Rationality, Reasonableness and Religion

In this paper I seek to advance a definition of religion, primarily in order to defend a new account of what it might mean to justify the rationality or reasonableness of living a religious life. Standardly, the rationality of religiosity is evaluated in terms of the religious creed in question. Is it rational to believe in the content of the *creed*? I shall argue that framing the question this way sets the bar too high, *and* too low: too high, because rational and reasonable faith doesn't require *belief* or the same degree of *evidence* as belief; too low, because a religious life requires *more* than just evidence for the truth of a creed.

§1. A three part definition

The existence of atheistic religions rules out a definition of religion in terms of theology. Some have defined religion in terms of morality and duty (Kant, 1999, p. 153). Others have tried to define it in terms of the experience of the holy (Otto, 2010). Emile Durkheim defined it as a 'unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things… which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them' (Durkheim, 2008, p. 47). Durkheim therefore added the notions of *community* and *practice* to Kant's morality, and to Otto's sanctity. John Dewey (2013, p. 25) and Paul Tillich (1963, p. 4) focus, instead, upon the affective qualities of religiosity, and its role in organizing one's activities and concerns. I propose a definition of religion that pulls many of these threads together. My definition involves three necessary and jointly-sufficient criteria for the living of a religious life.

Before moving on to the three criteria, I want to issue a disclaimer: I'm interested, not in what a *theologian*, or a religious *practitioner*, might recognise as religion, but in what a *sociologist* would. I adopt this focus because religion is a *social* phenomenon. A theologian can speak to the content of the theological commitments of a religion. A religious practitioner might best assess who is a member and who is outside of *their* particular religion. But when talking more generally about religion in the abstract, we are talking about a global *sociological* phenomenon.

Though I deny that 'religion' is a family-resemblance term since I'm in the business of providing a *definition*, I do however recognise that religiosity can come in degrees. It's not always a black and white issue as to whether a person is religious or not. Accordingly, the criteria I lay out are only intended to define a '*norm-kind*' for religiosity. Religious life-styles are only religious to the extent and degree that they *approximate* the norm-kind.[1] I turn now to the three criteria.

§1.1 - Community

1. A religious life is a life lived as a part of a community; a *religious* community.

When a religion formulates a binding catechism, it often has more to do with *belonging* than it has to do with *belief*. Witness the classical Rabbinic text that approximates a catechism; the Mishna in tractate *Sanhedrin* 10:1:

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[1] Thanks to Terence Cuneo for this suggestion.

> These [Jews] have no share in the World to Come: One who says that the resurrection of the dead is not from the Torah, or that the Torah is not from Heaven, and an *Apikoros…*

The text isn't explicitly concerned with what people *think* but only with what they *say* and *do*. Denial of the doctrine of resurrection, and denial of the divinity of the Oral Torah, were the rallying cries of the Sadducees – a sectarian rival to Rabbinic Judaism. The *Apikoros* is understood, by the Talmudic gloss on this Mishna, to be a person who disrespects the Rabbis. It might not matter what you *think*, but don't *say* that the Oral Torah isn't from heaven. If you go about *saying* that, you'll be adding to sectarian strife – you'll be lending support to the Sadducees, or undermining the Rabbis. On these grounds, Menachem Kellner (2006) concludes that this Mishna is more about sectarianism than catechism. Judaism isn't alone in this regard. Christian conciliar statements spend a great deal of time *anathematising* certain views – a practice that isn't merely about labelling a view as *false*; it's about shutting certain sorts of believers out of the community; saying to them that they don't belong (unless they change their views).

The evangelical Protestant, who claims to abhor established religion, will nevertheless see herself as part of a community of fellow travellers; fellow followers or disciples of Jesus, etc. Even the founder of a new religion, who has no community to belong to, hopes to be the first link in a community that will extend on in time. Similarly, the last surviving member of a religious community still views herself as loyal to her communal forbears, even if she has no contemporaries in her community.

My first criterion follows directly from my contention that religion is, at root, a sociological phenomenon. To subscribe to a set of theological doctrines, but not to see yourself as a part of any community at all – not to see your fate as somehow bound up with the fate of your co-religionists – simply falls short of living what most of us would call a distinctively *religious* life; since belonging to *a religion* means to belong to *a community*. A person with no sense of communal belonging can have a theology and a set of rituals, but not a religion in any *sociological* sense of the word.

§1.2 – Fundamentals of the Faith
It follows from my first criterion that belief in a religious creed isn't *sufficient* for a religious life. Daniel Howard-Snyder argues that it also isn't *necessary* (Howard-Snyder, 2013). A religious person is a person of *faith*, but faith – it turns out – isn't a species of *belief*. According to Howard-Snyder, faith that p (i.e., propositional faith) has four ingredients:

(i)   A positive evaluation of p
(ii)   A positive conative orientation towards p
(iii)   A positive cognitive attitude towards p
(iv)   Resilience to counter-evidence for p

There's something somehow inappropriate in saying that you have faith that p, when you realise that p isn't the sort of thing that you should want to be true. This leads to Howard Snyder's first ingredient. To afford p a positive evaluation is to think that p is the sort of thing that people should want to be true.

I wrote another paper on the nature of faith (Lebens, Forthcoming). An anonymous reviewer of that paper raised a worthy objection. 'Why can't I have 'faith',' the reviewer asked, 'that my son's basketball team will win their game – even though I don't at all expect the opposing teams' parents to want it to be true?' I could envisage two lines of response: (1) it might be possible to have faith in such situations, but somehow blameworthy. Just as it's possible but blameworthy to have beliefs without sufficient evidence, it might be possible but blameworthy to have faith that *p* without affording *p* a positive evaluation. You can certainly have blameless faith that your son will do his *best*, but to have faith that he'll *win* is to have faith that equally worthy others will *lose*, and thus perhaps faith is the *wrong* attitude to have here; (2) some sports fans argue that it *would* be objectively good for their team to win out over others. When Leicester City won the Premier League, it was said to be a good thing for English football, in that it demonstrated what could be achieved by smaller clubs with fewer resources. The first option is more concessive. It accepts, against Howard-Snyder, that a positive evaluation is not *constitutive* of faith, but constitutive only of *appropriate* faith. The second response is more strident. A person only *really* has faith that *p* when, rightly or wrong, they afford it a positive evaluation.

