




ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Epistemic phariseeism

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Abstract

A prominent view in religious epistemology, which I call *divine-help epistemology*, says that people of faith are epistemically gifted by God, whereas non-believers are subject to the noetic effects of a fallen world. This view aims to show how religious beliefs for people of faith can be epistemically justified. But I argue that it makes such people prone to a cluster of epistemic vices that I call *epistemic phariseeism*. Divine-help epistemology is especially apt to promote these vices because its normativity is not just epistemic, but also religious and moral. I suggest an alternative epistemological view that is better suited to religious faith.

Keywords: religious epistemology; faith; religious belief; reformed epistemology; epistemic phariseeism

Introduction

A world like ours contains many challenges to religious beliefs. A prominent approach in religious epistemology aims to show how people of faith can maintain religious beliefs despite them. It works from the theological claim that human beings are fallen, and thus come into the world unable to form accurate beliefs about God and other religious matters. But it says that God divinely repairs the cognitive ability of certain people so that they can do so. This approach, which I call *divine-help epistemology*, can be found in the work of Plantinga (1983 and 2000); Wainwright (1995); Moroney (1999); Moser (2008 and 2010); and McAllister and Dougherty (2019).

Divine-help epistemology, especially Reformed epistemology (Plantinga 1983 and 2000), has done much to clear a space for faith at the table of respected philosophical positions. Before its ascendancy, there were few options for justifying religious beliefs that did not treat them like scientific beliefs. Religious beliefs were only considered justified if based primarily on evidence that is *impartialist* (that is, intersubjectively available and accepted), such as philosophical arguments.¹ But this is not the sort of evidence on which religious believers most naturally base their beliefs. And nor should they, since many religious traditions hold that God's main channel of revelation consists of evidence that is *partialist* – such as community tradition, religious experience, or scripture. This sort of evidence is not available to just anyone at any time, and it is not commonly accepted outside one's own community. Divine-help epistemology provides a much-needed

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alternative to this extreme scientific position. If it is on target, then it provides not only epistemic status, but also a path to *accurate* beliefs about religious matters – for divine inspiration is surely truthful.

I argue, however, that divine-help epistemology goes too far in its emphasis on partialist evidence, and that because of this, it inadvertently promotes a certain cluster of epistemic vices in the people employing it that *obscure* accuracy. Merold Westphal (1991) and William Wainwright (1995) first call attention to this worry; in honour of their terminology I will call this cluster of vices *epistemic phariseism*.² Westphal's and Wainwright's remarks are too fleeting to tell whether they have in mind exactly what I do, but there are certainly overlaps. Wainwright's mentioning of epistemic phariseism is especially heartening, because his view is itself a divine-help epistemology, which I argue (and he realizes) risks promoting it.

The problem with divine-help epistemology arises from its claim that, although God has restored some people's abilities to form accurate beliefs about religious matters, he has not restored everybody's. This promotes a two-tiered epistemology, on which some people are epistemically blessed and others are not. Its grounding in religious and moral normativity, I argue, makes divine-help epistemology especially prone to encourage epistemic phariseism in people who form their beliefs according to it.

I will highlight four vices of epistemic phariseism. The first is a type of epistemic arrogance that I call *epistemic self-righteousness*. The second is a type of closed-mindedness that I call *epistemic disdain*. The third is what Medina (2013, ch. 2.2) calls *meta-blindness*, or ignorance of your own epistemic failings. The fourth I call *epistemic cold-heartedness*, and amounts to not caring about others' epistemic good. Divine-help epistemologies aim to show how accurate beliefs about God for the faithful can be epistemically justified; but in unwittingly encouraging these epistemic vices, they promote inaccurate beliefs for the faithful, and put non-believers at a significant epistemic disadvantage.

Some clarifications to start. First, I will focus on the following three representative divine-help epistemologies: William Wainwright's *passional-reason* view (1995), Alvin Plantinga's *Reformed epistemology* (1983; 2000), and Paul K. Moser's *filial-knowledge* view (2008; 2010).

Second, I use the term 'phariseism' (lower-case 'p') to pick out a cluster of vices. The biblical characters called 'Pharisees', mentioned occasionally for illustration, get a capital 'P'. I am making no claims about historical Pharisees, the negative portrayal of some of whom in the New Testament provides the origin of the term 'pharisee'. And I emphatically reject any anti-Semitic readings of these biblical stories, or any anti-Semitic associations with the term 'pharisee' or 'Pharisee'. I am using these terms, in keeping with our cultural usage today and the philosophical literature seeking to understand this usage, to refer to a set of vices that *anyone* can exhibit. Indeed, the primary target of my critique are specifically Christian epistemologies of religion for promoting these vices.

Third, because my interlocutors are proponents of divine-help epistemologies, I will assume for argument's sake that the Christian tradition from which they operate is true. This includes the claims that a monotheistic God exists, that the world is fallen, that God regenerates believers to have faith in him, and that he has not (yet) regenerated non-believers. I am also happy, in discussing individual views, to accept for argument's sake their individual metaphysical details about this picture (elaborated in the following section) – at least to the extent that they are compatible with Christian tradition; where I think that they depart from this tradition in ways that matter for my argument, I make clear below. One thing I take issue with are the religious epistemologies that they claim flow from Christian tradition so construed (also discussed in the following section).

