

Is there a pervasive bias against theism in psychology?

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Abstract

To address the title question, the authors first conceptualize the worldview of theism in relation to its historical counterpart in Western culture, naturalism. Many scholars view the worldview of naturalism as not only important to traditional science but also neutral to theism. This neutrality has long provided the justification for psychological science to inform and even correct theistic understandings. Still, this view of neutrality, as the authors show, stems from the presumption that these two worldviews are philosophically compatible. The authors' review of the traditional candidates for compatibility suggests not only that these candidates fail to reconcile naturalism and theism but also that these worldviews are fundamentally *incompatible*. Therefore, attempts to use the insights gleaned from a naturalistic worldview to inform or correct the understandings of a theistic worldview could constitute a significant prejudice against theism and theists. The authors then provide practical examples of this prejudice in: 1) mainstream psychology and its history, 2) research design and explanation in the psychology of religion, and 3) interpretations of important philosophers and scholars relevant to psychology.

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The APA Council of Representatives (2007) recently adopted a resolution on religious prejudice. It reads, in part: “BE IT RESOLVED that the American Psychological Association condemns prejudice and discrimination against individuals or groups based on their religious or spiritual beliefs, practices, adherence, or background” (p. 3). As recent as this particular resolution is, it affirms a long ethical tradition in which psychologists and other professionals have attempted to avoid a wide range of “discriminatory practices” against religious people¹ (p. 1). The difficulty is, as the resolution later notes, many of these prejudices and practices are so “covert” and so institutionalized that they often go unnoticed (p. 2).

The present article describes one category of these hidden prejudices that even the resolution document does not recognize: the prejudice against theism in the theories and interpretations of many psychologists. This prejudice does not occur with full awareness or explicit intention. It occurs, instead, in what Taylor (2007) calls the “social imaginary” or background understanding of many psychologists² (p. 171). In the lexicon of those who study prejudice, it is a type of “implicit prejudice” (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002, p. 62) and stems primarily from the implicit professional framework of the interpreter. This prejudice is so unintentional or so unimaginable that psychologists who engage in it often perceive themselves to be adhering strictly to APA ethical injunctions against religious bias.

Part of the reason for this perception, as we will attempt to show, is that many psychologists understand their discipline’s secular stance as a type of neutrality or nonpartisanship with respect to theistic religion. They may view their psychological scholarship as outside of or indifferent to the issue, neither caring about nor taking a professional position on theistic religion. Nevertheless, we will argue that this view of their neutrality toward theism is

part of the prejudice against it. We do not refer here to an absolute neutrality, the “view from nowhere.” We refer, instead, to the presumption of a type of compatibility with theism that assumes that the findings, explanations, and theories of secular psychology are automatically applicable to and informative of the practical world of theistic meanings and persons, a population that constitutes the majority of psychology’s consumers (Richards & Bergin, 2005).

As we will attempt to describe, this perceived neutrality or compatibility results in unconscious practices that discriminate against theism in a host of ways, including not only the obvious omission of theistic considerations from psychology’s mainstream but also the more subtle discrediting of theism as a serious interpretive and explanatory framework. Indeed, this discrediting has prompted important observers of academic scholarship, such as George Marsden (1997), to wonder why there are no theistic schools of thought “to compare with various Marxist, feminist, gay, post-modern, conservative, or liberal schools of thought.” (p. 6). Charles Taylor (2007) also notes how a theistic interpretive framework is commonly understood as superfluous, with its many forms explained away by economic or social structures that deny “any independent motivating force to religion” (Taylor, p. 433, 452-453).

To explicate these prejudices and practices, we first conceptualize theism in relation to its historical counterpart in Western culture, naturalism. Many scholars view naturalism as not only important to traditional science but also neutral to theism. This view of neutrality, as we show, stems from the presumption that naturalism and theism are fundamentally compatible. Yet, our review of the traditional candidates for compatibility suggests not only that these candidates fail to reconcile naturalism and theism but also that these worldviews are fundamentally *incompatible*. Therefore, attempts to use the insights gleaned from a naturalistic worldview to inform or correct the understandings of a theistic worldview constitute a significant prejudice

against theism and theists. We then provide practical examples of this prejudice in: 1) mainstream psychology and its history, 2) research design and explanation in the psychology of religion, and 3) interpretations of important philosophers and scholars relevant to psychology.

Conceptualizing Theism

In order to clearly define theism, especially for a science such as psychology, we must understand its relation to what many consider the fundamental worldview of traditional science—naturalism (cf. Griffin, 2000). Naturalism is, after all, “science’s central dogma” (Leahey, 1991, p. 379). It directs psychologists to appeal to and study only natural events and processes, not “supernatural” events and processes, to understand and explain psychological phenomena (Collins, 1977; Griffin, 2000; Gunton, 1993; Leahey, 1991; Russell, 2002; Smith, 2001; Richards & Bergin, 2005). As Taylor (2007) explains, this “self-sufficient immanent order” is “envisaged without reference to God” (p. 543) and constitutes the “naturalistic rejection of the transcendent” (p. 548). But this conception of naturalism, especially the study of only natural events, begs the methodological question: do we have to assume the nonexistence of theistic entities to study only natural events and processes? In other words, can we assume a mere epistemological or methodological naturalism without also assuming an ontological or metaphysical naturalism?

These questions get complicated, as we will show, but many scholars recognize that all epistemologies are underlain with ontological assumptions and vice versa (e.g., Nelson, 2009; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Why, for example, would methodological naturalists focus on just natural events and processes unless they assume, for the purposes of their investigation, that supernatural events and processes are not relevant, or do not functionally exist, for that study? Another way to put this is that if supernatural events and processes were

considered to functionally exist in a difference-making way, and thus be important to the phenomena of study, then the methods derived from studying only natural events and processes would be considered inadequate to the task. The point here is that the naturalism at issue in this paper, whether it is labeled ontological or epistemological, makes the pre-investigatory assumption that the supernatural is not needed for conceptualizing, conducting, or explaining scholarship and investigation in psychological science.

