

## CHAPTER 5

### The Design Plan and NonBasic Theistic Belief

The concession to partial basicity in chapter 4 is the starting-point for understanding how a full-blown acceptance of warrant by reasons may be integrated with Plantinga's epistemology without sacrificing or compromising either the soft or hard theses. In this chapter I will develop a plausible view of warranted nonbasic theistic belief based on Plantinga's theory of warrant and proper function.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I will be developing such an account by analyzing the ways in which the *sensus divinitatis* (as an immediate source of theistic belief) may be thought to malfunction. The cognitive malfunctions I will be considering may be viewed as an account of (at least some of) the noetic effects of sin given Plantinga's theory of warrant and proper function. My overall case will support the contention that there are two closely related circumstances that increase the importance of natural theology. First, cognitive malfunction (specifically malfunctions of the *sensus divinitatis*) increases the importance modes of theistic belief formation besides the immediate mode related to the *sensus divinitatis* and experiential grounds. Secondly, the acquisition of defeaters against theistic belief creates a need for additional resources to sustain the rationality of theistic belief. In both these cases, natural theology has an important epistemic role.

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<sup>1</sup> In this way I anticipate Plantinga's own development and articulation of the place of theistic belief in a well-formed and proper noetic structure in his forthcoming *Warranted Christian Belief*.

## I. The Design Plan and Theistic Belief

### *A. Aspects of the Design Plan*

Central to Plantinga's discussion of warranted belief is the notion of a *cognitive design plan* - a set of blueprints or specifications for a well-formed, properly functioning human cognitive system (1993b, pp. 13-14, 21). The design plan may be unpacked in terms of triples of the form: <circumstance, response, and purpose or function>. The design plan specifies, not merely what our cognitive response will be in certain circumstances, but what the *appropriate* response of our cognitive faculties should be in those circumstances (appropriate given its purpose). For instance, in the circumstance of being appeared to redly, the appropriate response *ceteris paribus* is that the belief that there is a red object in front of one is formed. But the circumstances need not be restricted to experience in the sense of being appeared to as such and such, what we might call *sensuous* experience. It could just as well be the kind of *nonsensuous* phenomenology which accompanies (or leads to) the formation of *a priori* and memory beliefs. Equally though, the circumstances could be (or include) beliefs or the considering of propositions. Upon considering the propositions (A) all men are mortal and (B) Socrates is a man, I form the belief (C) Socrates is mortal. In short, we can think of our cognitive establishment as responsive to beliefs and experience(s) (in the sense of a broad range of nonpropositional circumstances). Also, the design plan specifies for the relevant sorts of circumstances the appropriate degree or firmness of a belief formed (or modified) in response to those circumstances.

Moreover, since the design plan may state how a thing will change over time, it is

important to distinguish the here-and-now design plan from the design plan at other times, where relevant changes have been introduced. We may capture the idea of a thing's working at a given time by speaking of a *snapshot design plan* (1993b, p. 22). A master design plan will be the succession of snapshot design plans appropriate for a thing given its entire history.<sup>2</sup> The proper functioning of one's cognitive equipment at age 3 is different from its proper functioning at age 34. In this sense a human person's cognitive situation consists of different snapshot design plans as they grow. This will be true not only as a result of mental maturation with age development but the process of learning or education can play a hand in understanding how the design plan may be modified over time. "More precisely," says Plantinga, "the design plan specifies how learning new facts and new skills will lead to changes in cognitive reaction" (1993b, p. 43). So, for instance, a person who spends several years in college or graduate school studying history, biology, or philosophy acquires over that time a new snapshot design plan (or at least one such plan). The master design plan will state which snapshot design plans are appropriate for a person at what age and in what circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

The succession of snapshot design plans is closely related to another matter, and that is the acquisition of defeaters in one's noetic structure, reasons to believe a

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<sup>2</sup> The design plan as such is distinguished from what Plantinga calls the maximum plan (or just max-plan), which is simply a set of circumstance-response pairs. The distinction is based on the fact that though an organism will in fact respond a certain way in a broad range of circumstances not all of these will be those that the designer had in mind. There is an appropriate response for the circumstance of being appeared to redly, but not necessarily for being appeared to redly and falling off a three-story building. The design plan covers just the latter, whereas the max plan covers the former. And there may obviously be master max plans and snapshot max plans.

<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid multiplying design plans beyond necessity, we could classify "the learning of new facts" and "mental development" as circumstances (rather than new snapshot design plans). On this way of viewing things, a person who enters college and earns a Ph.D does not acquire a new design plan but simply enters relevantly new circumstances for which the design plan specifies new responses. Having noted this alternative construal, I will nevertheless follow Plantinga's treatment.

proposition's denial (rebutters) and reasons not to believe a proposition (undercutters).<sup>4</sup> The design plan specifies that when we are appeared to rainily, we form the belief <it is raining>. But it will also specify the conditions under which, though one *is* appeared to rainily, one does not form the belief it is raining outside. A person may acquire evidence that, say, the neighbor is spraying water from a garden hose over the fence (undercutter) or that there are no clouds in the sky (rebutter). If the person did not have these defeaters, then he would (by virtue of being appeared to a certain way) be warranted in believing that it is raining outside. Equally it may be a matter of providing a person with reasons for not believing some proposition to the degree which he believed it before the acquisition of the relevant defeater. Now a complicated defeater system is acquired not only with age but social exposure and education. So a master design plan will have a series of sub-plans, that is to say, specifications for what sort of beliefs we will not form given other things we now know (or are experiencing). Simplifying matters, since a person's belief has warrant only if her cognitive system is functioning properly, warrant will require the proper functioning of a person's defeater system. This entails that if S believes that she has a rebutting or undercutting defeater for B, rationality requires a modification of her noetic structure with respect to B. If the defeater is partial, rationality requires S's holding B less firmly than before the acquisition of the defeater. If the defeater is full, rationality calls for the deletion of B from S's noetic structure. S might, of course, have a defeater-defeater against an initial defeater. In this case, S might remain rational in holding in B (to the degree she does) after the acquisition of a defeater. What constitutes irrationality is S's holding B (or holding B firmly) and holding that she has an

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<sup>4</sup> As noted in the last chapter, defeaters may also include experience(s), but will always involve at least a dispositional belief about the negative evidential relation between an experience or other beliefs and the defeatee.

undefeated defeater for B (which requires either not holding B or holding B less firmly than she does).