The fourth clarification concerns the strength of my claim. I am not claiming that forming beliefs in accord with divine-help epistemology *automatically* causes you to exhibit the

vices of epistemic phariseeism. Rather, I am claiming that doing so makes you particularly prone to exhibiting them, indeed more prone (all else equal) than those who do not adhere to divine-help epistemology.³ A full defence of this claim would require empirical investigation. My aim here is to show that it is highly plausible, indeed believable, on the basis of the moral-psychological and philosophy-of-religion considerations discussed below.

Finally, in discussing these epistemological views, I will focus on the epistemic aim of accurate beliefs. The aim of accuracy is broader than knowledge or truth and is meant to reflect the complexity of religious worldviews. Three characteristics make beliefs accurate. First, an individual belief is accurate only if it is true, and a belief set is accurate only to the extent that it contains true beliefs. Second, a belief set is accurate to the extent that it is representative – it does not distort the big picture by omitting important information. Third, a belief set is accurate to the extent that the beliefs within it coherently connect in a web of understanding. An accurate belief or belief set is justified and so apt to constitute knowledge.

I'll start by describing divine-help epistemologies. Then I'll give my account of phariseeism in general, which is a form of hypocrisy, in preparation for my account of epistemic phariseeism. I'll finish by addressing objections and proposing an epistemological antidote to epistemic phariseeism.

Divine-help epistemology

There are three prominent divine-help epistemologies: William Wainwright's passional-reason view (1995), Alvin Plantinga's Reformed epistemology (1983; 2000), and Moser's filial-knowledge view. They stake similar, though not identical, claims on four issues: (i) human fallenness; (ii) human regeneration by God; (iii) the way in which regeneration enables people to form accurate beliefs about God; (iv) the religious epistemology flowing from this picture. Let's take these issues in turn.

(i) *Fallenness*. The three views agree that both our affection and our cognition are fallen; hence Plantinga's general term 'noetic' fallenness (2000, ch. 7). They also agree that the fallenness of our affections is logically and psychologically fundamental. That is, our affections are turned away from God and the forms of goodness that he embodies; and because our affections influence our perception and reason, we cannot, in our fallen state, cognize accurately about God. Wainwright (1995, 148) calls fallenness a 'failure of the heart'. Plantinga (2000) says that it stems from affections directed at the wrong objects – from 'love of self' (*ibid.*, 294) and 'thinking of oneself as the chief being of the universe' (*ibid.*, 308). Moser (2008) concurs, characterizing fallenness in terms of 'selfishness' (*ibid.*, 105, 116–119, 127).

(ii) *Regeneration by God*. The views agree that God regenerates our affections as well as our cognition. Plantinga (2000, 301) does not say that either comes first chronologically. But Wainwright and Moser are adamant that God first regenerates our affections, which in turn inform our cognition. Whereas Wainwright and Plantinga attribute the regenerative action wholly to God, Moser emphasizes human free will too: God non-coercively nudges us, but it is we who decide to invite regeneration by 'repenting' (Moser 2008, 127).

(iii) *How regeneration enables accurate beliefs about God*. Wainwright's view is the most intellectual of the three; he says that regenerated affections enable us to form accurate value judgements, and that these in turn colour our experiences and supply background evidence for accurate inferential reasoning (Wainwright 1995, 3). Plantinga's view is more experiential: regenerated affections enable us to perceive God's traces in the world, enjoying both accurate religious experience and accurate 'doxastic experiences' (i.e. a felt sense of the truth of a proposition) about religious matters (2000, 121; see below, this section). Moser's view emphasizes experience even more than Plantinga's,

by focusing exclusively on a second-personal encounter with God through conscience. He says that regeneration ‘attunes’ us to experiential communication from God (Moser 2008, 113–123).

(iv) *Religious epistemology*. All three views endorse a partialist epistemology. One intended upshot of partialism is to help believers, in a world like ours full of counterevidence, respond to it without automatically having to abandon their religious beliefs. So far so good. But the way in which partialist epistemology does this, I argue, is part of what promotes epistemic phariseism. The reason is that it allows counterevidence to be dismissed too easily. Let’s look more closely at the three views to see how.

Wainwright takes natural-theological arguments to be an important source of evidence about God; he places ‘a high value on proofs, arguments, and inferences’ (1995, 5). He thus might seem an odd candidate for an attribution of partialism.⁴ But his partialist leanings are evident in his claim that theists are entitled to trust their own evaluation of such arguments more than the evaluations of non-theists: ‘the evidence can be accurately assessed only by men and women who possess the proper moral and spiritual qualifications’ (*ibid.*, 3). Theists’ entitlement to trust their own evaluations of the evidence comes from giving heavy weight to two kinds of partialist evidence: the value judgements that they form from affectively infused moral seemings, and the theistic metaphysical and value claims (152) that supply their background evidence. So although theists need to seriously address counterevidence, they may do so by giving greater heed to their own reasoning than to the reasoning of non-theists, because of prior commitments arising from their theism. This is partialism *par excellence*.

Plantinga, unlike Wainwright, says that natural-theology arguments are not necessary as evidence about religious matters (Plantinga 1983; *Idem* 2000). One can certainly use them if one wishes, but the most informative sort of evidence, on his view, is partialist, consisting in community beliefs and religious experiences. Another form of partialist evidence is what Plantinga calls ‘doxastic experience’. This is ‘the sort of experience one has when entertaining any proposition one believes’ (Plantinga 2000, 121); such propositions ‘feel natural, right, acceptable’ (*ibid.*). In other words, the very feeling of entertaining a proposition you believe counts, for Plantinga, as evidence favouring that proposition. Such forms of partialist evidence are truth-conducive when generated with the help of cognitive faculties, either your faculties or those of community authorities, that God has cleansed of the noetic effects of sin.