What, then, is the relation of this naturalism to theism? There is no question the two worldviews are different, but how different are they? Some scholars contend that the two worldviews are incompatible (e.g., Collins, 1977; Gunton, 1993; Leahey, 1991; Smith, 2001; Richards & Bergin, 2005), while others treat these worldviews as completely, if not primarily, compatible (e.g., Griffin, 2000; Murphy, 1990; Russell, 2002; Wacome, 2003). Both factions of the controversy seem to agree that the two worldviews disagree on the importance of the supernatural, or God for the theists. Theism necessarily assumes that a currently active God (or Gods³) is necessary for understanding the world; the world is “indissolubly connected to God,” including the psychological world (Taylor, 2007, p. 594). The good life, for example, “is inconceivable without God” (Taylor, 2007, p. 544). As philosopher Alvin Plantinga (2001) describes it, “God is already and always intimately acting in nature which depends from moment to moment . . . upon divine activity” (p. 350).

This understanding of theism means that the two worldviews can be contrasted in the following manner: naturalism is concerned only with natural events and processes, while theism is concerned with supernatural events and processes. The two worldviews differ on the importance of God, but this particular difference does not mean that theism is *unconcerned* with “natural events and processes.” On the contrary, theistic scholars have a long tradition of natural

theology, going back to patristic authors such as Maximus the Confessor, who look to nature for signs about and even arguments for God's nature and existence (Nelson, 2009). As the above quotation from Plantinga (2001) illustrates, theists see the supernatural, specifically the activity of God, as "already and always intimately" involved with nature and the natural world (p. 350).

Nevertheless, this theistic interest in nature does not mean that natural theologians understand nature the same way as naturalists. In fact, the nature of natural events and processes may be an important, if often unarticulated, distinction between the theist and the naturalist. The theist perceives nature to be in continuous relation to God's activity, while the naturalist sees this activity as irrelevant, at best. In this sense, the two groups understand even natural events and processes quite differently—as different experienced realities.

If this difference in understanding is true, then the findings and explanations of a naturalistic psychology should not be *automatically* viewed as applicable to or corrective of theistic understandings.⁴ Yet, we have found no books or articles in psychology that distinguish among their readers on this basis. Most psychologists seem to believe, instead, that virtually all naturalistic psychological findings and explanations are just as relevant to and informative of the theist as the naturalist. Indeed, many psychology of religion researchers make similar, implicit assumptions about the findings and explanations of their studies. Even theists in the psychology of religion contend that "faith and [naturalistic] observation cannot ultimately contradict" (Looy, 2003, p. 303) and that psychological research is the "window through which we are able to understand behavior" (VanderStoep, 2003, p. 109). These researchers may see themselves as part of the natural theology tradition, but they treat the findings and explanations of psychology as though they were neutral to a theistic interpretive framework. We believe this treatment by theists on theistic topics, such as prayer and conversion, indicates that many, if not most,

psychologists presume the compatibility of their findings and explanations for both naturalists and theists (Griffin, 2000; Russell, 2002; cf. Slife & Ellertson, 2004; Wacome, 2005).

This presumption is understandable considering that there are seemingly two great sets of truths in modern Western society – the truths of science, which often assume naturalism, and the truths of religion, which frequently assume theism (Griffin, 2000; Smith, 2001; Taylor, 2007).

The notion that such truths are ultimately unified has led many to assume that the two worldviews are compatible, even if this compatibility is rarely made explicit. After all, many psychologists are professionally or personally committed to naturalistic science *and* they believe in God. Many nontheistic psychologists are also sensitive to the faith traditions of others, but they hold that their research findings are not incompatible with these faith systems. In both cases, psychologists presume that it is possible to discover and explain psychological findings in ways that are true to both the naturalism of traditional science and the theism of many religions.

Relations Among Worldview Assumptions

This presumed compatibility, we believe, is the root of the perception that psychological science and its theories are not biased against theism (cf. Taylor, 2007). If theism is compatible with naturalism, then any science based on naturalism does not essentially violate the assumptions and values of theism. Although these two systems may have one or more differing assumptions (e.g., the necessity of God), many assumptions are thought to be in common (e.g., order, truth). Indeed, many psychologists seem to view theism as merely naturalism plus God (e.g., Wacome, 2005). Consequently, the theories and findings of a naturalistic psychology are thought to be just as valid for theists as they are for naturalists. The findings are considered impartial; just add God to satisfy the theist.

This particular type of assumption, what we could call *add-on assumptions*, is a pivotal condition of this compatibility. Add-on assumptions must be complementary to and/or independent of the common assumptions to which they are added. That is, add-on assumptions cannot change the meaning of already existing assumptions. These assumptions must be relatively self-contained ideas? (similar to scientific variables or objects) that do not essentially change in relation to one another. They may “interact” or “combine,” but they retain their original essence. Analogous to the many combinations of carbon and oxygen elements in chemistry, the essential elements of add-on assumptions, and those they interact with, are considered to retain their basic identities.

On the other hand, if two worldviews are *incompatible* assumptive systems, then their differing assumptions are not add-on assumptions. They are, instead, what we could call *altering assumptions*, because their inclusion alters the meaning of many existing assumptions. They are not self-contained ideas, but are better understood as parts of wholes, where the properties of parts mutually constitute their very natures. From this relational perspective (Slife & Richardson, 2008), even one assumption that differs among systems could mean a dramatic change in much of the rest of the system, and thus other assumptions as parts. In this sense, the different systems of assumptions (worldviews) would be better understood as incompatible, with the notion of neutrality between them considered “bogus” (Taylor, p. 560; see also pp. 555, 558).

As an example in the naturalism/theism issue, many scholars would call attention to the common assumption of order for both worldviews. Indeed, some historians contend that this assumption of a naturalistic worldview is a historical residue of traditional theism (e.g., Russell, 2002). God may have created the order, but the scientist now attempts to discover it. If the differing assumptions of naturalism and theism are merely add-on assumptions, then naturalistic

psychological researchers are discovering the order of the psychological world for *both* worldviews, an order that is neutral to either the naturalistic or the theistic view of the world. If, on the other hand, some of the differing assumptions are altering assumptions, then the common word “order” could refer to radically different meanings or experienced (hermeneutic) realities, in which case a naturalistic order might be incompatible in important ways with a theistic order. Common linguistic terms, such as “order,” could be part of what covers over or blurs such differences in meaning.

Another important example of a possible assumption, or set of assumptions, that is often considered to be held in common between naturalistic and theistic worldviews is the notion of truth. The unity of truth (or even Truth) is a strong assumption in Western culture (cf. VanderStoep, 2003; Looy, 2003). As mentioned above, this conception assumes that truths, if they are really truthful, are essentially the same regardless of the worldview that might be associated with them. Valid findings of psychology, in this sense, would be just as valid or truthful for the theist as they would for the naturalist (cf. APA Resolution, 2007). Again, from this perspective, the theist would merely need to presume a God that only “adds on” and does not alter the assumption of truth.