To say that warrant depends on one's cognitive faculties functioning properly does not imply that warrant depends on all of one's cognitive faculties functioning properly (1993b, p. 10). A defective memory need not stand in the way of warranted sensory perceptual beliefs. What is required is that the modules responsible for the particular belief in question be properly functioning. Even here, though, certain allowances must be made. A given module need not be functioning properly over its entire range of operation. The module responsible for the formation of sensory perceptual beliefs may be damaged so that objects beyond 30 feet are blurry, but objects closer than 30 feet are not blurry. Moreover, even objects at 30 feet may be distinguished by colour, if not shape. And if a person is colour blind, beliefs about the shapes of certain objects can possess warrant. Frequently, external aids may be introduced to rectify the situation. My visual defects are corrected by a pair of glasses, thereby allowing the sensory perceptual module to furnish me with warranted beliefs about objects which otherwise I would not be warranted in holding. So one's cognitive faculty need not be functioning perfectly to produce warranted beliefs. Cognitive proper function/malfunction comes in degrees.

### ***B. The Sensus Divinitatis***

Plantinga (1993b, p. 48) lists several important modules of the human cognitive establishment: self-knowledge, memory, sensory perception, testimony, *a priori* knowledge, induction and probability, and more controversially, modules for the formation of moral and religious beliefs. With respect to the last of these, Plantinga notes

what Calvin calls the *sensus divinitatis* and the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Plantinga takes these as immediate sources for religious belief (1990b, p. 56). Although I shall eventually argue that the design plan is not restricted to these latter two modules in the formation and/or sustenance of theistic (or more broadly religious) belief, here I direct my attention to the module which has received the most coverage by Plantinga himself to date. Calvin speaks of the *sensus divinitatis* (*Institutes* I.iii.1) and Plantinga has interpreted this as a cognitive module responsible for the *immediate* formation of various theistic beliefs. Recalling the exposition of chapter 3, Plantinga takes it that the *sensus divinitatis* module (hereafter the SD-module) is triggered by widely realized experiential conditions. These include “beholding the majesty of the mountains, or the glory of the starry heavens above, or the power of the ocean, or the marvelous, highly articulate beauty of a tiny flower” (1991, p. 304). The result is the formation of any one of a number of theistic propositions: God has created all this, God is present, God is guiding me, God is sustaining the world, and so on. Translating this into design plan terminology, we should say that human beings have been designed in such a way that in these circumstances the appropriate response from their cognitive system (specifically the SD-module) is that they are strongly inclined to believe theistic propositions of the form just given. Furthermore, we should say that they are typically going to believe such propositions rather firmly (firm enough for the degree of warrant to be sufficient to transform true belief into knowledge), perhaps equal to the degree to which they believe in the existence of other minds and the external world.

**[D1]** In a range of widely realized experiential circumstances  $C_1, \dots, C_n$ , human beings have a strong inclination to form (or maintain) beliefs that  $Pt_1, \dots, Pt_n$  to some fairly high degree.

To be more precise, what we really have are circumstance-response pairs like:

- (1) C<the sight of a starry night sky>  
R<firm belief that God created this>
- (2) C<sight and sound of the ocean>  
R<firm belief that God is powerful>
- (3) C<the sound of a lovely piece of music>  
R<firm belief that God is present>
- (4) C<belief that one has done some wrong action>  
R<firm belief that God disapproves of what one has done>
- (5) C<confessing one's wrong doing>  
R<firm belief that God has forgiven one>
- (6) C<engaging in the activity of prayer>  
R<firm belief that God hears one>

I will be taking “response” in the above pairs to mean response *in accordance with the design plan*. For ease of exposition I will simply speak of <circumstance-response> pairs as opposed to triples of <circumstance-response-purpose>. Also, the appropriate response need not be restricted to one particular belief-type. It may be that for some set of circumstances there is more than one appropriate response for each member of the circumstance set. To keep matters simple, the paradigm circumstance-response pairs will have one specific belief as the doxastic response. Moreover, I will take it that the sorts of circumstance-response pairs given above are going to be the snapshot design plan for a mature adult. The master design plan is going to include other snapshot design plans which vary to a greater or lesser extent from what I have sketched. One variation will be found in contrasting the snapshot design plan of an adult with that of a child, for the process of mental development and maturation with age is going to require a different

snapshot design plan. These variations I think might be found at two points, the sorts of conditions which are intended to trigger theistic beliefs and the sorts of theistic beliefs which are in fact triggered. It may be that for young children the design plan dictates less sophisticated sorts of religious beliefs in these conditions (indeed this would seem to be a requirement dependent on a person's conceptual development), perhaps beginning with some rather vague sense of a god of some sort. And it may be that some of the stipulated conditions only activate the disposition to form theistic beliefs for adults, such as listening to a beautiful piece of music, whereas others trigger theistic beliefs in the young as well as adults, say, the experience of a thunder and lightning storm. And it may be that for young children there are conditions that yield theistic belief more readily than for adults, say, testimony from one's parents (though this would not be the SD-module but that known as testimony).

Later in this chapter and more thoroughly in chapter 8 I will argue that theistic beliefs based on experiential grounds depend for their sophistication on a background system of beliefs (and so social input and education play a role), and here testimony may indeed be a significant determining factor. This account stands temporarily incomplete by restricting attention to the SD-module, but as I will shortly argue there are other modules responsible for theistic belief. These include testimony and inferential reasoning. The design plan may very well specify testimony as the primary mode of theistic belief formation in children. And that what they learn on testimony would certainly contribute (along with beliefs produced by inferential reasoning) to a background system of belief that, as they grow, allows for a variety of beliefs to be generated and sustained by



experiential grounds (with increasing degrees of sophistication).

For the moment I only want to restate [D1] so as to allow for appropriate variation within the design plan.

[D2] In a range of widely realized experiential circumstances  $C_1, \dots, C_n$  specified by the appropriate snapshot design plan, human beings have a strong inclination to form (or maintain) beliefs that  $Pt_1, \dots, Pt_n$  to some fairly high degree, where the range of  $C_1, \dots, C_n$  and  $Pt_1, \dots, Pt_n$  is a function of the appropriate snapshot design plan.