As for counterevidence, Plantinga obligates believers to take seriously any they may encounter – which Plantinga supposes will typically be impartialist, consisting in anti-theistic arguments. However, his view entitles believers to evaluate counterevidence in light of their own partialist evidence – their community tradition and their experiences, including the doxastic experiences accompanying their religious beliefs. So believers can often count as taking counterevidence seriously simply by considering it, and then ascribing it less epistemic weight than they ascribe to the partialist evidence that favours their own beliefs. To see this aspect of his view in action, consider his laudatory description of an agent confronted with arguments against her religious beliefs. She responds by carefully considering them, but ultimately concluding that they are unpersuasive. How does she conclude this? Not by determining which of their premises or background assumptions are mistaken. Rather, she gives heavier evidential weight to the doxastic experience that she has when entertaining her own beliefs (Plantinga 2000, 203–204). This agent has a ‘powerful inclination to believe [the great truths of the Gospel] and hence has strong doxastic evidence [experience] for them’; as a result, her religious beliefs ‘remain thus convincing even after she has considered the objections she has encountered’ (*ibid.*, 203–204). So she keeps them as before.

Moser's partialism wears its heart on its sleeve. Unlike Wainwright and Plantinga, he takes arguments to be *bad* evidence concerning God. The reason is that they are 'cognitively idolatrous' (Moser 2008, 101–104) and even 'presumptuous' (*ibid.*, 138–150), treating God as subject to our cognitive frameworks instead of as a free agent who can show or hide himself as he pleases. The only epistemically and religiously appropriate way to form beliefs about God, says Moser, is to open yourself up to a special form of partialist evidence, namely the second-personal communication, through experience and conscience, of 'God's transformative spirit' (*ibid.*, 150–151).

When it comes to counterevidence, Moser's view offers two responses. One is available when the counterevidence takes the form of arguments. These, says Moser, can be dismissed out of hand on the basis of the (partialist) claim, just discussed, that they are bad evidence about God. The second response applies to any sort of counterevidence. It says that Christian theism provides the best explanation for the believer's total evidence, including any counterevidence. For example, divine hiddenness is best explained as God's means to nudge people to seek him (*ibid.*, 107). And Christian theism supplies, more generally, an 'undefeated best available explanation of the whole range of my experience and my other evidence' (*ibid.*, 138). How is this best-explanation claim an appeal to partialist evidence? Because any such claims imply explanatory principles that supposedly make one inference better than others (Kuhn 1977). Whichever explanatory principles Moser uses (he does not tell us), they are partialist enough to make Christian theism come out on top every time. On all three divine-help epistemologies, then, counterevidence to one's religious beliefs can be overcome by appeal to partialist evidence.

This heavy weighting of partialist evidence in addressing counterarguments is part of how divine-help epistemology promotes epistemic phariseeism. It inclines believers to noetic entrenchment – an inability to appreciate other viewpoints or evidence against their own beliefs (for detail see Dormandy 2018a; *Idem* 2021). The reason is that this evidence, though an important potential source of religious insight, is also apt to reflect biases and groupthink. And cognitive entrenchment, as we will see, is one feature of epistemic phariseeism.

Proponents of divine-help epistemologies will respond that, even if believers are entrenched, they are entrenched in *accurate* beliefs – and this is epistemically good. But even if your beliefs are accurate, the fact that you hold them in an entrenched manner means that you also invite in many beliefs that seem true but are in fact false (Dormandy 2018a). For example, someone who is entrenched in the (let's suppose true) belief that God speaks through experiences is much more apt than otherwise to read God's communication into more experiences than she should, and resolve any ambiguities, without even being aware that she is doing so, with what she expects or wishes he might say.

But epistemic phariseeism is more than noetic entrenchment, as I will now argue.

Epistemic phariseeism

Epistemic phariseeism is a form of hypocrisy. The account of hypocrisy best suited for present purposes, at least in its general outline, is that of Rossi (2021). Rossi characterizes hypocrisy as an essentially vicious form of inconsistency in actions or attitudes. The inconsistency arises either between propositions that a person endorses, or between propositions that she endorses and her actions. Two propositions are inconsistent just in case they cannot simultaneously be true. A proposition is inconsistent with an action just in case the action does not 'satisfy' the proposition (*ibid.*, 59). For example, if a person asserts that one should not jaywalk, yet jaywalks herself, she exhibits an inconsistency.

Inconsistency need not be vicious; consider parents who believe that a dictatorship is abhorrent but obey it to protect their children. What makes an inconsistency vicious on Rossi's view, and thus hypocritical, is that it is powered by certain moral and epistemic vices. The moral vices that Rossi posits are pretentiousness, self-righteousness, complacency, and inappropriate partiality towards one's own clan. The epistemic vices are dishonesty, self-deception, wilful ignorance, wishful thinking, and unreflectiveness (71).