In his second ingredient of faith, Howard-Snyder gesticulates towards the difference between wanting something intrinsically and wanting something instrumentally.[2] The mother in the midst of an agonising cancer treatment may no longer care, in and of herself, whether she lives or dies, but she must at least have some *relevant* desire, perhaps the desire to be there for her children as they grow up, if we're to make sense of the claim that she has *faith* that she'll survive (Howard-Snyder, 2013). And thus, to have a positive conative orientation towards *p* is either to want *p* to be true, intrinsically, or, as in the case of the suffering mother, to want its truth indirectly, or *instrumentally*. To have faith that *p* doesn't merely require the thought that people should want *p* to be true. It also requires the person of faith to want it to be true *themselves*.

Here is a putative counter-example to this second ingredient of faith. Let *p* be the proposition that you will never again take heroin. You might want *p* to be *false*, since, as a recovering drug addict, you might want against your better judgement to continue taking drugs. You might nevertheless have faith that *p* (despite wanting it to be false). But, in fact, this case *needn't* be a counter-example to Howard-Snyder's account as long as your higher-order desire not to want to take heroin remains stronger than your lower-order desire to take it. A positive conative orientation will have to be an *overall* desire for the truth of a proposition – intrinsically or instrumentally – *all things considered*.

When Howard-Snyder talks about a 'positive cognitive attitude' towards a proposition, he's talking about a certain degree of confidence in its truth. Perhaps the requisite degree is calibrated differently in different situations depending upon the alternative candidate propositions on offer. For example, Howard-Snyder thinks that you have a positive cognitive attitude toward *p* even if you only think that *p* is the least unlikely of the relevant options. And thus, however exactly we're to define this attitude, it's certain that it can fall far short of belief. This seems right because faith must be compatible with doubt, as is well captured by Daniel McKaughan (2013, pp. 106-7):

> Faith is clearly not incompatible with a persistent sense of uncertainty, dark nights of the soul, or a pervasive sense of the hiddenness of God... If deep, sincere, and wholehearted faith coexists with doubt in the lived experience of many religiously

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[2] He doesn't use this distinction explicitly, but it certainly seems to be what he's gunning for. I'm grateful to Simon Hewitt for pointing this out to me.

> committed persons and can do so in a relatively stable way despite fluctuating levels of confidence, surely this fact is one that any adequate account of faith ought to be able to accommodate. Belief-plus models [which insist that faith always requires belief] define faith in such a way as to preclude significant doubt, yet faith appears to be compatible with doubt in a way or to an extent that belief is not.

You could start out *believing* that something is true, until some counter-evidence comes along, robbing you of your previous *certainty*, leading you to think that it is merely *probable*. Further counter-evidence might make you reassess, until it starts to seem merely *plausible*, or *possible*. Finally, of course, the evidence could be enough to make you lose your faith altogether, as you come to believe the negation of *p*. But faith is resilient because it's consistent with so many different levels of confidence in a proposition, before actual *disbelief* kicks in.[3]

Every religion has a number of propositions that a person must have faith in, even if their cognitive attitude falls somewhere short of belief. Some religions have book length catechisms, and some have just a handful of fundamental principles. Sometimes the set of fundamental propositions is only vaguely determined or the principles under-defined; sometimes they will be precise and will come along with an official interpretation. To the extent that religiosity allows for doubt, the key is not necessarily to *believe* the propositions that constitute the fundamental principles of your faith; rather, you need to have *faith* that they are true. Bear in mind that sometimes, in conversation, people use the word 'belief', colloquially, especially in religious contexts, to pick out what Howard-

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[3] In correspondence, Simon Hewitt raises two more putative counter-examples to Howard-Snyder's account of faith: (a) Simon Hewitt's belief that Fermat's last theorem is true; (b) the devil's belief that God exists. In neither case would we want to say that there's faith, but Howard-Snyder's definition, according to Hewitt's objection, can exclude neither of them.

The devil wants it to be true that God exists since, if God *didn't* exist, neither would the devil! Accordingly, the devil has a positive conative attitude towards the proposition, via an instrumental desire, and thus can be said, counter-intuitively (and contra the New Testament) to have faith (cf. James 2:19).

To respond: I think it's possible for people to have pro-attitudes towards necessarily false propositions. And thus, even though it's necessarily false that the devil could exist without God, the devil may still *wish*, per impossible, that he *could* exist without God, and therefore, he might have an overall positive desire for God's non-existence. Accordingly: he believes that God exists, but he doesn't have *faith*.

Regarding the first counter-example, Hewitt thinks that true mathematical propositions are the sort of propositions that people should believe. He therefore has a positive evaluation of Fermat's last theorem. His belief in the theorem is also very resilient in the face of counter-evidence, since the theorem has been firmly established by the mathematical community. But a positive evaluation of the theorem, in combination with resilience to counter-evidence, isn't sufficient to generate faith. You also have to have a positive conative attitude towards the proposition in question. If it turns out that Andrew Wiles's proof of the theorem is faulty, and if it turns out that the theorem itself is actually *false*, then what will Simon Hewitt have lost – apart from a mistaken belief? It therefore makes sense to say that *Wiles* has faith that the theorem is true, but not that Simon Hewitt has faith in its truth, unless he'd be terribly disappointed by its disproof.

In further correspondence, Hewitt said that, although the disproof of Fermat's last theorem wouldn't be much of a blow to him personally, he could think of other mathematical propositions in which he was more invested. For example, he would be disappointed if it turned out that there was actually a highest prime number, because the loss of the infinite structure of the sequence of prime numbers would be a loss of an elegance that Hewitt treasures. If that's the case, then I'm very willing to say that Hewitt doesn't just *believe* that the sequence is infinite, he *hopes* that it is; he has *faith* that it is. I don't think that this would be a damaging counter-example to Howard-Snyder's account. I think it's simply an example of faith in a Mathematical proposition.