## II. *Sensus Divinitatis* Cognitive Malfunctions

But how might the Christian theological concept of the noetic effects of sin (strongly emphasized in Reformed theology) bear on Plantinga's account design plan and the warrant of theistic belief? I think this is a most pertinent question, especially since a good deal of the negative press that natural theology has received within the Reformed tradition has been based on the so-called noetic effects of sin. By "the noetic effects of sin" I understand a broad range of negative influences and consequences the presence of sin in the human psyche has for man's cognitive system.<sup>5</sup> These include: the believing of

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<sup>5</sup> The *locus de peccato* in relation to man's cognitive life has always occupied an important place in Reformed theology, typically under the rubric of total depravity - the doctrine that sin affects the entire person, intellect as well as will. Calvin pointed out: "For this reason, I have said that all parts of the soul were possessed by sin after Adam deserted the fountain of righteousness. For not only did a lower appetite seduce him, but unspeakable impiety occupied the very citadel of his mind, and pride penetrated to the depths of his heart. . . .in his discussion of a corrupt nature Paul not only condemns the inordinate impulses of the appetites that are seen, but especially contends the mind is given over to blindness and the heart to depravity" (*Institutes* II.i.9). John Gill explained that human corruption extends to "all the powers and faculties of the soul" (1984, p. 332). Consequently there is a "loss and want of knowledge and understanding" (p. 323) and "the understanding is darkened through the blindness and ignorance that is in it; so that a mere natural man cannot discern the things of the spirit of God; whatever knowledge men have of things

falsehoods (or the mere disposition to do so), various mistakes in observation, memory, and thought processes, diminished capacity to assess rightly and see the force of certain kinds of evidence, and general lack of clarity in the understanding. The precise nature of the interaction between these noetic defects and the corruption of the human will, affection, or passions, I leave out of the picture.<sup>6</sup> In the present case I am interested particularly in how the noetic effects of sin might affect the warrant of various theistic beliefs (though beliefs formed on the basis of pride, arrogance, etc. could be cases of cognitive malfunction). This requires answering at least two questions. First, what does the original design plan dictate regarding the formation (and sustenance) of theistic belief? That is, what modules are responsible for the production (and sustenance) of theistic beliefs? And how might these modules have been affected by sin? How might the *sensus divinitatis* experience malfunction as the result of sin?

Plantinga writes (1991, p. 308):

It is only because of the results of sin, only because of this unnatural fallen condition, Calvin thinks, that some of us find belief in God difficult or absurd. If it weren't for sin and its effects, we human beings would believe in God with same sort of natural spontaneity and to the same degree that we believe in the existence of ourselves, other persons, and the past. This is the natural human condition, the condition of a person all of whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly.

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natural and civil, they have none of things spiritual" (pp. 332-333). Charles Hodge wrote: "the whole man is the subject of original sin; that our cognitive as well as our emotional nature is involved in the depravity consequent on our apostasy from God; that in knowing as well as in loving or in willing, we are under the influence and dominion of sin" (1982, vol. 2, p. 256).

<sup>6</sup> Several prominent Reformed theologians have held that the sinful bias of the will, or a wrongly disposed heart, affects man's understanding and knowledge, so that (at least) some of the noetic effects of sin are mediated by a corrupt will.

Plantinga here just scratches the surface of what I want to develop in detail, an account of the noetic effects of sin on a person's noetic structure and the proper functioning of their theistic module(s), what I will call *hamartic cognitive malfunction*. Since the design plan involves a set of circumstance-response pairs the rather obvious way to spell out the noetic effects of sin is by explicating a range of malfunctions in the circumstance-response pairs.

### ***A. Cognitive Flatlining and Misfires***

The most severe cognitive malfunction of the SD-module would be the failure to form any belief that Pt in any of the widely realized circumstances. Here we have the circumstance but no response from the cognitive module - what we can call *doxastic flat lining*. This could be a phenomenon relative to one, some, or all of a person's snapshot design plans. Perhaps as a young child the SD-module was functioning according the specifications of the snapshot design plan then relevant. Later in life, though, the conditions specified for a new snapshot design plan (that of a mature adult) do not trigger theistic beliefs of any sort. If the SD-module were the only theistic module of the human cognitive establishment, then SD-module flat lining would lead to agnosticism. I do not want to make that claim, though, as I shall shortly argue for a multiplicity of theistic relevant modules. In that case SD-module cognitive flat lining would be compatible with theistic belief being generated or sustained by another module of the human noetic establishment.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless agnosticism does appear to entail the phenomenon I am

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<sup>7</sup> Though it might have consequences for a disposition to lose belief in God (and so implications for the diachronic epistemic status of theistic belief). It might be that, though firm theistic belief is sustained at  $t_1$  by properly functioning theistic relevant cognitive modules (yielding nonbasic theistic belief), if a defeater for nonbasic theistic belief is acquired at  $t_2$ , S's continuing to hold

describing, for agnostics would be people in whom the SD-module is totally nonfunctional for some period time. The phenomenon of atheism is a little more difficult to assess, for here it is not merely the failure to form (any) theistic belief but the actual formation of the belief that God does not exist. The distinction between failing to form the appropriate belief and forming an inappropriate belief is the distinction between doxastic flat lining and doxastic *misfires* (the former can obviously lead to the latter). It is also conceivable that belief that God does not exist is the result of malfunction in some other cognitive module, but that the SD-module is functioning properly over at least some range of its operation. Noetic structures could exemplify something like cognitive blockage.<sup>8</sup>

**[M1]** For some or all of a person S's snapshot design plans, there is no belief that Pt formed (or sustained) in any of the widely realized circumstances specified by that snapshot design plan.

Another malfunction is that only sometimes do we find the appropriate response to the circumstances specified by a particular snapshot design plan. At one time  $t_1$ , we have the pair [C<the sight of a starry night sky> & R<firm belief that God is created this>], and at some other time  $t_2$  we have malfunction such that [C<the sight of a starry night sky> & R<----->]. Call this condition temporary cognitive (or doxastic) response flat lining.<sup>9</sup> The SD-module, at some time(s) responsive to some

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firm theistic belief would require the proper functioning of the SD-module.

<sup>8</sup> I am indebted to David Reiter for this suggestion. On the assumption that there is a distinction between belief and acceptance (see chapter 3, section II.A), an atheist might believe that God exists and perhaps even know that God exists, but he might not *accept* that God exists, though he will probably believe that he does not believe that God exists. These cases of self-deception may well be rooted in cognitive blockage, in this case between doxastic and acceptance cognitive states.

<sup>9</sup> The doxastic flat lining phenomenon I am describing is relative to a specific module. The SD-

circumstance(s), is not at another time.<sup>10</sup> This is a kind of frequency problem in a person's cognitive responses, which itself comes in degrees. Maybe the doxastic flat lining phenomenon is rare; maybe it is frequent. Perhaps it is only present in the presence of other conditions which interfere with the proper function of the SD-module (a matter to which I will return). Point being that this sort of malfunction comes in degrees. Moreover, it may be true for either the formation or maintenance of a belief. A similar malfunction would be doxastic flat lining with reference to some circumstance-response pairs but not others. Here there is the same sort of stipulations as with the former phenomenon.