I will not dispute Rossi's list of hypocrisy-yielding vices. But I will suppose that there are others too, for hypocrisy comes in many forms. The form of hypocrisy that I call *phariseism* is characterized by at least four: self-righteousness, disdain for outsiders, culpable ignorance of one's own failings, and lack of compassion. After describing these I will give their epistemic analogues, which together yield epistemic phariseism, and will show how forming beliefs in accord with a divine-help epistemology makes believers more prone to it.⁵

What is phariseism?

The first vice of phariseism is *self-righteousness*. This is a type of arrogance. Arrogance in general is having an inaccurately high estimation of your own qualities; self-righteousness is having an inaccurately high estimation, specifically, of your own *moral or religious* qualities. We recognize self-righteousness in the biblical parable of the Pharisee, at the front of the synagogue, thanking God that he is not sinful like the tax collector lurking in the back (Luke 18:9–14). In behaving this way, the Pharisee ironically demonstrates his own moral and religious impoverishment. We may similarly imagine a devout Christian casting judgement on members of her congregation who sin in other ways than she does.

The second vice of phariseism is *disdain for those unlike oneself*, which one harbours because of this unlikeness. The pharisaic person neither seeks nor perceives good in others, instead assuming and seeking signs of the worst. That is, she work from the uncharitable presupposition that others lack moral or religious worth. In a fantasy version of the above parable, the Pharisee might have worked from the charitable assumption, or hope, that it was not moral or religious depravity, but simply difficult circumstances, that drove the tax collector to his dubious profession. But this seems not to occur to him; as evident in his prayer, he assumes the worst about the tax collector. Similarly, a devout Christian might condemn the failings specifically of non-believers.

The third vice of phariseism is that of *culpably overlooking one's specific failings*. This stands in contrast to self-righteousness, which is a general sense of superiority. A pharisaic person may be culpably unaware of her flaws, or she may be aware of them but push them to the periphery of her awareness or under-emphasize their importance. In the story, it is the tax collector who humbly confesses his failings before God, while the Pharisee remains stubbornly unaware of his own, even though these include the vices discussed here. Our Christian believer might similarly overlook her own failings, not least her own judgemental tendencies.

The fourth vice is *lack of compassion for non-pharisees*. In the parable, not only does the Pharisee disdain the tax collector, but he is utterly uninterested in helping him – not even to become the kind of person whom the Pharisee would not disdain. This is so even though the Pharisee, as a well-regarded member of his community, would be in a good position to help. Even in his prayer, a direct channel of communication with a God whom he supposedly believes answers prayers, the Pharisee declines to request that the tax collector's circumstances improve. We can easily imagine a Christian believer who criticizes others instead of showing them compassion.

If phariseism is a form of hypocrisy, pharisaic people must exhibit an inconsistency. What is it? There are at least two possibilities. One, which we may call a *theoretical inconsistency*, arises *between the propositions that the pharisaic person endorses*, on the one hand, and *the propositions that she should endorse (and is in a position to know she should endorse)*, on the other. The Pharisee in the story might be interpreted as exhibiting a theoretical inconsistency: as endorsing, for example, the proposition that some people are morally and religiously better than others, whereas he should endorse the proposition (and is in a position to know he should) that all are equal in God's sight.

Another sort of inconsistency, which we may call a *theory-practice inconsistency*, arises *between the propositions that the pharisaic person should endorse*, on the one hand, and *her actions*, on the other. In the story, the Pharisee should endorse (and as a representative of the religious elite represents himself publicly as endorsing) a proposition to the effect that one should not be sinful, even as he acts sinfully in lacking charity towards the tax collector while praising himself.

Phariseism has negative consequences on others. In religious cases, by exhibiting the above characteristics, pharisaic people tend to *discourage others from faith* – either influencing people to fall away, or discouraging them from embracing faith to begin with. For their inconsistencies, of whichever type, are glaring to others if not to themselves. There are at least three ways in which phariseism is apt to discourage other people from faith. One way is by the psychological mechanism of association. Pharisaic hypocrisy may ignite a negative emotional association, such as disgust, with the faith. Another way is epistemic: Pharisaic hypocrisy may sap credibility from the faith. It may support the conclusion that there cannot be much to pharisaic people's God, if his most prominent followers are such hypocrites. Another way is practical: pharisaic people's attitudes and behaviour may create social or institutional barriers to those who might otherwise have been interested in joining the faith community.

In summary, phariseism is a form of hypocrisy characterized by at least four vices: self-righteousness, disdain for non-pharisees, lack of awareness of one's own failings, and lack of compassion. And it risks discouraging people from embracing faith.

Epistemic phariseism

Each vice of phariseism has an epistemic analogue, yielding a cluster of vices that I'll call *epistemic phariseism*. They are epistemic vices because they detract from accurate beliefs about religious matters. The first three vices primarily detract from accurate beliefs for the pharisaic person herself, but also indirectly for other people. The fourth detracts primarily from accurate beliefs for others. And just as the moral vices described in the previous subsection discourage others from faith, exhibiting these epistemic vices discourages people from holding beliefs of faith.