What about the God assumption—a currently active God—in this regard? Here, most scholars seem to agree that this assumption is one of the pivotal differences between the two worldviews (Colin, 1977; Griffin, 2000; Taylor, 2007; Slife & Whoolery, 2006). Is this theistic assumption an altering assumption? If it is, then the meaning of other assumptions, such as order and truth, are also altered, and thus the naturalistic understandings and explanations of psychological science are not only distinct from similar theistic meanings but also incompatible with them. This incompatibility, in turn, provides a basis for bias against the understandings and

explanations of theism. On the other hand, if this active God assumption is an add-on assumption, all or most of the theories and explanations of naturalistic psychology are potentially compatible with theistic religious understandings, because the major assumptive distinction between the two worldviews does not essentially change other assumptions. This compatibility would imply that the meanings of order and truth are essentially unchanged with an add-on God.

Examining Conceptions of Compatibility

We first examine the possibility of compatibility. After all, most psychologists have conducted their research and formulated their theorizing with this understanding. If they had not assumed this compatibility, these psychologists would be conducting research and formulating theories with intentional prejudices and violating their own code of ethics. Indeed, many psychologists believe not only that their work is compatible with theism but also that the findings and theories produced through the worldview of naturalism should *correct* the beliefs generated through the worldview of theism (e.g., Weaver, 2003).

Let us consider the following questions as we look at some of the primary philosophical justifications for presuming this compatibility. Do these justifications hold up under critical examination? People from the same physical world can surely use these different worldviews, but do they illuminate the same world of meanings, the same “reality” (e.g., findings, explanations), with only a few minor (add-on) differences? Of course, people can and, we believe, should compare these different illuminations and worlds of meanings. After all, as Bernstein (1983) notes, their incompatibility would not necessitate their incommensurability or even their incomparability (Slife, 2000). Nevertheless, the important question for our purposes is: should meanings from the world of the naturalist *routinely* be thought to inform and correct meanings from the world of the theist?

In science, this question has often been answered with an appeal to the objective (e.g., Griffin, 2000; Leahey, 1991). The naturalistic worldview is considered to get the perceiver closer to the objective, and thus the common or compatible world (e.g., through the scientific method), whereas the theistic worldview is thought to be more subjective, and thus less accurate about these potential commonalities. The naturalistic is the more neutral and real, whereas the theistic is the more biased and fanciful. This perception has led to the familiar notions that theism is more meaning-oriented, variable, and dogmatic than naturalism. These notions exist, in part, because *naturalism* is often mistaken for *natural*, the supposedly common events between the two worldviews. However, once it is understood that our focus is the *worldview* of naturalism—or world of meanings in the Heideggerian sense—and not the *physical world* per se, naturalism can be viewed as just as meaning-oriented (Slife, 2004), varied (Griffin, 2000), and even dogmatic (Leahey, 1991) as theism. Once this is understood, naturalism has a tougher task in being neutral to or compatible with theism.

Nevertheless, the popularity of science, in particular, has led to numerous attempts in Western culture, formal and informal, to make them compatible (cf. Taylor, 2007). Two main categories of conceptions are typically considered the primary candidates for compatibility: *deism* and *dualism* (Barbour, 1997, Griffin, 2000). Deism is the notion that God created the world, along with its natural laws, but that God is no longer involved in the world (except, perhaps, in extraordinary instances), allowing its natural processes to operate autonomously (Griffin, 2000). This approach would seem to affirm the existence of God without compromising the demands of naturalism. Because God does not interfere in the world after its original creation, according to deism (Taylor, 2007), the autonomous operation of natural,

physical events and laws is not disrupted and science can proceed without considering God's activity (Slife et al., 2004).

The second main category for attempting to make theism and naturalism compatible is dualism. According to this general conception, the world is divided into two spheres, one that is spiritual and the other that is natural. God is involved in the spiritual sphere, but not the natural (Griffin, 2000; Plantinga, 2001; Slife & Richards, 2001). This way, the natural sphere is fully explainable through natural events and processes, while still allowing for a spiritual sphere in which God is required. There are many variations on dualism, including Descartes' soul/body, a "god of the gaps" approach, and some supernatural/natural distinctions (Griffin, 2000; Hall, 2004; Plantinga, 2001). Indeed, deism itself can be viewed as dualism across time, with God involved in one "sphere" at the beginning of time and then functionally nonexistent thereafter (Slife, 2006). In all these variations, theistic explanations may be useful for the "mysterious" or "miraculous," such as creation, the soul, or the supernatural, which may be difficult to explain through natural events and processes (Griffin, 2000). Because there is much in the world of psychology that is not fully explained (e.g., "gaps"), there would seem to be considerable room for God's miraculous and mysterious workings, at least until they are explained.

These dualistic approaches demonstrate that it is certainly possible to talk about God and theism in relation to naturalism. There is a sense in which these approaches bring two different worlds or ontologies "alongside" one another. There is even an additivity implicit in these dualisms because the two worlds can literally be added together to encompass the totality of the universe. But does this type of dualism allow psychologists to assume that psychological findings and theories can inform or even correct theistic understandings? How satisfactory are

these attempts to make the fundamental assumptions of naturalistic and theistic worldviews compatible?

In addressing these questions, we first need to consider whether important assumptions of these worldviews are being made compatible at all. Although deistic and dualistic explanations certainly *include* theistic and naturalistic assumptions, it appears that the two worldviews are ontologically confined to separate corners of the world. For the deist, God and naturalistic processes are never actively involved in the world at the same time; for the dualist, the two are never actively involved at the same place. Those who are familiar with the ontological problems of dualism can probably foresee, at this point, some difficulties with these attempts at compatibility.

If there really were two worlds (or two different ontologies) as these dualisms imply, why would we assume that the findings and explanations of one world apply to the findings and explanations of the other? If the findings of the natural world worked, explained, or applied to the theistic world, why postulate different worlds in the first place? This says nothing of a host of other philosophical problems that are historically associated with dualisms. How do the two worlds interact? Where does one world leave off and the other begin? Indeed, such dualisms have most frequently been postulated when worlds are *incompatible*, because the two conceptions of these worlds cannot fit into the same world. From this perspective, these attempts at compatibility could be implicitly acknowledging that there is no way to bring them into the same world. These attempts could suggest a fundamental *incompatibility* between the worldviews of naturalism and theism.