Snyder calls propositional *faith*. But note that, notwithstanding, it *is* Howard-Snyder-type *faith*, rather than *belief*, that religions really demand towards their creed.[4]

I'm not going to address what sort of propositional content is essential to religion. For that reason, my definition of religion will remain incomplete. All I'm claiming is that each religion has some fundamental propositions. We can now state our second essential ingredient of a religious life:

2. To live a religious life requires propositional faith directed towards the fundamentals of the faith in question (or, at least to their conjunction[5]).

§1.3 – Imaginative Engagement

Religions tend to demand that their followers imaginatively engage with a particular set of narratives; a *narrative canon*. To engage with a narrative is, first and foremost, to engage one's *imagination*. Whether we're dealing with a fictional narrative or a non-fictional narrative, if it's written *as* a narrative, then we engage our mind's eye. We imagine the scenes described unfolding, as if we're watching them. Neurological research suggests that we use the same regions of our brain in witnessing an event of type *X*, as we do when we process a mere narrative about an event of type *X* (Oatley, 2008; Marr, 2011; Young & Saver, 2001). To read or listen to a narrative is to engage in a sort of offline mental simulation of witnessing the events described.

But I can't argue that religion *per se* requires narrative engagement, since not all religions have a narrative canon. Some forms of Buddhism revolve around stories about the Buddhas, but Zen Buddhists, despite their own body of legends and stories, seem to think that such stories are something of a *distraction* from the endeavour of enlightenment.[6] Quakerism, despite its roots in Christianity, today eschews any particular canon of narratives. What I *can* say, is that every religion demands *some* form of imaginative exercise.

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[4] A catholic might think that their religion has been misrepresented. According to Catholicism, faith is an infused virtue, given by God. Faith might dispose you towards believing the content of revelation, but it is *belief*, and *disbelief*, rather than faith, that are going to be the difference between a heretic and a non-heretic. And yet I will stick to my guns. Whatever the Catholic might be picking out with the word 'faith', I cannot believe that they are using the word 'belief', in these religious contexts, to pick out what contemporary epistemologists pick out with the word belief. Use whatever words you like: the different between a heretic and a non-heretic will surely have more to do with positive evaluations, positive conative orientation, and positive cognitive stances, than with what contemporary epistemologists would call 'belief'. Is the Catholic really going to maintain that when Saint Teresa of Calcutta (2007), in her darker, most anguished moments, was praying to God that she should believe in him, and be saved from doubts, that she was a *heretic*? All the while she *wanted* him to exist, and thought it *plausible* that he did. She had what I'm calling 'faith'. I'm pretty sure that when the Catholic demands '*belief*', they're only really demanding Howard-Snyder-type faith, using a different name. Otherwise, their saintly mother was, by their own lights, a heretic. It's a question for *them* – and not for me – what *they* mean, in addition to their use of the word 'belief' (to pick out Howard-Snyder-type faith), by their use of the word 'faith'!

[5] I add the parenthesis because you might desire that a&b be true without desiring that one of the conjuncts be true without the other. Accordingly, faith in a conjunction won't always distribute over the conjuncts.

[6] Hence the phrase, attributed to the Zen Master, Linji Yixuan, 'If you meet the Bhudda on the road, kill him.' On the road to your own personal enlightenment, engaging with stories about the Bhudda will only be a distraction.

In order to develop my claim, we need to distinguish between a number of forms of imaginative engagement. As you imagine the events of a narrative unfolding, you're not necessarily projecting yourself *into* them. Imagining events in this somewhat detached fashion, as unfolding without you, is what Peter Alward (2006) calls *de dicto* imaginative engagement. Sometimes a narrative calls for *de re* imaginative engagement when, for example, you're invited to imagine, concerning an actual location in London, namely Baker Street, that Sherlock Holmes once lived there. Sometimes, *de se* imaginative engagement is what's called for. When we play games of role-play or make-believe, for example, we thrust *ourselves* into the imaginative action. We imagine that *we* are soldiers, or superheroes, or butterflies, or what have you.

Zen Buddhism, despite eschewing narrative, certainly seems to place a great weight upon acts of *de se* imagination. Certain elements of its meditative practice, known as zazen, could be characterised as a very minimalistic, and intentionally sparse, form of *de se* imaginative engagement: *you are your breath*.[7]

When thinking about *de re* and *de se* imaginative engagement, we can make some further distinctions. Sometimes we are invited to imagine ourselves, or something around us, in what can only be called, a literally true light. According to Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch, for example, we are not simply commanded to believe that God exists, we have to *view ourselves* as living in a world in which God exists (see his commentary to the first of the Ten Commandments, in Exodus (Hirsch, 2009)). According to Judaism, we *do* live in a world in which God exists. But that doesn't mean that we automatically *view ourselves as* living in such a world.

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[7] Simon Hewitt, in correspondence, objects. Zazen cannot be *de se* imaginative engagement because there is nothing that it is *like*, for a human animal, *to be breath*.

There are a number of different concerns that could be lurking under the surface here. You might think that there can be no such thing as a nonsensical proposition. And thus, you might think that the sentence 'I am my breath', as uttered by a human being, simply fails to express anything. Wittgenstein, for example, thought it impossible to have nonsensical, or illogical, thoughts. This was part of his critique of Russell's theory of assertion (Wittgenstein, 1961, p. 5.422). On this view, there can be no propositional attitudes towards the proposition that a human being is a breath for there can be no such proposition. 'Read sympathetically,' Hewitt suggests, 'we should see this kind of locution as a poetic way of saying 'focus on your breath to the exclusion of all else.''

I don't feel the pressure of this objection because I think that certain sorts of 'nonsensical' sentences *do* express propositions, and thus, it *is* possible to have propositional attitudes towards certain sorts of 'nonsense' – especially towards category mistakes, like the one at the heart of zazen. For arguments to bolster this claim, see Ofra Magidor (2013).