**[M2]** For some or all snapshot design plans, there is some circumstance  $C_n$  such that at time  $t_1$  S forms (or maintains) some belief that  $Pt_n$  (as the appropriate response specified by the snapshot design plan), but at time  $t_2$  S does not form (or hold) the belief that  $Pt_n$  in circumstance  $C_n$ .

But flat lining may not only be a frequency problem vis-à-vis the circumstance-response pair, but it may relate to the range of such pairs. A malfunctioning phenomenon may arise when a person's cognitive module responds to some but not all of the circumstances specified for belief formation and/or sustenance by a particular snapshot design plan. Whereas in **[M2]** S has a response/no response to the same circumstance over different times, this is a matter of responding to only some circumstances. This suggests that a mechanism is not functioning properly over its whole range of operation.

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module may be in a state of doxastic flat lining, but the module responsible for sensory perceptual beliefs may not. So, being appeared to stars-in-the-night-skyly, I form the belief that there are stars in the night sky, but I simply do not also believe that God created all this or is present.

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the design plan does not require that there be a cognitive response each time one finds oneself in the appropriate circumstances. Cognitive flat lining may be restated as a failure to respond in at least some of the instances where the design plan dictates a response, however often that may be.

An analogy here may be taken from the hearing mechanism that hears only some notes it was designed to hear, or the eye that cannot see certain colours. Suppose the snapshot design plan dictates that when S's SD-module is functioning properly we will find a set of circumstance-response pairs, which include

- (3) C<the sound of a lovely piece of music>  
R<firm belief that God is present>
- (4) C<belief that one has done some wrong action>  
R<firm belief that God disapproves of what one has done>
- (5) C<confessing one's wrong doing>  
R<firm belief that God has forgiven one>

Suppose though that we get (3) and (4), but not (5) - thereby leading to a troubled conscience. Examples could be multiplied. The central point is that where the design plan stipulates some set of circumstance-response pairs  $\{CR_1, CR_2, CR_3, \dots, CR_n\}$ , the malfunction in question may be stated as the set  $\{CR_1, CR_2, CR_3, \dots, CR_n\}$  minus at least one of its elements  $CR_i$ . Again, this sort of defect may appear during some or all of a person's snapshot design plans. So we can state a general third type of malfunction as:

**[M3]** For some or all snapshot design plans, S fails to form (or hold) some belief that  $Pt_n$  in some circumstance  $C_n$ , where the circumstance-response pair  $\langle C_n, Pt_n \rangle$  is a member of the circumstance-response pair set dictated by the snapshot design plan.

But the range of operation may be adversely affected in other ways. Here a close analogy would be something like the nearsighted person who can spot brown objects along the side of the road at a distance of 30 yards but who believes that they are garbage cans when in fact they are cows. So another sort of cognitive malfunction is evidenced when on some occasions there is a belief response but it is not the appropriate sort of response in some sense. This is the doxastic misfire phenomenon introduced above. How

one unpacks this will depend considerably on how we spell out the design plan, but a few examples will suffice. Instead of the circumstance-response pair [C<the sight of a starry night sky>, R<firm belief that God is created this>] we get [C<the sight of the starry night sky>, R<there is no God>] or [C<the sight of the starry night sky>, R<the universe is the product of blind chance>]. Calvin makes much of the denial of God's providential care and control over the world (I.iv.2; I.v.11) and attributing to nature what should be attributed to God (I.v.4). So we need not think of misfires as being confined to denials of the existence of God (or beliefs which entail that God does not exist) but, at least for Calvin, they involve the more subtle corruption of the “pure and clear knowledge of God” (I.v.14). This corruption may be outright falsehoods in the religious sphere or truths which are vague or unclear (much like the inability of some people to see at a distance or up-close). Here again, we may assert degrees of malfunction.

**[M4]** For some or all snapshot design plans, S forms (or holds) a belief that p (or Pt) in some circumstance C, but S fails to form (or hold) the appropriate belief that Pt in C as dictated by the snapshot design plan.

### ***B. Degree of Belief and Defeater System Malfunctions***

There may also be strength of conviction failures. In **[D2]** I noted that the design plan specifies the degree of the strength of belief for circumstance-response pairs. Malfunction may be something like [C<sight of the starry night sky> & R<less than firm belief that God is present>]. Calvin emphasizes how the effects of sin on the human personality obscure the objective clarity of God's existence.<sup>11</sup> This malfunction, like the

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<sup>11</sup> Referring to Calvin's innate knowledge of God, as distinct from man's acquired (i.e., inferential) knowledge of God, Abraham Kuyper writes:

This knowledge of God was given *eo ipso* in his own self-consciousness; it was

others, may be exhibited at various times in a person's life, and this may range over some or all snapshot design plans as a person's cognitive life develops. Strength of belief malfunctions are those instances where the design plans calls for a doxastic response of a certain degree given the particular circumstances and yet the response lacks the appropriate oomph! Plantinga speaks several times about how if there were no sin, we would up and form theistic belief with a greater natural spontaneity than we in fact do.

**[M5]** For some or all snapshot design plans, S forms (or holds) the appropriate belief that Pt in circumstance C but S's belief that Pt is less than firm in C, and where the snapshot design plan dictates that S firmly believe Pt in C.

There are, however, some crucial qualifications required here. Decreased strength of belief, or failure to form (or hold) a belief, in some circumstances may actually be part of the design plan and so constitute proper function. This follows from the no-defeater requirement as a component of proper function. If defeater D is a partial defeater for S's belief that p at  $t_1$ , then if S is rational in holding p, S believes p less firmly at  $t_1$  than S did at  $t_{n-1}$ . If D is a complete defeater, rationality requires the deletion of the belief p from S's noetic structure. Now if there is a defeater-system along these lines, malfunction in a defeater system would be something like S's continuing to believe p with the same degree of firmness after the acquisition of a defeater as S did before the defeater

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not given as discursive knowledge, but as the immediate content of self-consciousness. . . .Before the fall, when no darkening had yet taken place, this immediate self-knowledge must have been much more potent and clear. And thus it could not be otherwise but that in this clear and immediate self-knowledge there was. . . .an equally immediate knowledge of God, the consciousness of which, from that very *image itself*, accompanied him who had been created in the image of God. . . .Calvin called this the seed of religion (*semen religionis*), by which he indicated that this innate knowledge of God is an ineradicable property of human nature, a spiritual eye in us, the lens of which may be dimmed, but always so that the lens, and consequently the eye, remains. (1980, p. 265)



acquisition. This seems to be something like doxastic tenacity. But in the case where S has an intrinsic defeater-defeater against some putative defeater, doxastic tenacity is entirely appropriate. In fact, as long as S has a defeater-defeater (of the appropriate sort), doxastic tenacity is not a cognitive dysfunction. The defect in view is better described as *doxastic stubbornness*: S's continuing to hold B (with the degree of firmness that he does) given the conjunction of a defeating condition and the absence of any defeater-defeater.