The Possibility of Incompatibility

Why might this incompatibility be so? Here, we believe the answer is that the God assumption is not an add-on assumption for the serious theist. Compatibility would not be a problem if the main assumption that differed between these two worldviews—the necessity of an active God—were an add-on assumption, a God that is in some way independent of the activities and events of the natural world. Add-on Gods would include divine beings that are only active in another world (dualism) or only active at the beginning of the natural world (deism). From a theist's perspective, however, this independence makes God functionally nonexistent. A divine being in this independent sense might exist in some abstract sphere, but it would not exist in any way that really matters to the practical world (Barbour, 1997). For this reason, serious theists cannot view God as an add-on God because a theistic position, by definition, requires a functionally existent God, one that relates to the events of the world in which they live in a practical sense.

A naturalist could contend that God is not only the creator of natural laws (deism) but also the upholder of them. With this conception, God is continually involved, but involved in a lawful manner that is consonant with naturalism. Understanding this conception, of course, hinges on the meaning of terms such as “lawful.” Many theists would also view God as involved in the regularities of the world. However, if “lawful” is meant in the conventional sense of naturalism (Slife, 2004), this conception is little more than another add-on approach to compatibility—adding God on to natural laws. As Griffin (2000) and other scholars have argued, the notion that God merely upholds the laws does not allow God to be “active” in any meaningful theistic sense because God's mere upholding of natural laws means that God cannot act otherwise than the laws. Because this ability to “act otherwise” is the basis of any freedom of

action, God enjoys no such freedom. Moreover, God cannot uniquely minister or modify divine actions in the light of changing circumstances, because the laws of nature are the same for everyone, regardless of their situations.

For theists, of course, God is meaningfully and even uniquely active. However, this activity does not require that God is a sufficient condition for events; God could merely be a necessary condition for events—one of several conditions that are required for the events to occur in the way they do. Bishop (2009) calls this theistic conception *concurrence*: “This is the idea that God acts concurrently in nature so that everything that happens is both fully a divine action and a fully natural action” (p. 3). Surely, this understanding of God’s current and active involvement suggests an altering assumption, because no natural event or process would escape this divine influence. Recall, again, Plantinga’s (2001) description of this necessary involvement: “God is already and always intimately acting in nature which depends from moment to moment . . . upon divine activity” (p. 350).

From this necessary-condition perspective, theistic psychological theories would need to include this divine influence for full and complete explanation. Explanations and theories might attempt to focus on other necessary factors, but they would have to be considered at least incomplete, if not misleading, without the necessary spiritual influences. After all, an insufficient set of necessary conditions would not produce the event or topic of interest, by the very definition of “necessary.” Moreover, if God is an altering assumption in the sense defined above, then many necessary conditions are mutually constitutive. That is to say, they gain their very qualities and identities from their relation to the other necessary conditions; they have a shared being (Slife & Hopkins, 2005). Consequently, they cannot be understood properly without the presence of *all* the relevant conditions, which includes God for the theist.

It is difficult to see how this type of divine assumption – a currently active and potentially necessary condition for all events—can be compatible with the worldview envisioned by the naturalist. In fact, this is the conclusion of many scholars. Philosopher David Ray Griffin (2000), in his book *Religion and Scientific Naturalism*, surveys a host of scholars to understand the relation between religion and the type of naturalism considered here, “scientific naturalism” in Griffin terms. He concludes with this statement: “Most philosophers, theologians, and scientists believe that scientific naturalism is *incompatible* with any significantly religious view of reality” (italics added, p. 11).

Charles Taylor (2007) offers a similar assessment in his recent book, *A Secular Age*:
 Modern science offers us a view of the universe framed in general laws. The ultimate is an impersonal order of regularities in which all particular things exist, over-arching all space and time. This seems in conflict with Christian faith, which relates us to a personal Creator-God, and which explains our predicament in terms of a developing exchange of divine action and human reaction to his interventions in history... (p. 362).

This quote from Taylor not only indicates the “conflict” of the naturalistic (and the “impersonal”) with the theistic (and the “personal”); it also goes to the heart of another question regarding the issue of compatibility: does the differing assumption of God alter the widely perceived “common” assumptions of order and truth? Recall that order was one of the most frequently identified common assumptions of both naturalism and theism. As mentioned, some historians have argued that this assumption is common because the naturalist historically embraced some form of it from the theist. In the quote from Taylor, however, he seems to distinguish two very different meanings of order in the two perspectives, one an impersonal, lawful, and determined order and the other a personal, divine, and obedient order. The common

term “order” denotes the importance of regularities for both perspectives, but the nature, source, and meaning of this term could not be more different.

Likewise, the common term “truth” denotes the importance of the *actual* for both worldviews. However, the existence of this common term and common concern does not necessarily imply that the meaning of this term is the same for each perspective. Here, again, Taylor’s quote is helpful in discerning these meanings, because truth from the naturalistic worldview is a kind of impersonal, unchangeable entity, such as a natural, physical law. A theistic truth, by contrast, is the truth of a “personal” God who reveals this truth through a “developing exchange,” to use Taylor’s phrase. For example, the Jesus of Christianity is portrayed in the New Testament as “the truth” (John 14:6). In this sense, he is not representing, bringing, or even modeling the truth (Palmer, 1993); he *is* the truth, an embodied truth with whom we can have a “developing exchange.” Surely this personal, embodied truth is considerably different from the impersonal, disembodied truths of natural laws (cf. Slife & Reber, 2005), suggesting again the incompatibility of these two worldviews.

What if these two predominant worldviews *are* largely incompatible? What practical ramifications would this incompatibility have in the realm of psychological research and scholarship? Could the naturalist, consciously or unconsciously, exclude important considerations of theistic assumptions and resources, to say nothing of theists themselves? If so, how relevant are naturalistic findings to a theistic “world”? Moreover, could important theories and explanations, or portions of theories and explanations, be excluded that pertain to theistic sensibilities? In other words, could there be implicit biases against a theistic position, particularly in regard to the social imaginary of the professional psychologist? If so, how might

we expect these to be manifested in psychology generally and theoretical psychology specifically?