In fact, Hewitt accepts that category mistakes can still express propositions. So perhaps his worry is *this*: even though my uttering, 'I am my breath', may express a proposition, that proposition isn't one that I can *imagine to be true*, since I can't *visualise* its truth, since there is nothing it would be like for it to *be* true!

In response to this objection, I might point towards the work of Tamar Gendler (2000), who explores *obviously* and *explicitly* impossible stories that still serve as perfectly good stories. Surely, we engage our imagination with such stories in some way or other.

Alternatively, and perhaps relatedly, I could simply concede: yes, it's true that nobody can successfully imagine being their own breath, but this doesn't mean that they can't *try!* A child might *try* to jump to the moon. It isn't *possible* for her to jump that high, but it won't stop her *trying*. More generally, it is possible for an agent to *try* to Φ, even when Φ-ing is impossible for them. Perhaps the Zen master merely *ties* to imagine that he is his breath – and this attempt, though it's doomed to fail, might be thought to bring certain positive effects in its wake.

When you're being asked to imagine yourself, or something around you, in a *true* light, I would call it '*attentive-seeing-as*'. This can be *de se*, as when the Jew tries to see herself as a creature of God, or *de re*, as when the Quakers 'endeavor to see "that of God" in every person' (Clarke, et al., 2011). I call it *attentive-seeing-as* because you don't believe that you're making something up – instead you're trying to attend to something that's all too easily ignored. It's as if you're engaging your imagination in order to see the world more *accurately*, in *accordance* with what you believe, or in accordance with your faith. I call engagement in an act of *attentive-seeing-as*, adopting a perspective.

Besides regular make-believe (which can be *de dicto*, *de se* or *de re*), and *attentive-seeing-as* (which can only be *de se* or *de re*), there's another type of *seeing*-as that is relevant to the religious life. I call it *metaphorical-seeing-as*. Elisabeth Camp (2009) helps us to distinguish between regular *de se* make-believe, and *metaphorical-seeing-as*. In order to make believe that she is Anna Karenina, she has to forget all about Elizabeth Camp, or at least to ignore everything that's distinctive about her. She ignores that she is a philosopher, and a professional woman in the twenty-first century, and tries, instead, to *pretend*, even to herself, that she's a Russian aristocrat in the nineteenth century. She tries, in some sense, to lose herself. Compare this with the metaphor that *Elisabeth Camp is Anna Karenina*. Processing this metaphor, she has to view *herself* through the prism of Anna Karenina. She says (Camp, 2009, pp. 112-3):

> I might decide that Anna's conflict between her love for her son and her love for Vronsky mirrors my own struggle to reconcile parental devotion and professional ambition… The overall result of this [metaphorical] matching process is a restructured understanding of myself, one which highlights, connects, and colors my Anna-like features while downplaying the rest

Throughout this process, Camp cannot lose sight of herself, and her own life story, which she matches up with details of Anna Karenina's story. *Attentive-seeing-as* harnesses the power of your imagination to help you see its object for what you already believe it to be. *Metaphorical-seeing-as* 'helps you to reconstruct your understanding' of its object.

Similar to the distinction between attentive-seeing-as and metaphorical-seeing-as is Terence Cuneo's distinction between playing a role and playing a *target* role. To play a role is consistent with losing yourself in an act of *de se* imagination. To play a *target* role, on the other hand, is to play a part 'of being some way for the purpose of *being that way*, becoming like or identifying with that which one imitates' (Cuneo, 2016, p. 78). To play Anna Karenina as a target role would be to act like her in order to become more like her or to identify with her. Cuneo argues that the adoption of target roles is common-place in Christian (and especially Eastern Orthodox) liturgy.

Howard Wettstein (2002; 2012) talks about *signing on* to an image. Take the image of God judging us on Rosh Hashona. What it means to *sign on* to that image, I take it, is to agree to structure your life through its prism, to engage your emotions with it, to make it your *own*, to choreograph your life with this image as part of your personal symbolic landscape. What religious people *do*, characteristically, is to engage in a very powerful and intimate way, with certain images at certain

times; to *sign on to them*. And thus we can now formulate our third and final essential ingredient to a religious life:

3. To live a religious life requires imaginative engagement (either via a species of make-belief, attentive or metaphorical seeing-as, target role playing, or in terms of *signing on*, depending on the context) with the canonical narratives, metaphors, prescribed games of make-belief and/or perspectives of the faith in question.[8]

Religious life, at least as a norm-kind, is supposed to be absorbing. It is the imaginative component of religion that gives rise to this quality. It is one thing to *believe* in a religion; it is another thing to *sign on*. Signing on is what it means, to echo Jonathan Kvanvig's (Dewey inspired) account of a life of faith, *to live one's life in service of an ideal* (Kvanvig, 2013; Kvanvig, 2015). Signing on engages the imagination. There is something defective about a religiosity that believes in a creed but fails to engage the imagination; that would be a faith without a religious psychology.

§2. A reasonable and rational life-choice

My definition of religion is incomplete. The most striking omission is the failure to address the sorts of *topics* that the fundamentals of a faith would have to include in order to constitute a religion (most religions address theological issues, for example, but not all of them). I also haven't defined, in my first criterion, what makes a religious community *religious*! But I do contend that, despite the presence of these lacunae, the following criteria are necessary and jointly-sufficient for the living of a religious life:

1. Living as part of a religious community
2. Having propositional faith towards the fundamentals of the faith in question
3. Imaginative engagement with the canonical narratives, metaphors, prescribed games of make-belief and/or perspectives of the faith in question

Furthermore, I think that even in its incomplete state, this definition is of considerable philosophical interest because it opens up new paths for discussing what might make a religious life rational or irrational; reasonable or unreasonable. In the remainder of the paper, I shall argue that there are three potentially reasonable or rational *ways in* to a religious life (each of which correspond to one of the three ingredients of a religious life that I outlined above). These three *ways in* tend mutually to reinforce one another.[9]

§2.1 – Communal Belonging

A person who feels a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the Jewish community will find it unthinkable that Jesus was the Messiah.[10] A person who feels a strong sense of belonging and loyalty

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[8] For extensive and fascinating discussion of the use of imagination in the religious life of Evangelical Americans, see Tanya Luhrmann (2012)

[9] Even if you disagree that my three criteria are necessary and sufficient for religiosity, you might agree that they are, at least, *jointly-sufficient* for religiosity. Even then, you will agree that the three ways into faith that I will chart are legitimate ways into a religious life – you may only want to argue that there are *other* ways besides them.

