definition-of-atheism>

- Craig, W. L. (2008, September 08). Rationalism and Evidentialism. (K. Harris, Interviewer)
Retrieved December 10, 2020, from <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/media/reasonable-faith-podcast/rationalism-and-evidentialism/>
- Definition of faith in English.* (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2020, from Oxford Living Dictionaries: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/faith>
- Elst, K. (2013, March 13). *Sati and Hinduism*. Retrieved December 16, 2020, from Hindu Human Rights: <https://www.hinduhumanrights.info/sati-and-hinduism/>
- Fideism.* (2017, april 7). Retrieved December 7, 2017, from New world Encyclopedia: <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Fideism>
- Gandhi, M. (2017, August 13). *Blind Beliefs*. New Delhi: The Statesman. Retrieved December 8, 2020, from The Statesman: <https://www.thestatesman.com/features/blind-beliefs-1502436706.html>
- Good News.* (2011, March 23). Retrieved October 15, 2020, from United Church of God: <https://www.ucg.org/the-good-news/whats-the-difference-between-various-bible-versions>
- Greenwald, G. (2013, April 3). *Sam Harris, the New Atheists, and anti-Muslim animus*. Retrieved December 16, 2020, from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/03/sam-harris-muslim-animus>
- Hackett, C., & McClendon, D. (2017, April 5). *Christians Remain World's Largest Religious Group, But They are Declining in Europe*. Retrieved December 17, 2020, from Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>

- Harris, S. (2006, March 19). *Killing the Buddha*. Retrieved December 31, 2020, from Samharris.org: <https://samharris.org/killing-the-buddha/>
- Harris, S. (2011, may 25). *Bombing our illusions*. Retrieved November 23, 2020, from Huffpost: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/bombing-our-illusions_b_8615
- Hoffman, B. (2018, March 6). *Al-Qaeda's Resurrection*. Retrieved August 27, 2019, from Council on Foreign Relation: <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/al-qaedas-resurrection>
- Holst, K. (2011, March 14). *Halal or Haram? A new council gives advice to Muslims in Sweden*. Retrieved December 21, 2019, from The Local Se: <https://www.thelocal.se/20110314/32578>
- Hrozeincik. (2013, April). *The History & Philosophy of Fideism*. Retrieved january 2, 2017, from Fideism Evidence for Christianity: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwie2aisu6LRAhXFq48KHS1yBqEQFggZMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fvidenceforchristianity.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2013%2F05%2FARS-COURSE-1-PAPER.docx&usg=AFQjCNGP9IKL5xOjnKq>
- Jackson, W. (2019). *Bertrand Russell's "Teapot" Argument*. Retrieved October 4, 2019, from ChristianCourier.com: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1317-bertrand-russells-teapot-argument>
- Jerryson, M. (2017, April 26). *Monks With Guns*. Retrieved June 20, 2018, from aeon.co/essays: <https://aeon.co/essays/buddhism-can-be-as-violent-as-any-other-religion>

- Johnson, E. (2019, May 8). *Sam Harris talks Islam, politics, Twitter, and Trump with Kara Swisher*. Retrieved August 25, 2019, from Viox.com:
<https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/5/8/18536100/sam-harris-making-sense-recode-decode-kara-swisher-podcast-interview-islam-sri-lanka-new-zealand>
- Kaushik, A. (2018, July 5). *Gandhi on Gender Violence and Gender Equality : An Overview*. Retrieved October 25, 2018, from <http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org>:
http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org/articles/gender_equality.htm
- Knight, C. (n.d). *Dawkins' Delusions: faith and evidence*. Retrieved Oct 3, 2019, from Bethinking: <https://www.bethinking.org/atheism/dawkins-delusions-faith-and-evidence>
- Laub, Z., & Masters, J. (2015, March 27). *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*. Retrieved December 16, 2020, from Council on Foreign Relations:
<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb>
- Levine, M. (2005, September 16). *Miracle*. Retrieved November 21, 2018, from Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy:
<https://stanford.library.sydney.edu.au/archives/spr2008/entries/miracles>
- Marriage and Divorce (Muslim)*. (n.d). Retrieved December 3, 2019, from commonlii.org:
http://www.commonlii.org/lk/legis/consol_act/mad134294.pdf
- McCormick, M. (2008, August 27). *Common Criticisms of Atheism (and Why They're Mistaken)*. Retrieved Nov 10, 2018, from Atheism: Proving the Negative.:
<http://atheismblog.blogspot.com/>