Practical Implications of Incompatibility

God's exile from psychology

The origins of this modern bias against theism in psychology involve the very start of the discipline. Many of the founders of the new scientific psychology, taking hold in the United States in the late 1800s, viewed the discipline as a theistic, specifically Christian, enterprise (Kessen, 1996). “The New Psychology,” proclaimed G.S. Hall in 1885, “is I believe Christian to its root and center” (pp. 247-248). Because many early advocates for this new psychology believed that it shared a common root with Christianity, they assumed that this scientific psychology was fully compatible with and sympathetic toward theism (Pickren, 2000). However, as the example of James McCosh illustrates, these founding psychologists’ efforts to conceptualize this compatibility and put it into practice ultimately brought about “God’s exile from psychology” (Maier, 2004, p. 323).

James McCosh was a psychologist and theologian who served as the president of Princeton from 1868-1888. He, like many of the Christian psychologists of his time,⁵ believed that the facts of science were ultimately compatible with scripture, even if they did not initially appear to be. As he put it, “I believe that whatever supposed discrepancies may come up for a time between science and revealed truth will soon disappear, that each will confirm the other, and both will tend to promote the glory of God” (Sloane, 1896, p. 234). McCosh’s belief in the ultimate compatibility of these two worldviews relied upon his presumption that both produced truth and all truth was unified in the glory of God, regardless of the means by which it was uncovered. His challenge, as he saw it (McCosh, 1880, p. 209), was to frame this compatibility

in such a way that scientific psychology's evidence would be seen, not as competing with and potentially threatening to theistic truth, but as complementary to and ultimately integral with religious faith.

His first step in meeting this challenge was to frame the "compatibility" in terms of a dualism that ensured the epistemological independence of each worldview. Each intellectual pursuit was limited to its proper sphere of inquiry. Science would investigate only natural events and processes, while religion would limit its focus to the things of God. For McCosh, this "sharp division of intellectual labor" (p. 331), as Maier (2004) describes it, was to be strictly followed, as evidenced by his warning to students and colleagues: "we do not subject religion to science; but we are equally careful not to subject science to religion. We give to each its own independent place, supported by its own evidence." (Sloane, 1896, p. 233). To his thinking, if science and religion each had "its own independent place" with its "own evidence" their obvious differences would not pit them against one another.

As a further step toward compatibility, McCosh attempted to defend the neutrality of science in relation to religion. He accomplished this defense by reassuring psychologists that science, properly employed, was free from any philosophical baggage that might bias it against religion. Science was, he asserted, a neutral method that could be objectively applied to psychological reality to produce "scientific facts" (McCosh, 1871, pp. 195-196). These facts could not be biased against religion because unbiased facts had to be true, and all truth is itself unified and ultimately compatible. For this reason, McCosh asked that his students and colleagues first reconcile discoveries in science to truth, not scripture. As he put it, "our first inquiry, when an asserted discovery in science is announced should be, not is it consistent with

scripture, but is it true? If it be true, all who have an implicit faith in the Bible are sure that it cannot be unfavorable to religion” (McCosh, 1880, p. 210).

The implication, notes Maier (2004), of “setting scripture aside (even temporarily)” was that science could be done “apart from the influence of divine revelation” (p. 332). The new generation of scientific psychologists following McCosh had no compelling reason to be interested in the theistic side of the dualism. Because they were taught that the neutrality of science made its findings applicable to and corrective of the theistic side anyway (McCosh, 1880, p. 209), they did not see why the theistic side was needed to get at the truth. Even theists would be educated by good science. As a result, “the next generation of scientists/psychologists trained by McCosh did not worry about relating their studies to Christianity at all” (Maier, 2004, p. 336). Within a span of about 20 years, from 1880 to 1900, “references to God and religion had all but dropped out of the new psychology’s literature” (p. 323).

Some may be tempted to interpret this exclusion as an artifact of specialization; theism just naturally migrated to other disciplines (e.g., theology). However, Kemeny (1998) sees the historical migration of theism from psychology as having more in common with the forced relocation of Native Americans to reservations than with a natural process (p. 108). That is to say, the specialization interpretation does not account for the need or motive for this specialization. To assume that this happened “naturally” is to grossly underestimate the dualism and incompatibility that motivated it. Indeed, Maier (2004) asserts that psychology quickly developed “an open hostility” toward theism and “clearly became the aggressor” in the “warfare between psychology and religion” (p. 337). In other words, this specialization is analogous to the two separate worlds of dualism we described earlier. Because of the incompatibility of the two worldviews, they could not remain in the same world/discipline. Consequently, McCosh’s

well-meaning project of compatibility failed, because theism was ultimately and forcefully excluded from the new psychology that he and so many others felt was “rooted” in theism.

This exclusion continues to pervade the literature of the discipline after more than a century. A review of ten recently published introductory textbooks (Baron, 2001, 1998; Bernstein & Nash, 2007; Davis & Palladino, 2001; Lahey, 2001; Morris & Maisto, 2000, 1999; Nevid, 2003; Pastorino & Doyle-Portillo, 2006; Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart, & Roy, 2006; Wade & Tavris, 1999; Weiten, 2000), confirms that the consideration of theism continues to be virtually non-existent in the mainstream of psychology. Indeed, there is no mention of God at all in any of these texts and only two make any reference to religion, one of which is to explain its exclusion (Morris & Maisto, 1999).

A common conception is that this exclusion is merely the result of secularism. However, what does this move to secularism mean? As Pannenberg (1996) and others have clarified, early secularists never intended a “break” with theism (p. 33; see also Reber, 2006). It is only in its modern manifestation that secularism became wedded to naturalism and took on a decidedly nontheistic prejudice as an acceptable scholarly practice (Council for Secular Humanism, 1980; Duke, 2005). Brown’s (2005) review of the introductory psychology texts used most often in Great Britain and Australia also reinforces this conclusion. It would appear that the “exile of God from psychology” is now complete (Maier, 2004, p.323).

The Psychology of Religion

While the exclusion of theism from the mainstream of a secular psychology may not be all that surprising, one might not expect to find the theistic worldview absent from the psychology of religion literature. There is, after all, an immense research literature that reports on the investigation of a variety of religious attitudes, behaviors, and experiences (Nelson, 2009;

Paloutzian & Park, 2005). The concern of this paper, however, is not so much whether the topics of religion and spirituality are included as objects of study, but whether systematic biases against a theistic interpretive framework have led the discipline to avoid considering theism in the formulation and interpretation of psychological theories and research, even when that research is focused on seemingly theistic topics. To this end, we argue that there are at least two generic categories of bias against the theistic worldview that pervade the psychology of religion literature. One has to do primarily with the formulation and conduct of the studies, and the other is involved in the interpretation of data and explanation of results.