If the defeater system is built into the design plan as just considered, I see no reason why it wouldn't hold for theistic belief in particular. Surely, if a defeater system operates the way Plantinga suggests, it will operate this way for theistic belief too. It is simply one of the consequences of a person's having a cognitive design plan that includes a defeater system that this system will have consequences for the epistemic status of theistic belief in certain situations. So the design plan will, as I see it, dictate that S form a firm belief that Pt in some circumstance C *unless* there is some undefeated defeater for S's belief that Pt in C. So the belief <God created all this> may be the appropriate doxastic response to the simple circumstance C <sight of the starry night sky>, but not if the circumstance is complex C\* and includes strong reasons for believing that God does not exist (or for believing that C is not a warrant conferring circumstance for belief in God). To be sure, the circumstance would also have to exclude S's theistic belief having more by way of warrant than the defeater, but this is just to say that the circumstance must exclude defeater-defeaters (intrinsic or extrinsic). But it does appear that defeater system malfunction yields the following result:

**[M6]** For some or all snapshot design plans, S forms (or holds) the firm belief that Pt in some complex circumstance C\*, where C\* includes a (rebutting or undercutting) defeater to theistic belief, but the snapshot design plan dictates that, unless C\* includes defeater-defeaters, S should not form (or hold) the belief that Pt or not form (or hold) it with the degree of strength

that S does.

It might be thought that [M6] constitutes cognitive malfunction only if the defeater D in S's noetic structure N has much by way of warrant by virtue of being based on arguments which have a good deal of force given correct inductive standards. So, take the rebutting defeater [it is probable that <God does not exist>] given contingent evidence e, where e = an evidential argument from the existence of moral evil. Plantinga has claimed (1986e, p. 309) that such a defeater does not have much by way of warrant since no one has constructed a cogent atheological probabilistic argument from evil. Perhaps, then, we are **not** rational to believe a theistic proposition less firmly just because of such an apparent defeater. In other terms, it might be thought that the design plan specifies that we believe a theistic proposition less firmly (or not at all) only if a doxastic defeater against it is (at least) more probable than not on the evidence adduced given *correct* inductive standards.

This doesn't seem right though, and for several reasons. First, in Plantinga's view there are considerations in support of the notion that a belief can be defeater even if it has little by way of warrant.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, even given correct inductive standards, the epistemic probability value of h on e will still vary depending on both the evidence e and the logical capacities and knowledge of the subject. There is no obvious reason for thinking that no one will have a total evidence base such that it makes the negation of theism more probable than not. Thirdly, suppose the evidential probability of h on e is relative to S's

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<sup>12</sup> Plantinga suggests the following example. "I believe that there is a sheep in the pasture; you (the owner of the meadow) tell me there are no sheep in the neighborhood, although (as you add) you do own a dog who frequents the pasture and is indistinguishable from a sheep at 100 yards; I believe you. As it happens, you are lying (in order to demonstrate your liberation from pre-post-modern ideas about truth and truth telling). The belief I innocently form as a result of your mendacity has little or no warrant for me but is nonetheless a defeater for my belief that there is a sheep in the pasture" (1994a, pp. 23-24).

own inductive standards. What's wrong with that? Why should that not be in the ballpark for what is sufficient for constituting a legitimate defeater for theistic belief? It certainly affects the degree of belief, and on that account affects the degree of warrant. But why should the design plan not take subjective evidential probability values as having defeater relevance? Suppose further that it is not sufficient that  $\langle \text{God does not exist} \rangle$  is rendered more probable than not given S's own inductive standards. Surely we can add something like "and S has checked (sufficiently by S's own standards) to see that he has good reason to believe that his inductive standards measure up to correct standards." Fourthly, worst case scenario. S's inductive standards contain false logical beliefs and S's noetic structure contains several irrational noetic sectors. These false beliefs and irrational sectors may well have consequences for what it is rational for S to believe (especially where these sectors contain logical beliefs, such as what is evidence for what). It may be that a defeater generated by false inductive standards is sufficient to call for revision in one's noetic structure. Plantinga has made the very interesting observation that a belief may be rational even if the noetic structure to which it belongs is not rational. More specifically, given some irrational belief and circumstance, the rational thing is to hold p (where if one didn't hold the irrational belief the rational thing might be not to hold p, or even to hold not-p). "Given that I have to come to believe (perhaps irrationally) that this dog is trying to drive me insane, the rational thing to do is to give up my previous view that dogs never intentionally set out to drive people insane" (1994a, pp. 22-23). Similarly it seems that if S's own inductive standards (false or irrational as they are) make some proposition p more probable than not, then - all other things being equal - the rational thing is to believe p. What else could S be expected to do? It is hard to see how we could have knowledge unless we followed our own inductive standards and thus on occasion reasoned in accord with false inductive standards. The person for whom the nonexistence of God is in fact

more probable than not given his (incorrect) inductive standards will it seems, *ceteris paribus*, be rational in withholding theistic belief, especially if he has considered the matter and found no reason to doubt his inductive standards and has no evidence to the contrary.

### III. NonBasic Theistic Belief and Proper Function

Having established some of the forms of cognitive malfunction with respect to the SD-module, the proper role of reasons may now be explicated.

#### A. *Theistic Relevant Cognitive Modules*

In the last chapter I developed a case for partial immediate/mediate beliefs, beliefs based on reasons and experiential grounds (where each contributed partial sustaining or evidential support, or both). The reason for this, citing Plantinga, was that doubts may enter into a person's noetic structure so that they do not hold the belief with the degree of firmness required for warrant (or the degree of warrant sufficient, with true belief, for knowledge). Basic beliefs are compatible with degrees of doubt, and reasons may assuage those doubts considerably, and may also contribute to the evidential support of beliefs (in fact may do the former by doing the latter). What this tells us is that the *sensus divinitatis*, even if an immediate mode of belief production and sustenance, is not the only module responsible for or relevant to the formation and sustenance of theistic beliefs. Plantinga of course stresses the immediate mode, but in fact by admitting that reasons may increase the degree of warrant, there must be a place for additional theistic relevant modules in the cognitive system (or a broader sense of the SD-module).