The epistemic analogue of self-righteousness is what I'll call *epistemic self-righteousness*. This is a type of epistemic arrogance. Epistemic arrogance, I'll suppose, is the vice of culpably overestimating your epistemic strengths and underestimating your epistemic weaknesses (Tanesini 2018, 418; Whitcomb et al. 2017, 526). Epistemic self-righteousness adds to this a moral or religious dimension. We saw above that self-righteousness is a form of arrogance that is grounded in a sense of moral or religious superiority; similarly, epistemic self-righteousness is a form of epistemic arrogance arising on moral or religious grounds. You overestimate your epistemic abilities *because of something morally or religiously special about you*. For example, you may be an activist for important causes and on that basis take yourself to have greater insights than others. You may be right about this, in which case you do not count as epistemically self-righteous. But you might also be mistaken, in which case you do.

Epistemic self-righteousness is a particularly pernicious, or hard-to-dislodge, form of epistemic arrogance. The reason is that it is apt to be undergirded by what Fricker (2007, 14) calls a 'social imagination': a story that your community tells, complete with associations, concepts, and implicit commitments, that supposedly legitimates your claim to epistemic superiority. A social imagination upholds practical and epistemic power structures, making epistemic self-righteousness particularly hard to shake.

Epistemic self-righteousness promotes inaccurate beliefs for the epistemically self-righteous person herself, as well as for other people. Systematically overestimating yourself epistemically makes you prone to misfire in your beliefs, and doing so out of self-righteousness makes you apt to justify or rationalize them rather than self-correct. And to the extent that other people, particularly those in positions of lesser power, agree that the epistemically self-righteous are morally or religiously superior (and thus also epistemically superior), they are vulnerable to according the epistemically self-righteous too much epistemic authority, or what Fricker (*ibid.*) calls a *credibility excess*. They may accept the pronouncements of such people less critically than they should, further degrading the accuracy of their community's social imagination (Tanesini 2016).

The second vice of epistemic phariseeism is *epistemic disdain*. This is a special form of closed-mindedness. A closed-minded person is unreceptive to information seeming to speak against her beliefs (Battaly 2018); an epistemically disdainful person, in particular, is unreceptive to the idea that certain people outside her own belief-forming community have anything to offer epistemically. She thus declines generally to take them seriously as interlocutors, without considering individuals on their own merit.

Epistemic disdain too promotes inaccurate beliefs for the individual as well as for others. Individually, the epistemically disdainful person forfeits insights that she might otherwise gain from the people she disdains. Socially, especially when combined with uneven power dynamics and a social imagination supporting them, epistemic disdain has at least two epistemically negative outworkings. First, it can undermine the epistemic self-trust of those towards whom it is directed, so that, because their confidence in their beliefs drops below a certain threshold, they no longer count as knowing. This harms the disdained as well as the broader community that is deprived of their insight. Second, epistemic disdain can give rise to echo chambers. To see what this amounts to, contrast them with mere filter bubbles (Nguyen 2020). A filter bubble is a community that happens, for contingent reasons, to be isolated from outside information that speaks against their beliefs, but whose members are open to revising their beliefs should they receive such information. In an echo chamber, in contrast, people who hold beliefs that do not accord with the social imagination are treated with a priori scepticism or even demonized (*ibid.*). The result over time is a cycle of *increased* epistemic disdain, and a lessened ability to appreciate criticism of community views.

The third vice of epistemic phariseeism is overlooking one's specific epistemic failings. Following Medina (2013, ch. 2.2), we may call it *meta-blindness*. Whereas epistemic self-righteousness is the general tendency to epistemically overestimate oneself, meta-blindness is the lack of awareness, or downplaying, of *specific* epistemic flaws. Meta-blindness is a natural corollary of the first two vices. If you overestimate your epistemic abilities and think that you have little to learn from others (especially for moral or religious reasons), you are apt to err in certain ways without realizing or being prepared to consciously acknowledge it.

And meta-blindness, like the first two epistemic vices, is an epistemic impediment individually as well as for others. If you are unaware of your epistemic failings or unwilling to admit them, you will not fix them. And insofar as the meta-blind person exerts epistemic influence on others, the community's social imagination is prone to inherit many of her epistemic shortcomings.

The fourth vice of epistemic phariseism is *epistemic cold-heartedness*. Whereas the first three vices have epistemically negative outworkings individually and for other people, this one does so primarily for other people. Epistemic cold-heartedness is the epistemic analogue of lacking compassion. It is a matter of not caring about other people's epistemic aims, so that, to the extent that it is in your power to help them meet these aims (and not an unreasonable burden on yourself), you nonetheless decline to. For example, suppose that you are in an unfamiliar city, dragging heavy luggage, and are hurrying to the railway station; you ask a passer-by for directions. She has time and a smartphone, but nonetheless declines to put much effort into helping you. She may grudgingly tell you the way that is easiest for her to describe that goes up a steep stairway, but not bother to tell you a way that she would have to stop and think about, or look up on her phone, that is accessible for heavy luggage.

These four epistemic vices have negative epistemic consequences beyond those just discussed. Exhibited as a package, they produce a highly unattractive epistemic exemplar, which we may call an *anti-exemplar*. An epistemic exemplar is a thinker worth admiring and emulating both morally and intellectually (Zagzebski 2012); an epistemic anti-exemplar is a thinker worth being *unlike* – an example of how *not* to conduct one's cognitive life. If people of faith are epistemically pharisaic, they will discourage others from forming or maintaining faith beliefs, in at least three ways. Emotionally, people may be turned off from considering beliefs of faith, associating them with epistemic phariseism. Epistemically, pharisaic people provide evidence suggesting that there may not be much to the beliefs they hold (for if there were, those professing them would surely not be pharisaic!). And practically, epistemic phariseism, if widespread, can yield a culture with impoverished educational structures for helping people truly understand the faith.