These two categories of bias are involved in many of the numerous studies in the psychology of religion literature. However, a review of that literature is beyond the scope of this paper. We intend, instead, to discuss an exemplar study from the *image of God* research that we believe is representative of many other programs of research in the psychology of religion that focus on seemingly theistic topics (e.g., prayer, conversion; see Nelson, 2009). Image of God research is surely one of these topics, investigating, as it does, the development of people's representations of God, including their images of God's personality (e.g., Bassett & Williams, 2003), God's relational orientation toward people (e.g., loving, controlling, distant; see e.g., Granqvist, Ivarson, Broberg, & Hagekull, 2007), and God's emotions (e.g., Demoulin, Saroglou, Van Pachterbeke, 2008). We selected Cassibba, Granqvist, Costantini, and Gatto's 2008 study as a typical investigation of how theistic people develop their images of God.

Discriminatory Method Practice. One example of the first category of bias occurs in the operationalization and assessment of the participants' experiences of their relationships. This bias is manifested primarily through a discriminatory method practice wherein the researchers will either exclude assessments of the participants' experiences of God altogether (e.g.,

Granqvist, Ivarson, Broberg, & Hagekull, 2007) or they will use a different form of assessment for participants' experiences of God than they use to examine other relational experiences (e.g., Reinert & Edwards, 2009). In the Cassibba et al., (2008) study, the researchers examined participants' experiences of their relationships with their parents by asking them to describe those experiences and perceptions using a semi-structured interview. Yet, when they examined the participants' experiences of their "relationship to God" (p. 1755), which was the explicit purpose of the study, the researchers did not ask participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of this relationship. Instead, they resorted to demographic and behavioral variables, such as church attendance, as a "proxy" for those experiences (p. 1754).

The researchers clearly acknowledged the limitation of using "religiosity as a nonvalidated proxy," noting that a number of their participants "may not, in fact, have experienced an attachment to God at all, in which case the question of the quality of such individuals' God attachment becomes nonsensical" (Cassibba et al., 2008, p. 1761). However, despite knowing that the proxy might not accurately reflect the participants' experience of a relationship to God, and despite having another form of assessment of those experiences available, the researchers chose not to include the participants' experiences of their relationship to God in a study specifically focused on this topic. How do they account for this obvious difference in method practices?

The answer is that the researchers do not account for this discriminatory practice at all. In fact, they do not even acknowledge the difference in their assessment methods. There is no evidence anywhere in the study that the researchers ever considered the implications of using different methods of assessment for both relationships, God and parents. We assert that this unacknowledged difference in method practices occurs because of an unconscious bias against

theism—God does not exist and thus cannot be experienced. As we have discussed earlier, the systematic biases against theism in psychology are part of the “social imaginary” of the discipline. Consequently, it would not occur to the researchers that their different methods of assessing their participants’ relationships constituted a bias against the theistic worldview, nor would it occur to them that they should justify their use of different methods. Yet, the end result is a bias against theistic experiences, even in studies of theistic topics that use theistic participants.

We see this discriminatory method practice as both disciplinary and personal. First, like most studies of religious experience (e.g., Bruce, 1999; Greeley, 1996; Stark and Finke, 2000), it takes for granted a disciplinary “methodological atheism” by which researchers “bracket—or refuse to consider—the reality of a supernatural object of religious experience” in their assessments (Porpora, 2006, pp. 57, 58; see also Berger, 1967; D’Souza, 2007). This bracketing is supposed to preserve the naturalism of science, both by avoiding any reference to supernatural processes and by ensuring its neutrality through the absence of methodological commentary on the “actual truth of religious beliefs” (Porpora, p. 57).

The problem, as Porpora (2006) describes, is that when this methodological atheism is applied to a study of theistic experience (e.g., relationship to God) it excludes the very object of the experience that theists hold is necessary for a proper study. As a result, the researchers indirectly make judgments about the truth of theistic beliefs, without the evidence to do so. In some cases, those judgments are less implicit, as when Cassibba et al., (2008) refer to divine beings as “imaginary figures” (p. 1760) or when Granqvist, Ivarson, Broberg, & Hagekull (2007) describe God as an “individual construction” (p. 598). More typically, however, these prejudicial judgments are subtle, such as when relationship experiences are measured differently.

Thus, whether or not Cassibba and her colleagues (2008) consciously intend it, the exclusion of their participants' God experiences indicates that they considered these experiences irrelevant in the development of God images, even before the investigation began.

In addition to this disciplinary bias in method practices, the researchers also discriminated against the personal theistic framework of their participants. As identified theists, the participants were likely to understand their relationship to God through their experiences and perceptions of that relationship, rather than through proxies of religiosity, such as church membership or attendance. By not assessing these theistic experiences and perceptions the researchers omit what is for the participants an essential factor in the development of their own images of God.

Moreover, the researchers risk mistakenly inferring the existence, strength, and quality of the participants' relationship to God when using proxies such as church attendance. This approach is like trying to understand a woman's relationship with her partner by counting the number of times she goes home after work. There is no way to clearly discern what her behavior means. It may be correlated with her relationship to her partner or it may have nothing to do with their relationship at all. Similarly, measures of religiosity, such as church attendance, may not necessarily correlate with participants' sense of their relationship to God, the strength of their attachment to God, or their image of God. Cassibba et al. (2008) do acknowledge the limitation of this operationalization but their implicit bias against the participants' own theistic framework for their experiences precludes the researchers from using anything beyond a problematic proxy.

Discriminatory Explanatory Practice. The second category of generic bias that shows up regularly in psychology of religion research is a bias against including theistic interpretations and explanations of the research results. In our review of the image of God research (e.g., Granqvist,

Ivarson, Broberg, & Hagekull, 2007; Reinert & Edwards, 2009), we observed that throughout the entire text of each report, and particularly in the discussion section where the researchers interpreted their results and explained how participants acquired their images of God, theistic interpretations were completely absent. Indeed, the researchers made no mention of even considering the possibility that God or the participants' relationships to God had anything to do with the results of their study, even when this relationship was the stated focus of the research. Instead, they neglected to consider theism in their explanation just as they neglected to consider it in their method formulation.