[10] Unless of course they belong to a community of so-called 'Messianic Jews', but already, to belong to such a community is to be significantly alienated from the mainstream Jewish world.

to a Christian community will find two horns of C. S. Lewis' trilemma about Jesus – 'Liar, Lunatic or Lord' – unthinkable. A person who feels a strong sense of belonging and loyalty to a Muslim community will find it unthinkable that Mohammed was a charlatan. The idea that your communal loyalty can make certain thoughts unthinkable for you seems worrying. It suggests that becoming a loyal member of a community can be deleterious to your rational faculties. Furthermore: your beliefs are not supposed to respond to what and who you *care* about, they're supposed to respond to the *evidence*!

Allan Hazlett (2016) defends intellectual loyalty as a type of virtue. In the first instance, he notes that intellectual loyalty to a community doesn't *completely* close the door to evidence. Intellectual loyalty comes in degrees. Accordingly, there will be 'degrees of the unthinkable'. Things can be easy to think, difficult to think, and seemingly impossible to think, depending upon what you care about, at any given time, and upon how *much* you care. What you care about, in turn, can be *responsive* to evidence. Hazlett's romantic affection for his wife makes it very hard for him to believe that she's plotting to kill him. But, faced with *overwhelming* evidence, his affection for her is likely to undergo a radical change, allowing for her plot to become more believable to him. In short, intellectual loyalty doesn't completely shut the door on evidence, although it might raise the burden of proof.

If you knew that developing a feeling of loyalty towards another person would potentially corrupt your epistemic faculties, leading you to become less sensitive to certain sources of evidence and information, would it then seem rational to become a hermit, and conscientiously eschew the formation of any bonds of fraternity, solidarity, loyalty or love? Perhaps we should adopt a non-standard epistemology according to which, what should count as justification for a belief (Fantl & McGrath, 2002), or what should count as knowledge (Stanley & Hawthorne, 2008), can depend upon the stakes that an agent has in the belief being true or false. In the face of fraternity, solidarity, loyalty, or love, perhaps belief and knowledge answer to different standards.

On *standard* epistemologies, the definitions of evidence and knowledge never respond to pragmatic considerations. But even on standard epistemologies, we *can* explain why the hermit is being irrational. We must simply distinguish between the demands of *epistemic* rationality and the demands of *practical* rationality. Practical rationality is about acting, in consultation with your beliefs as to how things might turn out, in ways that will maximise your expected utility. By contrast, epistemic rationality (on the standard account) is purely concerned with forming beliefs in ways that are appropriately sensitive to evidence and counter-evidence. It turns out that (on a standard epistemology) it can sometimes be *practically* rational to act in ways that may turn out to be detrimental to your *epistemic* rationality.

Imagine. An evil villain arranges things such that if you could only bring yourself to believe a certain false proposition, *p*, you would be able to save millions of lives. If you can't bring yourself falsely to believe that *p*, he will bring on a nuclear apocalypse. In that situation, it would be practically rational to do everything in your power to come to believe that *p*, even though you know that *p* is false. You'd be justified in seeking the help of a hypnotist, or taking a course of drugs that might temporarily impair your cognitive faculties, so as to allow you to come to believe that *p*, against all of

the evidence that not-*p*.[11] The expected utility of saving millions of lives is worth the cost to your epistemic rationality.

So too, the utility of living a life that has room for meaningful human relationships, and the disutility of living your life as a hermit, make it practically rational to seek out such relationships, even though you know that doing so may end up making certain thoughts unthinkable for you, therefore making you less *sensitive* to certain streams of evidence. That *can't* be irrational, at least not *practically* irrational, since it might be essential to living a life in which human flourishing is possible.

Similarly, if Hazlett is confronted with sufficient evidence to believe (according to the standard theories of epistemology) that his wife is plotting to kill him, but not enough to justify *certainty*, then it might be *practically* rational for him to *refuse* to believe it. He can't *literally* refuse to *believe*, since belief doesn't fall under our voluntary control. He might find that he can't bring himself to believe, despite the evidence, because of his deep affection for his wife. He might therefore find that he needs more evidence than is demanded by epistemic best practice. Furthermore, even if he finds that he does believe the evidence he can still decide to bracket the belief, and wait for more evidence, in the hope that his loyalty might ultimately be vindicated. He *can* continue to act, in the meantime, *as if* she isn't plotting to kill him, and *as if* he doesn't believe that she's plotting to kill him. This is because the utility of her being a loving wife is so extremely high, and the disutility of his being found out to have suspected her of murderous intent, if she's actually innocent, is also extremely high. We can therefore explain the relevant data without taking a stance on whether we should adopt a standard or a non-standard epistemology (in which pragmatic concerns can encroach upon the demands of epistemic rationality). Intellectual loyalty, on either account, can in principle be justified.

Returning to religion, we can't criticise the committed member of a Christian community for finding it unthinkable, to the extent that she's committed to her community, that Jesus was a 'lunatic'. Realising this, somebody might try to criticise her, *instead*, for caring about belonging to such a community in the first place; even more so if she actively *joined* it. Why do you belong to *this* community, when you could have belonged to another, or to none at all? Accordingly, a defence of the rationality or reasonableness of a religious life will have to appeal to the sorts of reasons that can rightly and wrongly motivate belonging to a community in the first place.

For example, belonging to a certain community might be inherently *immoral*, even if it maximises your own personal utility; even if membership will somehow give you lots of reliable evidence for forming new beliefs. For instance, there could be a community of scientists who hoard all sorts of evidence only for members of the community, but they might also be exclusionary and exclusivist in morally repugnant ways. We might want to say that even if membership is practically or epistemically rational, in such a case, it's still somehow *unreasonable.* Reasonability – on this account – would chart another axis of evaluation, in addition to practical and epistemic rationality. Reasonability will evaluate the preferences you have, that then factor in to what you find to be practically rational. If those preferences are *immoral*, for example, you might be found to be

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[11] Thanks to Trent Dougherty for this example

unreasonable (although there may be more than just moral values in play when we evaluate a person's preferences).