I said that epistemic phariseism goes beyond mere noetic entrenchment. To see how, note that noetic entrenchment is just the forming and holding of beliefs despite challenging epistemic circumstances – that is, circumstances where you have, or would easily have if you were appropriately sensitive, significant evidence against your beliefs. You can hold beliefs despite challenging epistemic circumstances without being epistemically self-righteous, since you can be entrenched in the belief that you are epistemically inferior. You can be entrenched without exhibiting epistemic disdain for others – you can hear them out with genuine interest and respect, and simply conclude each time that their views, though reasonable, are mistaken. You can be entrenched without exhibiting meta-blindness, since you can be fully aware that you are entrenched, just disinclined to do anything about it (say, because you are convinced your view is true). And you can be entrenched without being epistemically cold-hearted – you can genuinely care to convert others to your (entrenched) views, and do so winsomely.

Epistemic phariseism and divine-help epistemology

Now that we have an account of epistemic phariseism, we are in a position to show how divine-help epistemology makes people prone to it. I'll take each vice in turn.

Epistemic self-righteousness

Start with epistemic self-righteousness. A religious believer abiding by a divine-help epistemology might fall into this by inclining to give his cognitive faculties the benefit of the doubt in the face of counterevidence, tending to believe that his intuitions or value judgements are more accurate than they are.

The problem is not with his believing that he has been epistemically blessed – after all, we are assuming that he has been. It is with the tendency that this belief instils to form

beliefs complacently. The danger arises from emphasizing his partialist evidence, which we saw that divine-help epistemologies allow to defeat other considerations. Consider, for example, a tragic event that one might typically think speaks against God's goodness. A believer subscribing to a divine-help epistemology, trusting her faculties, is apt to conclude that this event is divine judgement on people who disobey a doctrine she especially cares about. It is unlikely to occur to her that her total evidence, including for example the fact that other people who follow her preferred doctrine have undergone similar tragedies, seriously underdetermines this explanation. Or if it does, she may resort to an ad hoc explanation for the difference.

The danger of slipping into epistemic self-righteousness arises from the assumption that, because you have been cleansed of the noetic effects of a fallen world in one respect, which might be true, they no longer affect you in others. A believer abiding by Wainwright's passion-reason view is in danger of concluding, from the belief that he possesses 'the proper moral and spiritual qualifications' (1995, 3), that these qualifications will keep him from succumbing to affective or cognitive temptation. Someone adhering to Plantinga's Reformed epistemology is in danger of drawing a similar conclusion from the fact that God has repaired her *sensus divinitatis*. And Moser's filial-knowledge view so strongly emphasizes the selfishness of non-believers, in contrast with believers' decision to repent, that it would be natural to have an over-optimistic understanding of this picture's epistemic implications.

But the conclusion that you are well placed with respect to the noetic effects of a fallen world does not cohere well with Christian tradition – and this matters, because Christian tradition is often cited to support divine-help epistemology. Divine help enables the believer to have faith, but it does not free her from susceptibility to the noetic outworkings of fallenness.⁶ These include the very real temptation to backslide on loving and believing in God, but also, more importantly for our purposes, to succumb to moral and epistemic vices that are compatible with, and even whitewashed by, religious faith.

A proper exploration of Christian tradition on this issue would explode my word limit. But we may briefly invoke at least Calvin and some biblical writers – Calvin because many divine-help epistemologies and their critics do so (e.g. Plantinga 1983; *Idem* 2000; Jeffreys 1997; Westphal 1991; Moser 2008; *Idem* 2010), and biblical writers because of their ecumenical significance. Calvin preaches on the temptation that believers face to sin cognitively and affectively by doubting what they know about God and turning from him in their actions (Calvin 1952, 167–174). Similarly, Paul⁷ supposes that believers will be sorely tempted to sin, and exhorts them to '[p]ut off your old nature' and to 'put on the new nature' (Ephesians 4:12; cf. Romans 12:1–2). And Paul describes himself, a believer, as continuing to sin despite himself, because sin still 'dwells in [his] members' (Romans 7:24).⁸ Finally, various biblical prophets, as well as Jesus, strongly warn against using your religious status to whitewash sin.⁹ What distinguishes believers from non-believers is thus *not* that they are less susceptible to sin. It is that God, because of their faith, does not hold these sins against them.¹⁰ (Paul does not say, in Romans 8:1, that there is no *sin* for those who are in Christ Jesus, but rather no *condemnation*.) Westphal notes that 'unbelief is not the only way of suppressing the truth about God. It is only the most honest' (213–214). What might be some other ways of suppressing it, to which believers are susceptible? One, I suggest (and Westphal agrees¹¹) is epistemic phariseism.

Epistemic disdain

Let's turn to epistemic disdain. How do divine-help epistemologies make believers prone to it? One way is by claiming that affective and cognitive fallenness explains non-belief in God. Unless this claim is further differentiated (which none of the three views does as far

as I can tell), the conclusion suggests itself that non-believers have little insight to offer on religious matters at all. This conclusion is the corollary of the partialist means of responding to evidence against one's religious beliefs (see the section on divine-help epistemologies). Given that partialism entitles believers to take their partialist evidence and belief-forming processes significantly more seriously than counterevidence, they are also entitled, *a fortiori*, to take these more seriously than the dissenting views of non-believers. Hence they do not need to take non-believers' views particularly seriously. This amounts to using the noetic effects of sin as a 'discrediting mechanism' (McKim 2001, 136). But '[s]in as an epistemological category cannot be . . . merely a device for discrediting one's opponents' (Westphal 1991, 216). Just as believers are susceptible to cognitive failings when forming beliefs about religious matters, so are non-believers prone to insights about such matters that believers may miss.