This discrimination against theistic explanations even occurred when the research failed to yield convincing results for the influence of natural events (e.g., parents) in the development of the participants' images of God. As Cassibba et al. (2008) illustrate: "the present study failed to find predicted relations between secular attachment and attachment to God" (p. 1761). These weak results could mean, as Porpora (2006) suggests, that researchers excluded a necessary factor in the participants' images of God—their actual relationships to God. However, even as Cassibba et al (2008) acknowledge the weakness of their naturalistic explanations (e.g., Bowlby's attachment theory), they do not consider the possibility of an alternative theistic explanation—that God, as one of several constitutive necessary conditions, had something to do with the participants' images of God..

Instead, the researchers suggest, without providing any support from their own research or the broader literature, that the source of attachment to God could be *other* natural processes and events. For example, "the adult human mind, [which] has an enormous degree of flexibility and capacity for imagination," allows for highly religious persons to "form close relationships with imagined figures" (p. 1760). At no point do they consider theistic events and processes or

theistic explanations. This bias has become so much a part of the social imaginary of the discipline that researchers seem unable or unwilling even to consider experiences with God as playing a role in the development of peoples' images of God.

The Omission of Theism from Theistic Theories

A third category of bias against theism occurs when psychologists exclude the theistic features of the theories they follow and/or describe in their published works, even when theism is fundamental to the theory. In what follows we will illustrate this bias through the example of Martin Buber's philosophy of the I-Thou. However, we believe we could demonstrate this prejudice with several other theistically oriented scholars as well, including John Macmurray, Soren Kierkegaard, and Emmanuel Levinas. We realize that the very notion of theism being fundamental to a particular theory is debatable, especially for some scholars and in some contexts, but that is our point—we want these issues to be debated instead of ignored.

We intend to stir this debate here by contending that it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand Buber's theory of I-Thou without theism. Yet, as we will describe, many psychologists, including theoretical and philosophical psychologists, have attempted to understand and apply his philosophy of the I-Thou to psychology without theism. For this reason, we intend to show how this exclusion not only indicates a systematic bias against theism but also a misrepresentation of Buber's theory as he designed and intended it.

According to Buber (1958), his philosophy of I-Thou begins with the premise that:

As a Person God gives personal life, he makes us as persons become capable of meeting with him and with one another. We can dedicate to him not merely our persons but also our relations to one another. The man who turns to him therefore

need not turn away from any other I-Thou relation; but he properly brings them to him, and lets them be fulfilled “in the face of God” (p. 136).

God, as the “ground and meaning of our existence” (p. 135), makes all “spheres in which the world of relation arises” possible, including “our life with nature . . . our life with men [and] . . . our life with spiritual beings” (p. 6). As Buber describes it:

God’s speech to men penetrates what happens in the life of each one of us, and all that happens in the world around us, biographical, historical, and makes it for you and me into instruction, message, demand. Happening upon happening, situation upon situation, are enabled and empowered by the personal speech of God to demand of the human person that he take his stand and make his decision (pp. 136-137).

In this way, Buber’s philosophy of I-Thou is based on a theism of persons-in-relation wherein “individuality neither shares in nor obtains any reality” (p. 64), and all relations imply the primary relation of persons to God. With God’s indispensability and inseparability from human relation, any account of human psychology that does not include God’s participation is incomplete and inaccurate. Indeed, God is so foundational to all relations for Buber that even the atheist’s I-Thou relations are bound up with God. In his words, “when he too who abhors the name, and believes himself to be godless, gives his whole being to addressing the Thou of his life. . . he addresses God” (p. 76).

Buber’s assertion of God’s inseparability from all other I-Thou relations is corroborated by his primary translator and interpreter, Maurice Friedman. Friedman is professor emeritus of religious studies, philosophy, and the pioneer of dialogical psychotherapy. He was Buber’s close colleague and friend and has translated a number of Buber’s texts, written extensively on

Buber's thought in religious, philosophical, and psychological journals and books, and is widely accepted as the foremost authority on Buber's thought.

In his religious and philosophical writings Friedman has consistently and explicitly recognized the theistic foundation of all I-Thou relations and dialogue (e.g., Friedman, 1976; 1981; 1982; 1985). He also regularly quotes Buber's comments to that effect, including in several of his articles Buber's statement: "If I myself should designate something as the 'central portion of my life work,' then it could not be anything individual, but only the one basic insight. . . that the I-Thou relation to God and the I-Thou relation to one's fellow man are at bottom related to each other" (Friedman, 1970, p. 99f; see also Friedman, 1982, p. 232 and Friedman 1985, p. 421). This message reverberates throughout Friedman's religious and philosophical publications as he regularly warns against losing sight of the "integral unity of the two [relations]" (Friedman, 1985, p. 430; see also Friedman 1976; 1981), including the application of Buber's I-Thou philosophy to psychotherapy (Friedman, 2002).

The problem is that psychologists have consistently explained Buber's I-Thou without including God in their explanations. This exclusion has occurred in spite of Buber's clear statements about the necessity of God to the I-Thou relation and in spite of Friedman's corroboration and numerous other philosophers and theologians affirming the necessity of including God in a proper understanding of Buber's philosophy (e.g., Kepnes, Ochs & Gibbs, 1998; Murdoch, 1992; Osterreicher, 1986; Tillich, 1948). Just as Cassibba and her colleagues functionally omitted God from any real consideration (or consideration *as real*) in their formulation of their study and their interpretation of their findings, so too many psychological scholars omit the eternal Thou from their depiction of Buber's work and theory.

In our review of the many psychology articles that address Buber's I-Thou relationship, we found that virtually all of them excluded God from the description and explanation of the I-Thou relation (e.g., Chiari & Nuzzo, 2006; Fishbane, 1998; Hess, 1987; Mouladoudis, 2001). The authors of these papers often acknowledge Buber's religious background and the role of his Hasidism in his theory of I-Thou, but that is as far as they go. They stop short of describing the connection of Buber's religious influence to his foundational premise that God is the grounding for all I-Thou relations. The few articles that do acknowledge God fail to do so in a way that would necessitate the inclusion of God in an explanation or practice of I-Thou relations (e.g., Ventimiglia, 2008; Watson, 2006).