There are two moves open to Plantinga. One is to say that the design plan specifies that *in sin unaffected conditions*, the proper functioning cognitive system will form belief in God in an immediate fashion and only in such a fashion, but that matters are different in a sin affected environment. There is what we might call a *pre-lapsarian snapshot design plan* and a *post-lapsarian snapshot design plan*. The human cognitive system acquires a new design plan as a result of being damaged by sin. Up to this point I have been referring to snapshot design plans independent of this sort of distinction, but I think it can easily be integrated into the picture. We can simply think of the pre- and post-lapsarian design plans as containing further sub-plans which range over the sorts of considerations introduced earlier (e.g., mental maturation and educational exposure). So the master design plan will recognize reasons contributing to warrant for the post-lapsarian snapshot design plan (and all its sub-plans), but not before then. Alternatively, the master design plan may specify that for both pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian man, reasons may make a contribution to the warrant of theistic belief, or may be a sufficient ground for warranted beliefs about God. Plantinga himself admits (1991) that reason may contribute to the warrant of theistic belief. This implies that reasons are at least worked into the post-lapsarian design plan, for reasons could not increase the degree of warrant for theistic belief under circumstances of doubt or wavering belief if believing at least in part on the basis of propositional evidence did not constitute proper function. Although I think this should be extended to the pre-lapsarian design plan, I will proceed on the more modest position that propositional evidence plays the role it does in conferring warrant given a post-lapsarian design plan.

The question, then, is what other modules could be responsible for generating or sustaining theistic beliefs? There may indeed be modules that produce immediate theistic beliefs other than the *sensus divinitatis*, if for instance God exists is a self-evident or a

*priori* truth. (Or perhaps this just indicates a broader function of the *sensus divinitatis*). Perhaps the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is relevant here, as Plantinga himself has suggested. Human testimony is certainly another source of knowledge, and one that I indicated earlier is quite active with respect to the acquisition of religious beliefs in children. It is not clear, though, whether testimony should be regarded as an immediate or mediate source of belief.<sup>13</sup> Testimony aside for the moment, it seems that a large part of our cognitive set-up is devoted to believing things on the basis of other things we believe. And theistic belief is no exception to this, however one chooses to cut the design-plan cake. What we learn from our other sources of belief may indeed furnish a noetic structure with the sorts of propositions that can provide (causal and evidential) support for various theistic beliefs. The history of natural theology provides a wealth of such instances. Through sensory perception we gain knowledge of our immediate physical environment, an external world consisting of many sorts of physical objects (of differing sizes, shapes, and volumes) which interact in certain ways. With the assistance of scientific instruments such as microscopes and telescopes we gain knowledge about very small objects (cells and viruses) and very large, distant objects (planets, stars, galaxies). We observe regularities of various sorts that reveal spatial and temporal order. Reasoning from experience we formulate statements about laws which operate within the universe

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<sup>13</sup> Following Reid, Plantinga takes beliefs based on testimony to be at least typically *immediately* warranted (1993b, p. 79). The nonbasicality of testimonial beliefs in some instances he holds to be the result of various modifications and qualifications to testimony which develop with new experience which often induces skepticism regarding the testimony of certain people under certain circumstances. To this I would add that even if testimonial beliefs are not the result of an explicit process of reasoning, they may still be based on other beliefs and so qualify as mediately justified. Take the situation where  $S_1$  believes that  $p$  because  $S_2$  told  $S_1$  that  $p$ . It is plausible to suppose that  $S_1$ 's belief that  $p$  may be based on the belief that  $S_2$  asserted that  $p$ ,  $S_2$  is reliable, or maybe that the belief that  $S_2$  is justified in believing that  $p$ . If we broaden the sense of mediate beliefs, we can plausibly view many testimonial beliefs as mediate which otherwise we would think of as immediate because of an undue focus on explicit processes of inference as the model of mediate belief.

and account for the behavior and interaction of physical objects. Here we have the basic data out of which cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God have been formulated.<sup>14</sup> Sensory experience, testimony, memory, induction, intuition (mathematical, logical, and philosophical), introspection, and extrospection are all (at least potentially) relevant to theistic belief. Basic and nonbasic sources of belief would seem to provide theistic relevant evidences.<sup>15</sup>

### ***B. Reasons and Malfunctions***

Given the plethora of cognitive malfunctions canvassed above which can and do plague humans in the SD-module, it would be important to have recourse within our cognitive environment to ground theistic belief in other ways, such as suggested above.<sup>16</sup> In the last chapter I noted that reasons may contribute to the epistemic status of theistic belief, especially where there are doubts. Depending on the person in question, and the specific ways in which the noetic effects of sin have been instantiated in them, it may

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<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the Barthian tradition and Plantinga (as presently on record), I believe that there is a case for this in Calvin's discussion on man's natural knowledge of God in Book I, chapters 1-5, of *the Institutes*. For the argument, see my "The Prospects for 'Mediate' Natural Theology in John Calvin" (1995b).

<sup>15</sup> By "theistic relevant," I mean evidences which severally or conjointly either entail or render probable theistic propositions. I would also include here phenomena that, though not making theistic propositions probable, are the sorts of phenomena that we might expect if various theistic propositions are true and so increase the probability of theistic propositions.

<sup>16</sup> If one thinks that the SD-module includes both immediate and mediate cognitive operations (as Wykstra 1995 has recently suggested), the account which follows could be restated in terms of the [M1]-[M6] malfunctions relative to two distinct ranges of operation, one immediate and another mediate. In that case, the argument here would be that malfunctions in the SD-module's immediate functions increases the importance of its proper function with regard to the range of its inferential operations.

well be that reasons may strengthen the person's degree of belief. Perhaps the person has formed a variety of warranted beliefs about the empirical world, and these beliefs provide some degree of support for the proposition that God exists. Assuming that the person sees that these beliefs do support belief in God, they may well add warrant to a theistic belief otherwise held solely on the basis of experience. There is no guarantee, of course, that each person who has such evidence will see that they indeed have reasons for believing in God (perhaps sin has affected their reasoning capacity in that respect). But it is reasonable to assume that some people at some times in certain situations will see reasons for believing in God which will strengthen their belief (otherwise) based on experiential conditions.

It seems equally clear, though, that for some people reasons could provide the sole basis for (at least some) theistic beliefs. The importance of this becomes quite evident when we scan the sorts of malfunctions explicated above. Some people are simply not able to form much less sustain theistic beliefs on the basis of the widely realized conditions we looked at. I take this to be an empirical fact (though I am giving it a theological/philosophical explanation as malfunction due to sin). If there are a plethora of sources for theistic belief, there will be prospects for such individuals to have theistic beliefs that could be based on other sources. Temporary SD doxastic flat lining may even be overcome by the sustenance of theistic belief on reasons for a time. Propositional grounds at time  $t_1$  which serve to highlight theistic-relevant features of the created world may lead to stimulating the SD-module so that at some later time  $t_2$  the person forms theistic belief on the immediate basis of those widely realized experiential conditions.