Joining a community might be unreasonable in certain situations, but so might *leaving* a community. Leaving a community that you were born into, for example, much like abandoning the family of your birth might be a dereliction of certain inherited duties, even if other considerations may sometimes tug you in the other direction.

Alternatively, you might think that to display any sort of loyalty to a particular subset of humanity (either by joining or by not leaving a community) is to act *immorally*. You might think that a pure Kantian ethic, for example, demands complete impartiality. You are to treat all human beings equally as ends in themselves. A utilitarian also requires us to pay no attention to ties of race, creed, distance, or even friendship and family. Bernard William's (1976) concern with impartial systems of morality is that they don't make enough room for what people find most meaningful about life. To the extent that an ethical system demands *complete* impartiality, it demands that you eschew bonds of friendship, love and community. As soon as you have a single deep attachment to a single friend, you run the risk of finding yourself in conflict with the demands of an impartial ethical system. And yet, imagine a world with no deep personal attachments. In such a world:

> There will not be enough substance or conviction in a man's life to compel his allegiance to life itself. Life has to have substance if anything is to have sense, including adherence to the impartial system; but if it has substance, then it cannot grant supreme importance to the impartial system, and that system's hold on it will be, at the limit, insecure.

The idea, then, isn't to abandon these impartial systems altogether. They may truly encapsulate a certain sort of value. But if life isn't itself worth living, nobody will be around to obey impartial systems. Williams calls the things that give people's lives meaning, their 'ground projects'. When conflicts emerge between the demands of an impartial ethical system, and a person's ground projects, the impartial system cannot *always* claim to have ultimate sovereignty in deciding which preferences are reasonable. Accordingly, which preferences are to count as reasonable can't *only* be a matter of impartial morality.

We have seen that there may be some sort of non-negotiable, non-ethical value in having partial relationships. But perhaps the impartial systems are wrong. Perhaps there is even *ethical* value in being a member of a social group. According to liberal nationalism, for example, membership in communities is of ethical significance, and ethical value (See Patti Tamara Lenard (2010)). The cosmopolitan, by contrast, might be thought to hold the view that though bonds of loyalty between friends and family can sometimes be legitimate, the bonds that hold between larger, bounded communities, create such horrific moral consequences that we should refuse to endorse such relationships. The thought might be this: partiality is one thing but large bounded communities is another.

The worry is that feelings of national (and by extension, communal) loyalty will 'obliterate duties to humanity at large.' David Miller thinks that these 'worries are groundless' (Miller, 1995, p. 69).

Miller (2007) himself conditions partiality towards co-nationals upon the requirement that certain basic rights are protected for all people.[12] If we're talking about the value of belonging to a community, then as long as that belonging doesn't require you to trample over your more general obligations to humanity at large, then there's no reason to think, that our ethical theory will have any reservations about communal loyalty *per se*.

In fact, it's quite possible to be a cosmopolitan *and* to recognise the ethical significance and value of communities (see, e.g., Tan (2004) and Appiah (2005)). Cosmopolitanism is really a position about how certain institutions of *power* should be arranged, and how certain resources should be distributed. Nothing here stands essentially at odds with the view that national communities are important, valuable and ethically significant. The only question is to what extent the institutions of political power should correspond to the borders of those communities. Indeed, Robert Audi (2009) argues that in some senses, it is possible to be simultaneously a moderate nationalist *and* a moderate cosmopolitan.

To summarise: we can criticise you for belonging to a community if that communal belonging comes at the expense of your respecting your general obligations to humanity at large. We can criticise you for belonging to a community that organises itself around a creed that is obviously false, given the evidence available to you, since intellectual loyalty only demands *resilience* to counter-evidence, but not impenetrable close-mindedness. Alternatively, you might seek to remain within such a community, but to encourage them to change their minds about the falsehood in question. *Joining* a community like this to begin with might be harder to justify. Likewise, we could criticise you for belonging to a community that was organised around immoral goals and ideals, unless you were reasonably trying to *reform* that community from within. Again, *joining* a community like this to begin with might be harder to justify.

Nevertheless, nobody can criticise you for wanting to belong to a community, and to forge those sorts of connections of mutual partiality. This seems to be an inherently reasonable human desire – basic to many of our ground projects. Once you *do* belong to a community, and once we have no reason to criticise you for so belonging to it, we can't very well go on to criticise you for finding certain propositions unthinkable, when your intellectual loyalty dictates such a response. You might not be acting rationally by *some* standards of rationality (purely epistemic rationality, for example), but *practically* speaking, you are acting in the service of perfectly *reasonable* virtues, and thus, by the standards of *practical* rationality, we can have no complaints.

§2.2 – Faith in the Fundamentals

A second entry point into a religious life is simply coming to have faith in its fundamental principles. Even on Howard-Snyder's non-doxastic account of faith, a defence of the rationality and reasonableness of a religious life will depend upon there being no *overwhelming* counter-evidence to the fundamentals of the faith. Furthermore, evidence that the fundamental principles of the faith are true *will* function as an important potential stream of justification for living a religious life.

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[12] This summary of Miller's position is owed to Patti Tamara Lenard (2010)

But propositional faith isn't simply about the *cognitive* element. It also has a *conative* dimension. Accordingly, we could certainly criticise a person, if not in terms of their rationality, then in terms of their *reasonableness*, for having a positive conative attitude towards a morally repugnant religion. Even if you *believed* on good evidence that there will be another crippling recession before long, we would be right to think badly of you for having *faith* that there will be another crippling recession before long. Accordingly, the rationality and reasonableness of living a religious life depends upon there being no sufficiently compelling counter-evidence to the claims of the faith, *and* upon holding an interpretation of the claims of the faith such that having a positive conative attitude towards them (or at least to their *conjunction*) would be reasonable.