Meaning of faith in English. (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2020, from Cambridge Dictionary.:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/faith>

Meister, C. (n.d). *Philosophy of Religion.* Retrieved January 4, 2021, from Internet Encyclopedia

of Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu/author/dowden/page/5/>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d). *Organized religion.* Retrieved December 16, 2020, from Merriam-

Webster.com dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/organized%20religion>

Middleton, J. F., Jolly, K. L., & Gilbert, R. A. (2016, December 22). *Magic.* Retrieved July 3,

2019, from Encyclopædia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/magic-supernatural-phenomenon>

Mittag, D. M. (n.d). *Evidentialism.* Retrieved October 20, 2020, from Internet Encyclopedia of

Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu/evidenti/>

Mondal, P. (2018, July 5). *Mahatma Gandhi Views on Caste System.* Retrieved November 10,

2018, from www.yourarticlelibrary.com:

<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/caste/mahatma-gandhi-views-on-caste-system/38494>

Muzvare. (2018, April 2). *30+ harmful cultural practices, beliefs and attitudes-holistic training,*

awareness and advocacy. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from Girls empowerment

initiative UK: <https://www.girlsempowermentinitiative.co.uk/post-title>

Novoa. (2017, December). *Rorty's Demands on Religious Belief: Looking for a Pragmatic*

Rationality. Retrieved October 20, 2019, from Researchgate:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321729830_Rorty's_Demands_on_Religious_Belief_Looking_for_a_Pragmatic_Rationality

Purie, A. (2018, October 4). Why religions in India discriminate against women. Retrieved December 30, 2020, from Daily O: <https://www.dailyo.in/politics/sabrimala-triple-talaq-why-religions-in-india-discriminate-against-women/story/1/27052.html>

Revelations, I. (2020). *The Six Dimensions of Religion*. Retrieved November 12, 2020, from ISEE Revelations Publications: <https://sites.google.com/site/iseerevelations/the-six-dimensions-of-religion>

Stout, J. (2007). *Rorty on Religion and Politics* . Retrieved February 4, 2020, from brown.edu: </Research/ppw/files/Rorty%20on%20Religion%20and%20Politics.pdf>

Study of Major Religions. (n.d). Retrieved December 11, 2020, from RTS Ministries: <http://rockysanders.com/study-of-major-religions.html?cv=1>

Taylor, J. E. (n.d). *The New Atheists*. Retrieved January 27, 2020, from Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/n-athxxx/>

Vermeersch, E., & Betz, W. (2006, March 12). Lourdes needs a miracle. (H. Nieuwsblad, Interviewer)

Walker, J. (2007). *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything by Christopher Hitchens* (Book review). Retrieved December 3, 2019, from nobeliefs: <https://www.nobeliefs.com/Hitchens.htm>

Wartono, A. H. (2012, March 6). *Religion As a Cultural System (Clifford Geertz)*. Retrieved Jan 4, 2019, from <http://aryo-heri.blogspot.com>: <http://aryo-heri.blogspot.com/2012/03/agama-sebagai-sistem-budaya-clifford.html>

What is Fideism. (n.d). Retrieved January 2, 2017, from Got Questions Ministries: <https://gotquestions.org/fideism.html>

(n.d.). Retrieved December 3, 2020, from Dictionary.com: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/faith>