Given the variety of ways in which the flat lining phenomenon may manifest itself, the availability of reasons may prove essential to the sustenance of some theistic beliefs over particular periods of time.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the possibility of deception to varying degrees was also a clear problem encountered above. As in the case of nontheistic beliefs, so in the case of theistic beliefs, what can be known from other sources may serve as a corrective for error in one source.

The argument from defeaters creates a similar need for propositional grounds. Doubts about the veridical nature of immediate sources of theistic belief, generated by defeaters, may be legitimate (as in the case of sensory perceptual beliefs). The same is true when doubts arise because of arguments against the existence of God. Perhaps the design plan indicates the following sorts of circumstance-response pairs:

(1)

C<sight of starry-night sky>

R<firm belief that God created all this>

(7)

C<(i)sight of starry-night sky & (ii)the problem of evil>

R<less than firm belief that God created all this>

(8)

C<(i)sight of starry-night sky, (ii) the problem of evil, & (iii) reason to believe that God exists>

R<firm belief that God created all this>

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<sup>17</sup> Compare this line of reasoning with Alston 1995 (p.401). Alston stipulates a design plan in which certain faculties for producing immediate beliefs have been badly damaged by sin (and are now unreliable). But the development of various ways of making inferences from what is immediately known becomes a reliable mode of belief formation for propositions originally grasped immediately. Although Alston is focusing solely on reliability, I have been trying to

I noted in the last chapter that in some cases, especially where the defeater (rebutting or undercutting) to theistic belief is weak, an undercutting defeater-defeater would be sufficient to defeat the initial defeater and restore warrant to theistic belief. This suggests that in the design plan we would find matters a bit more detailed and complex, so as to allow for something like:

(9)

C<(i) sight of starry-night sky, (ii) the problem of evil, (iii) good reason to believe that (ii) is either invalid or unsound>

R<firm belief that God created all this>

Whether the appropriate response should be *firm* belief in God will depend on *how* good the reasons are for believing that the argument from evil does not succeed. And as I have argued, this will normally be true given S's own inductive standards. But a very likely situation is that an undercutting defeater-defeater (as in (9)) is not strong enough (due to either its own intrinsic weakness or relative to the force of the initial defeater) to sustain a *firm* belief in God unless a rebutting defeater-defeater is brought into the picture. This will be more common I think in cases where the initial defeater is itself a rebutting defeater (and so a reason not to believe in God). As suggested above if the rebutting defeater-defeater is itself of a high degree of force for S, then an undercutting defeater-defeater will not even be necessary. If the rebutting (or undercutting) defeater is of a high degree of force for S, an undercutting defeater-defeater may not be sufficient. That would also seem to be determined by how strong (given S's own inductive

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locate the sort of contingencies he draws attention to in a master design plan.

standards) the undercutting defeater-defeater is. But it is plausible to suppose that, given a particular objection to theistic belief which carries some fairly high degree of force, undercutting and rebutting defeater-defeaters together constitute the severally necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for restoring warrant to theistic belief. As already noted a person who continues to hold theistic belief with the same degree of firmness in the presence of defeaters is subject to cognitive malfunction. What is required here is a defeater-defeater. For some it may be that their basic theistic belief is an intrinsic defeater-defeater. For others extrinsic defeater-defeaters will be required, and some will be undercutters and others rebutters. Therefore, for many people reasons to believe that initial defeaters to theistic belief are not efficacious, or reasons to believe that theistic beliefs are true, may be necessary for remaining warranted in particular theistic beliefs, or at least warranted to a degree sufficient for transforming true belief into knowledge.

There is obviously the contributory role which propositional grounds may play here. There may be situations in which, as a result of defeaters, theistic belief is sustained by both experiential and propositional grounds. The design plan may call for the sorts of evidential situations developed in the last chapter. Given the no-defeater condition, a person who believes at  $t_1$  that he has a partial defeater for his basic theistic belief will be rational in holding his theistic belief at  $t_2$  with the degree of firmness he did before acquiring the defeater only if it is (at least) partly sustained at  $t_2$  by propositional evidence (assuming that this is not a case of an intrinsic defeater-defeater). Moreover, where an undercutting defeater-defeater is not sufficient even to partly sustain the theistic belief, it would seem that a rebutting defeater is necessary. So natural theology would be

crucial for S's remaining rational in holding his theistic belief with the degree of firmness he does. But the account asks for a further step to be made. Reasons may become sufficient grounds for (at least some of) a person's theistic beliefs. This will be the case not merely because of the no-defeater condition, but because of the range of cognitive malfunctions to which the SD-module is subject. The SD-module was designed for a certain epistemic environment, and it is not an overstatement to say that Hume has complicated that environment.<sup>18</sup> To drop Pauline theology in the lap of the epistemological discussion: By one man sin entered the world and by sin objections to theistic belief, and so defeated theistic belief passed over many people. For some of these people it may be necessary that their theistic belief receive support (partial or total) from other sources of belief if they are to remain warranted in their theistic belief. Justification may be by faith; warrant may require reasons.

The conclusion I reach then is malfunction in the SD-module (and the defeater system) significantly increases the importance of reasons and mediate warrant for theistic belief. Put more strikingly (for those of a Reformed theological orientation): if total depravity is true, then natural theology is necessary.

**[D3]** Given any person S, if S suffers from SD theistic malfunctions (**[M1]**-**[M6]**), then reasons may either contribute to warranted basic belief or may constitute the sole (sufficient) ground for theistic belief.

An objection to the present argument is that it fails to take into consideration the

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<sup>18</sup> Here I am sympathetic to John Greco's claim (1994) that "natural theology, or the use of natural reason, is necessary for knowledge regarding theistic beliefs at least in epistemically hostile conditions" (p. 195). My only caveat is that the word "necessary" here should not be used without qualification for reasons already discussed.

implications of the noetic effects of sin on the rest of the human cognitive system. Advocates of total depravity within the Reformed theological tradition will emphasize this point. The SD-module is not the only part of man's cognitive establishment that has been affected by sin. Man's reasoning in the broadest sense has been corrupted by sin. The prospects of mediate natural knowledge of God are as problematic as immediate natural knowledge of God.