§2.3 – Imagination and Aptness

What makes some metaphors and some perspectives, in some situations, *apt*, whether or not they're true? Why do some images cause us to want to *sign on*, whereas others leave us unmoved? One of the best accounts in the somewhat sparse literature is due to David Hills (1997). Hills wants to explain what makes Romeo's metaphor that Juliet is the sun, apt. He develops what he calls a 'motivating explanation' of its aptness.

Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline had been marked by 'listlessness, solitude, [and] an aversion to light (especially daylight)'. His retreat into dark places had made it especially apt to 'picture his infatuation as a form of blindness.' To explain fully why *that* was apt, we'd need a motivating explanation of *that* metaphor. We can see a regress looming, but bear with me. Given that Romeo's initial infatuation had been thought of in terms of blindness, it made sense to Romeo and his friends to picture Rosaline's beauty in terms of a burning, *destructive* brightness. It was blinding Romeo.

Later, another beauty appears; more beautiful than Rosaline: Juliet. It makes sense for Romeo to think of Juliet in terms of *light*, because he'd already been thinking of Rosaline as a light. Juliet was *replacing* Rosaline. Like for like. The only difference is that Juliet was a *brighter* light. Romeo then starts to sense in himself a new found joy. He wants to embrace life. His aversion to daylight has gone. This leads him to think of Juliet's light not as burning and destructive, nor blinding. In fact, this light is *edifying*; it's helping him to *see*. Despite the joy she brings him, he doesn't yet feel that he *needs* her. There's a sense in which, perhaps, he would be able to carry on *without* her. Accordingly, he compares her to lights that are *decorative*. They shed a lovely light, but you can live without them. Finally, Romeo starts to reconceive 'his desire for Juliet as a need.' So he utters to himself, 'Juliet is the sun'. She sheds a light that helps you to see, but that light is no *luxury* item. That light source is necessary for life itself.

The extent to which this motivating explanation explains the aptness of Romeo's metaphor has to do with seeing it as the last link in a *chain* of metaphors, hence my worry that this won't be able to give us a full analysis of aptness. In a motivating explanation, each apt metaphor requires metaphors of varying degrees of aptness to have come before them. This is a real worry. I won't be able to address it in this paper. But Hills has helped us to see, I think, the following two things:

(1) The metaphor doesn't have to be *true* in order to be *apt*. Let's imagine that Romeo is wrong about his desire for Juliet. Let's imagine that it isn't anything like a need. To the extent that

his metaphor is trying to say otherwise, he would be wrong. His metaphor would be false. But it might still be apt.

(2) What makes a new metaphor apt has something to do with how well a certain new image fits what you're trying to say. This is, in turn, determined by your relationship to similar images that you've engaged with in the past; by the way your situation, and your relationship to those past images, have changed or stayed the same; and by the way you'd like to structure your thoughts about the world around you as you move forward.

A new metaphor might interact with images that have been salient for you *personally* in the past, or with images that are *culturally* entrenched. What's going to make a metaphor apt for *you*, and what's going to make an act of attentive-seeing-as apt for *you*, will therefore have something to do with your own personal history, and the perspectives you've adopted in the past, but also with your *cultural* and *historical* situation.

Aptness isn't the only value that justifies our various forms of imaginative exercise. Make-believe involves offline simulation. You can *learn*, through such simulation, what it might feel like to be in situations that you're unlikely to live through in reality. You can hone certain skills, such as empathy, and interpersonal understanding.

Eleonore Stump (2012) is interested in a type of narrative that she characterises as 'a second person account'. A second person account is a narrative that can communicate the content of 'a second person experience': an experience of another person *as* a person. Second person experiences could be contrasted with self-awareness (i.e. a first-person experience) and the 'objectifying' experience a surgeon has of an unconscious patient on an operating table (i.e. a third-person experience).[13] On Stump's view, second person experiences provide us with some sort of non-propositional knowledge; knowledge of what's it like to experience the person you're experiencing.

When reading a completely fictional second person account, you can have knowledge, through simulation, of what it's like to have a second-person experience of a certain *type* of person. If I write a particularly good narrative that includes Eleonore Stump as a character, and if I'm careful to make my representation of her, in the narrative, as true to life as possible, then reading my narrative might help you to attain, indirectly, something like a second-person experience of Eleonore Stump. This is non-propositional knowledge of a certain kind. Short of meeting her, only narrative can deliver you this sort of knowledge.

When a person of faith reads the Bible, they read second-person accounts of people who they greatly admire. We can't meet them, since they lived too long ago. Instead, the Bible provides us with indirect second-person experiences of them. Michael Rea (2009) has argued that reading scripture can give you second-person experience, albeit mediated via the narrative, of *God*. Elisabeth Camp (2009, p. 117) talks about another reason that we value narrative prose:

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[13] The contrast with self-awareness and a surgeon's third-personal experience is borrowed from Mike Rea (2009)

> They enable us to "get inside the head" of an alternate personality, to experience in an intimate, first-person way what it's like for someone else to meet the world around them (cf. (Currie, 1997)).

Perhaps we don't merely get second-person experience of God through sufficiently accurate narratives about him. If it's true that the scriptures are the revealed word of God, in some sense or other, then we may even get some hazy, inchoate access to something akin to God's own first-person perspective.

Furthermore, imaginative engagement might be key to a certain sort of human flourishing. Pretending that I was a slave in Egypt – as Jewish law commands me to do – is clearly supposed to alter my attitudes towards God, who I start to relate to, perhaps initially only from within the confines of the make-believe, as my *liberator*. It also alters my attitude towards the poor and disenfranchised around me, because I start to empathise with them in a new way. I was once a destitute slave. Accordingly, the make believe can inculcate a certain attitude in me that would be conducive to proper conduct.

To quote Elisabeth Camp (2009, p. 117):

> What begins as a temporary exercise in perspective shifting may unwittingly cause a modification of our ongoing dispositions to notice, interpret, and respond to related situations as we encounter them in reality. Indeed, authors often intend for us to "export" the fiction's perspective back to the real world (Gendler, 2000).