I'll point out three sorts of insight. The first and second are available through natural reason, which Christian tradition (including the Reformed tradition to which divine-help epistemologies appeal) takes to spread evenly over believers and non-believers alike. Here for instance is Calvin (Calvin 1846, 236):

[I]n reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver.

This acknowledgement of natural reason gets short shrift in divine-help epistemologies. Yet it puts non-believers in a position to offer two sorts of insight to believers.

The first is this. Non-believers deploying natural reason may pinpoint genuine vulnerabilities in believers' worldviews. This may include implicit but problematic background assumptions that believers rely on, unnecessarily culturally laden interpretations of key doctrines, infelicities of logic or coherence (within doctrine or with other truths) (cf. Dormandy 2020a; *Idem* 2020b). They are also in a special position to notice epistemically pharisaic behaviour, being targeted by it.

Second, it is through natural reason that non-believers and believers alike can become experts in non-religious domains – so, in domains in which our beliefs are not particularly susceptible to the noetic effects of a fallen world. These domains supply 'auxiliary beliefs' that support beliefs about religious matters (Dormandy 2020b). Examples include beliefs about historical or textual criticism (on which views about the transmission of the Bible may rest), historical ethnography (which helps us understand biblical cultures and thus the Bible itself), and epistemology (which clarifies why some things are good reasons for beliefs about religious matters and others not). There are also domains bearing on religious ethics, such as economics, psychology, and natural science. Because much if not all reasoning in those domains falls within the purview of natural reason, epistemic disdain for non-believers working in them is apt to deprive believers of important insights that are relevant to religious matters.

The third sort of insight that non-believers can offer arises less from natural reason and more from experiences they may have had, themselves, of faith communities. To see this, note that many people are non-believers because of bad experiences in such communities, and so are uniquely positioned to shed light on ways in which people of faith may – pharisaically – stray from the ideals that they espouse (Dormandy 2018b; *Idem* 2021). For example, recent scandals come to mind in which abuses of power were revealed by community outsiders who used to belong to the community. Westphal

says: 'If . . . we notice the frequent and easy marriage of [Christian] orthodoxy with various forms of exploitation and domination, we will begin to realize that correct beliefs can be just as useful in suppressing the truth as falsehood [can]' (1991, 216). Religious believers must heed such people, but epistemic disdain deprives believers of their insights.

Meta-blindness

Let's turn to meta-blindness. Medina argues that this follows naturally from a sense of one's cognitive superiority and others' inferiority (2013). Accordingly, divine-help epistemologies promote this vice as a consequence of the first two.

Meta-blindness might manifest itself in various areas. Take the claim, affirmed by divine-help epistemologies, that a truth-conducive way to form beliefs about religious matters is to deploy your divinely restored cognitive abilities. Even assuming that this claim is true, it leaves ample room for a believer who holds it to jump to conclusions. One such conclusion is that deploying his divinely restored cognitive abilities is the *only* truth-conducive way to form beliefs about religious matters – even though we just saw that this is not the case. Another is that deploying these abilities *guarantees* accurate beliefs about religious matters – which, given that the noetic effects of a fallen world affect believers too, is also false. To discourage believers from jumping to such conclusions, we need explicit and nuanced discussion of the ways in which they too are still susceptible to the noetic effects of a fallen world. In the three views discussed here, such discussion is notably absent.

Or take the claim that members of one's own religious community have divinely restored cognitive abilities in forming beliefs about religious matters to begin with. Even assuming that this is true, we saw that one can conclude too much about one's own abilities and too little about non-believers'. For example, the believer who overconfidently explains a tragedy in terms of God's judgement is likely to be unaware that she is overlooking the evidence of her own scripture and tradition, which encourages caution about reading divine judgement into specific tragedies.¹² For another example, it is likely that, sometimes, members of one's religious community – even if their cognitive abilities have been divinely restored – do not deploy them *all the time* in forming beliefs about religious matters, or do not do so *as well as they might*. After all, cognitive abilities are not like software that runs automatically – they are much more like tools that one deploys with or without due care. Consider how a church community is apt automatically to believe the testimony of an elder over that of a former congregant accusing the elder of abuse.

These are just some examples of ways in which divine-help epistemology, even supposing that its basic claims are true, is prone to encouraging specific errors.

Epistemic cold-heartedness

The first three vices of epistemic phariseeism suppress accurate beliefs about God for believers themselves, and indirectly for other people. The fourth vice, epistemic cold-heartedness, suppresses them primarily for other people. Wainwright's and Plantinga's views do so in a different way than Moser's.