The appropriate response to this objection is to clarify the doctrine of total depravity. Man is not as bad as he can be, but every aspect of his being is pervaded by the influence of sin.<sup>19</sup> Fine and well. Does it follow that every faculty is equally affected by malfunction as a result of this influence? Perhaps an analogy can be drawn from the volitional and moral effects of sin. The effects of sin on humans will lead some people to steal, others to commit murder, and others to fail to offer God the worship due Him. Point being, not every person is affected by sin in the same way such that each commits the same sins or has the same propensities toward the same wrong doing. Likewise, the noetic effects of sin are manifold and instantiated in different ways in different people. Some people may be unable to form belief in God in a mediate fashion; others might be unable to form belief in God in an immediate fashion. In some sin prevents belief in God altogether (sometimes only for a time; at other times for a person's whole life). Others are

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<sup>19</sup> Calvin holds that sin does *not* totally destroy the powers of human reason. "When we so condemn human understanding for its perpetual blindness as to leave it with no perception of any object whatever, we not only go against God's Word, but also run counter to the experience of common sense. For we see implanted in human nature some sort of desire to search out the truth to which man would not at all aspire if he had not already savored it. Human understanding then possesses some power of perception, since it is by nature captivated by love of truth. The lack of this endowment in brute animals proves their nature gross and irrational" (*Institutes*, II.ii.12).

unable to see how certain evidence counts for or against the existence of God. Others see this but are not thereby moved to piety and the love and worship of God.<sup>20</sup> The noetic effects of sin are not invariable under their instantiations, even as moral effects are not. What we must say I think is that different segments or modules of a person's noetic structure may be affected, to different degrees, and with a multiplicity of results.<sup>21</sup> Epistemic corruption or malfunction of the SD-module leaves open in principle the possibility that other modules of one's noetic structure *might* nonetheless allow one to assess evidence and form belief in God on the basis of reasons. The existence of God may not be evident in the SD triggering conditions but it may be made evident by argument. Total depravity, then, rather than militating against natural theology actually supports the development of theistic arguments.

Let us say, then, that a noetic structure has a *potential* theistic path just if theistic relevant evidence is (or at least can be) generated or sustained by some cognitive module. The path will be *actual* if the evidence is both generated and taken account of in the formation or sustenance of a theistic belief at some point. So where the potential path from the SD-module to theistic belief is fractured or in some way defective, some people

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<sup>20</sup> Calvin sees this as the chief *noetic* effect of sin. Since the pure knowledge of God that has been corrupted by sin has an ethical or moral dimension, it is not merely propositional but existential in character. It involves man's being affected in a certain manner that stimulates a particular religious consciousness and practice. See *Institutes* (I.ii.1-2) and Dowey 1994 (pp. 24-31).

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, for instance, makes a general distinction between the powers of the intellect regarding "earthly things" and "heavenly things" (*Institutes*, II.ii.14-18). Total depravity is held to be consistent with the acquisition of a broad range of truths in the natural sphere (e.g., common sense, liberal arts, and science). What Calvin failed to clearly note (perhaps due to his existential conception of the knowledge of God) is how earthly truths may support heavenly truths, though chapter 5 of book I of the *Institutes* shows that he was cognizant of the fact.

will have other theistic paths and these may prove necessary for *their* forming or holding some theistic belief in some circumstance(s).

**[D4]** There are some people S\* such that (a) S\* suffer from some warrant (or epistemic) defeating SD-module malfunction, (b) there is some theistic path generated or sustained by some other (at least) minimally properly functioning cognitive module(s) M, and (c) S\*'s belief that Pt is warranted only if it is based on evidence from M.<sup>22</sup>

It follows from **[D4]** that (so far as the post-lapsarian snapshot design plan is concerned) for some people in some circumstances reasons will be *necessary* for their belief in God to have warrant (or indeed necessary even for some people to have a belief in God at all). And where these reasons provide adequate support for theistic belief, believing on the basis of these reasons will be both necessary and sufficient for warranted theistic belief. A further consequence is this: for the same people a noetic structure in which theistic belief is nonbasic will be epistemically superior to one in which, if they believe, theistic belief is basic. For it will be possible for some people who believe in God in a basic way to do so without that belief being *properly* basic (i.e., basic and rational), while if they believe on the basis of adequate reasons the module(s) responsible for theistic belief will be functioning properly.

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<sup>22</sup> The exact wording here should be noted. In (a) it is *warrant*-defeating malfunction. It is possible that some slight degree of malfunction in a module will not prevent the production of a (particular) warranted belief, especially when the malfunction in question does not range over the entire operation of a module. But there will be a point at which the degree (or extent) of malfunction will prevent warrant, and it is at that point that other modules become relevant for warranted theistic belief. These other modules may themselves suffer from some degree of malfunction, but that is fine so long as it does not prevent warrant altogether. By “minimally properly functioning” in (b) I am allowing that a module may have less than optimal performance and still confer warrant. The “minimal” in question will be whatever minimum is compatible with the production or maintenance of warranted theistic belief(s).

So we may deduce the following two principles from the preceding discussion.

- [R5] For some people  $S^*$  in some complex circumstance  $C^*$ ,  $S^*$ 's belief that  $P_t$  is warranted and/or rational if and only if it is wholly based on adequate reasons (generated by a cognitive module which produces or sustains theistic relevant evidence), and where  $C^*$  includes warrant defeating malfunction (from the set [M1]-[M6]) on the SD-module.
- [R6] For some people  $S^*$  in some complex circumstance  $C^*$ , a noetic structure  $N_1$  in which  $S^*$ 's belief that  $P_t$  is wholly nonbasic is synchronically epistemically superior to a noetic structure  $N_2$  in which  $S^*$ 's belief that  $P_t$  is wholly or partly basic, and where  $C^*$  at least includes warrant defeating malfunction (from the M-set) on the SD-module.

#### IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to establish two main claims. First, given the numerous ways that the SD-module may malfunction (in fact does for various people), mediate modes of theistic belief formation and sustenance become very important for the rational and warranted status of theistic belief, even to the point where reasons constitute the sufficient basis for belief in God. Secondly, defeater system malfunctions suggest that a person may not be rational in continuing to hold theistic belief (or to hold it with a certain degree of firmness) as basic given the appropriate sort of defeater. Given this sort of malfunction though, the possession of propositional evidence in the form of undercutting or rebutting defeater-defeaters becomes necessary for rationality. As in the last chapter, I have further considered the complex factors involved in determining whether a rebutting or undercutting defeater is needed for rationality given that  $S$  believes that he has a defeater for his theistic belief (and assuming that his theistic belief is not an intrinsic defeater-defeater). The argument from SD-module cognitive malfunction provides confirmation for the kinds of conclusions reached in the prior chapter regarding the epistemic necessity and superiority of partial sustaining and overdetermining reasons



for theistic belief. Moreover, I believe there is a very plausible case for extending those arguments to noetic structures in which theistic belief is wholly nonbasic. If Plantinga's position on warrant and proper function is true, and we add to it the existential claims of cognitive malfunction, then modest evidentialism seems to be true.