In this way, imaginative activity can be transformative. Part of the religious motivation for the various types of imaginative engagement that religions call for is that they can, perhaps, prime us (by changing us and making us more sensitive) for veridical religious experiences. This in turn will serve as evidence for the fundamentals of a faith.

§3. Conversions and Conclusions
We have looked at three streams of justification for a religions life. They may often serve to reinforce one another, as illustrated by the following stories. These stories are all about conversion to Judaism, but they could be adapted to tell of conversion to any other religion.

Community
Sally grows up in a Jewish neighbourhood in New York. The vast majority of her friends growing up are committed Jews. She picks up certain Yiddish catch phrases from their parents when she spends time at their homes. She picks up certain characteristically Jewish mannerism, simply because she spends a lot of time in that community. She sometimes witnesses her friends having anti-Semitic comments muttered in their presence. She starts to take it personally. When she grows up, she visits Israel for a friend's wedding, and feels a sense of homecoming, because all throughout her childhood she has heard it spoken of. One day she feels a profound need to worship. Because of how acclimatised she is in the Jewish community, and because she grew up in a home without religion, she feels almost drawn to picking up a Jewish prayer book and delving into it. She is quickly moved to tears because the imagery somehow feels so apt. This should come as no surprise. The aptness of

the imagery plays upon certain culturally entrenched images and perspectives which Sally has already imbibed through her years of acculturating. By the time she comes to look into the fundamentals of the Jewish faith, it isn't all that hard for Sally to adopt a stance of propositional faith towards them because she's so acculturated into the Orthodox Jewish community that their outright denial seems unthinkable to her, and her conative and affective attitudes are already primed by her love for her community. Sally converts to Judaism.

Fundamentals

Martin has been having vivid religious experiences. Sometimes he feels a very strong presence, as if it's walking along with him. He experiences it as a peculiar delight. His credence in theism sky rockets. He wants to experience this presence more. He feels something like a calling. He reads various books about various religions and comes to believe, in consultation with the external evidence, but also his internal *experiential* evidence, that of all of the religions he's investigated, the least implausible one is Judaism. Not yet convinced of its truth, he starts to go to synagogue. At first the community are not all that welcoming. Martin has read that Judaism doesn't encourage conversion. But he keeps going. Eventually, he becomes close to a certain Rabbi who counsels him as he learns more about the faith. The more in tune he becomes with the community, and the more he understands about Jewish history, the more the prayer services, and the rituals, and particularly the Sabbath observances, start to resonate with him aesthetically. He finds that his religious experiences somehow seem to gel with his new practices; and that those experiences begin to occur somewhat more frequently. Given all of this, Martin has no problem adopting the attitude of faith towards the fundamentals of Judaism as he has come to interpret them and understand them. Martin converts to Judaism.

Aptness

Tanya lives in a town where no Jews live, but in a second hand bookshop with a very eclectic collection, she buys a dusty book of Jewish prayers: Hebrew on one side with English translations on the other side of each page. She finds that the metaphors and images speak directly to her own experiences in a way that no other literature has come close to doing. She sits with this book for years, studying the footnotes and the scholarly introduction, and even learns to read the Hebrew because she wants to feel what the prayers are like to utter in the original language. She's not a religious woman. She's just moved somehow by the poetry. She reads more, and researches more until she is moved to reach out. She discovers, online, that in a town nearby there is a Jewish community. She starts to attend prayer services. At the first service she attends, she has a very powerful emotional and transcendent experience. Her credence in theism dramatically increases. She keeps on attending services, eventually forming bonds of close friendship. The more she started reading about the content of the Jewish faith, the more she felt able to commit herself to it. The idea that the fundamental teachings of Judaism were clearly false had become unthinkable to her, given her intellectual loyalty to her newfound community. Her conative attitude towards the fundamentals of the Jewish faith became deeply coloured by how committed she had become to the liturgy and other imaginative activities of the faith. Accordingly, it became very easy for her to adopt

an attitude of propositional faith towards the fundamentals of Judaism. Tanya converted to Judaism.[14]

A religious life has three mutually enforcing streams of potential justification that correspond to three essential ingredients of a religious life. Those streams of justification trade in a wide variety of values – epistemic, pragmatic, moral, nonmoral, and aesthetic. No one stream seems sufficient. If you merely *believe* in the fundamentals of the faith, but feel no sense of commitment to the people who share that faith with you, then you will not be living a religious life. If you feel a commitment to the people and the doctrines, but have no attachment to any of the imaginative activities that your faith invites you to engage with, then you seem to have no religious psychology. These streams of justification are individually insufficient, but mutually reinforcing. I've tried to illustrate this with three short conversion stories, in which one stream of justification features as a *way in*, and the others get to work in its wake.

The three-part definition of religion also helps us to see the most promising ways of constructing arguments *against* the rationality and/or reasonableness of religion. Those arguments would be well advised to concentrate not upon counter-evidence for religious creeds, because religious faith (unlike belief) is entitled to its resilience. Religiosity is – it turns out – more vulnerable to arguments against the morality of particular communal belonging, and to arguments against the *desirability* of the truth of the creeds. This creates a corresponding obligation upon religious devotees to foster unobjectionable modes of communal belonging, and morally acceptable interpretations of the teachings of their faith.

Philosophy of religion has to move away from an almost exclusive concern with the theological commitments of various religions.[15] It needs to move away from a conception of religion that places all of the justificatory work upon evidence/counter-evidence *for* those commitments. Instead, the debate around the rationality and reasonableness of religiosity has to become sensitive to the nature of *religion*, and to the life of *faith*, as it is *lived* and *practiced*. Philosophy of religion needs to broaden its horizons in order to conceive of religion in terms of the wide-ranging sociological phenomenon that it is.[16]

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[14] Terence Cuneo's conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy also seems to have been instigated by an appreciation of the aptness of its liturgy (Cuneo, 2016, pp. 204-18).

[15] I say this despite my own continuing interest in philosophical theology.

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