Other similarly-minded philosophical and humanistic psychologists (e.g., Chiarri & Nuzzo, 2006; Rogers, 1995), including those who describe themselves as "Buberian" (Sayre & Kunz, 2005, p. 234), do not find it necessary to report even the consideration of Buber's "basic insight" in their application of the I-Thou to their theories. Surely, they would find the deletion of a foundational concept from some other theory to be an extremely problematic and unscholarly practice, comparable to leaving the conception of reinforcement out of Skinner's operant conditioning or ignoring the materialism of Marx's sociological theory. However, in the case of Buber's theory, the disciplinary bias against theism is apparently so pervasive and unconscious that it is not only perfectly acceptable to exclude God from the I-Thou account, but it is also completely unnecessary to explain the reason for this exclusion.

Conclusion

It is perhaps obvious, at this point, that our answer to the question that titles this article is affirmative. Although we have not reviewed all the research of psychology, the complete absence of theistic concepts in introductory texts is, we believe, an important indicator of the

mainstream of the discipline. Moreover, we believe that our examples in the psychology of religion and theoretical psychology provide significant indicators of the exclusion of theistic considerations *outside* the mainstream, even when they concern theistic topics, theistic theories, and theistic participants.

We are aware that many will view these exclusions as merely an aspect of the secular nature of the discipline. Although we believe this exclusion was not the intent of original secularists (Reber, 2005; Slife & Whoolery, 2005), we would welcome this modern understanding of secularism and psychology, *if* those in the discipline did not treat modern secularism as somehow neutral to or compatible with theistic topics, theories, and persons. In other words, we could support this secular definition of psychology if its advocates understood that it came with biases against theism. The problem is that we see no evidence that theists are generally warned about these biases when using psychological literatures or services.

As we have argued, we believe the main reason for the absence of this warning is not conscious or intentional prejudice, but rather misunderstandings about the neutrality of secularism. Our argument against this neutrality can be simplified into a few basic propositions. Psychologists may have rightfully focused on natural events and processes in their initial research and theories. However, this focus has, for several historical and philosophical reasons, become exclusive, and thus barred supernatural events and processes from *any* consideration. Again, this exclusionary bias is not a problem in itself, as long as all those who engage in it understand its existence and implications.

Unfortunately, most psychologists have assumed that this exclusion does not affect psychology's application to or corrections of theistic understandings. They believe that pivotal assumptive differences between naturalism and theism, notably God's current involvement in

psychology's events and processes, are add-on rather than altering assumptions, and thus do not substantially change *other* assumptions thought to be in common, such as order and truth.

Consequently, when the naturalist ascertains the order or truth of the world, it is also considered to be ascertained for the theist.

We have argued, on the contrary, that thorough-going theists assume an altering, not an add-on God. Their God is "concurrent" with nature where "God's constant involvement confers meaning on even the smallest of subatomic events" (Bishop, 2009, p. 3). This type of altering assumption raises the possibility that the order and truth of even natural events could be quite different for each interpretive framework. Indeed, theists and naturalists could literally experience and understand the world of such events quite differently. No longer, in this sense, can psychology's naturalism be automatically viewed as compatible with or neutral to the theism of the majority of its consumers.

This incompatibility does not mean that science and theistic religion cannot enjoy a productive dialogue (Nelson, 2009; Slife, 2000). As mentioned, Bernstein (1983) has argued that incompatibility does not itself prevent comparison and conversation. Indeed, it is in the *lack* of important contrasting relations, such as when worldviews are perceived to be compatible, that conversation would seem to be less needed and perhaps less likely. Incompatible differences, on the other hand, could indicate that the conversation will be especially fruitful because dialogue partners will inevitably expose themselves to important and clarifying contrasts. True and meaningful conversation, however, needs to be two ways, with theistic meanings considered to be just as potentially informative to a naturalistic world of meanings as the reverse.

This "two-way street" also means that the biases of naturalism and theism are not unidirectional; it is not just the naturalist who is biased. Theists clearly have their own biases,

including a bias against a naturalistic account of the world. Indeed, some scholars have argued that this bias against naturalism may contribute to theistic clients' resistance to or mistrust of naturalistic therapy (e.g., Richards & Bergin, 2005). However, as clear as the possibility of two-way prejudice is, biases against naturalism are not the main problem in the discipline of psychology. We find no evidence that theistic psychologists are actively excluding naturalistic theories and interpretations, though we admit this has been rarely considered. What we repeatedly see, instead, is the reverse—the number of psychologists, naturalistic *and* theistic, who have formulated their theories, studies, and explanations in ways that are biased against theism.

This type of prejudice could mean that a host of unintentional discriminatory practices are occurring both in the research of theistic topics and theories and in the service of theistic consumers and clients. Our more “in depth” presentation here has severely limited what we could explicate as discriminatory. We hope that other scholars will join us in helping the discipline to recognize its unintentional and perhaps even institutionalized prejudices. One important candidate in this regard is the loss of theistic resources. Religious scholars and theologians have written for literally centuries on a host of topics related to psychology. As Jurgen Habermas has put it: “Christianity and nothing else is the ultimate foundation of liberty, conscience, human rights and democracy, the benchmarks of Western civilization. We continue to nourish ourselves from this source” (Case, 2006). But Habermas’s final observation is our question: will psychologists be able to “nourish” themselves on the potential insights of such theistic “source[s],” or will they continue to harbor prejudices that discount and dismiss a theistic interpretive framework?

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Endnotes

¹ We also recognize the prejudices that religious people can have as a result of their religion, as does the APA document. However, this topic is not the subject of our paper.

² As Taylor (2007) says, this is an “unchallenged framework, something we have trouble often thinking ourselves outside of, even as an imaginative exercise” (p. 549).

³ For practical reasons regarding the scope of the paper, we focus here on the most popular form of theism, monotheism, and thus primarily the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. However, we believe our arguments pertain to most other theists, including the serious polytheist.

⁴ We emphasize “automatically” here because we do not hold, as we will later describe, that the two “worlds” (in the Heideggerian sense) of naturalism and theism cannot be meaningfully related or dialogically inform one another. However, this meaningful relation may be neither automatic nor straightforward.

⁵ It is not our intention to focus on a specifically Christian theism. Nevertheless, important figures, such as G.S. Hall and James McCosh, are almost unavoidable, along with their involvement in the historical Christianity of North America and more particularly the United States.