To see how Wainwright's and Plantinga's views promote epistemic cold-heartedness, note that one would expect believers to want non-believers to enjoy the same epistemic blessings that they do. A natural way to encourage this would be to design epistemic norms that, if adhered to, offer non-believers a leg up – that mitigate the noetic effects of sin to the extent possible, for example by advocating epistemic policies that are truth-conducive for them too. But Wainwright's and Plantinga's divine-help epistemologies do not do this. They are constructed primarily with believers in mind. They legitimate people

in maintaining religious beliefs that they already have, rather than helping people who do not have religious beliefs to acquire them, or people who have false ones to acquire accurate ones. These views do so, as we saw, by permitting believers to rely predominantly on partialist evidence. On the face of it this is perfectly innocuous. After all, how is encouraging *believers* to privilege their partialist evidence epistemically cold-hearted towards *non-believers*?

On Wainwright's passion-reason view, the reason is that the focus on God's help for believers leaves non-believers without any opportunity to improve their own epistemic situation. Plantinga's Reformed epistemology does this too – but even worse, it also inadvertently *misleads* non-believers. For just as Reformed epistemology permits believers to rely primarily on their partialist evidence, it also permits *non-believers* to rely primarily on *theirs* (2000, 343–344). This general permissiveness is geared towards allowing believers to take full advantage of their divine epistemic help without being led astray by counter-evidence. The corollary, however, is that *non-believers* will go even farther astray than they started. For relying predominantly on one's own experiences and background beliefs – religious or otherwise – is apt to cement biases or groupthink (Dormandy 2018a; *Idem* 2021). If your biases or groupthink push you towards inaccurate beliefs about religion, there will be little in the way of normative epistemology to encourage or nudge you back. (Of course, if the noetic-entrenchment objection from the section on divine-help epistemology is on target, divine-help epistemologies are not especially epistemically effective for believers either.)

One might think that a lack of epistemic nudging makes sense if, as Wainwright asserts and Plantinga is open to, non-believers' epistemic predicament is primarily *affective*. If a person's affections are not oriented towards God, epistemic nudging will be of little value anyway. In response, epistemic nudging can promote or support a person's opening up affectively to God. For example, a non-believer in the first stages of doing so will need epistemic guidance for exploring further, rather than simply being warned against relying on her unregenerate intuitions. For another example, some non-believers may worry that faith means throwing away their reason. Here, robust epistemic norms could make faith more attractive than it was before; it could be the means that God uses to affectively draw such people to him.

Moser's filial-knowledge view is prone to encourage epistemic cold-heartedness too, but in a different way than Wainwright's or Plantinga's. In contrast to theirs, Moser's view is very concerned with non-believers' epistemic self-improvement. And he is explicit about how they can achieve it: they can deploy their free will to turn affectively towards God (Moser 2008, 101; *Idem* 2010, 158). A significant risk of epistemic cold-heartedness emerges, however, when we consider how Moser talks about how non-believers are to do this. Both the prose and the content of his view express moral opprobrium of non-believers, even bordering on shaming.

Moser says, as we saw above, that non-believers are motivated by selfishness, and that turning affectively towards God amounts to repenting of this. Granted, he says that believers are naturally selfish too (Moser 2008, 101, 120); but they have at least made the laudatory decision to orient themselves away from selfishness and towards God and love of neighbour (*ibid.*, 127), which puts them on the road towards being cleansed of their selfishness. We may also grant that selfishness can sometimes explain why a person does not turn towards God. But Moser's view has little to say about non-believers with other reasons – such as the fact that they suffered or witnessed abuse in religious contexts. (All that Moser says is that God may be 'hiding' from such people to encourage them to yearn for him (*ibid.*, 107).) Moreover, even if Moser is right that non-belief is motivated solely or at least primarily by selfishness, surely this observation merits compassion – for being born into a fallen world, even if it affects our character, is not something for which we are

responsible. But compassion is nowhere to be found in Moser's prose. On the contrary: even in the few places where he mentions a compassion-worthy motive for unbelief, it is tied to selfishness. Fear, for instance, is in fact 'selfish fear' (*ibid.*, 104, 117, 125, 127).

So even though Moser lights a path for non-believers towards affective and cognitive regeneration, he strews it with barbs. Having selfishness attributed to you without any nuance, attention to specific circumstances, or expressions of compassion is not a win-some invitation to find God lovely. On the contrary, it is apt to turn people off from God (or what they have experienced of his followers in such prose as this).

In summary, Wainwright's view makes people prone to epistemic cold-heartedness by disregarding the epistemic needs of non-believers; Plantinga's view does so by inadvertently misleading them; and Moser's does so by discouraging positive feelings about God.

Of course, it is also likely that divine-help epistemologies have *encouraged* people to form or maintain beliefs of faith, confident that these beliefs are in good epistemic standing (at least if the relevant theology is on target). This just shows that the disposition of divine-help epistemology to discourage people from holding religious beliefs, like any disposition, manifests in context-dependent ways. A vase is disposed to shatter when struck or dropped, but to maintain its structure when left alone. Similarly, divine-help epistemology is prone, I argue, to discouraging people from holding religious beliefs when those people might have benefited from more robust epistemic norms, or are turned off by blanket attributions of selfishness. For those who are comfortable with partialist epistemic norms, or who feel spoken to by attributions of selfishness, divine-help epistemology may have a different effect altogether.

What is hypocritical about epistemic phariseism?

What makes the vices of epistemic phariseism hypocritical? The first three, epistemic self-righteousness, epistemic disdain, and meta-blindness, are all hypocritical in the same way, exhibiting the same sort of inconsistency. It might be theoretical or theory-practice inconsistency. If it is theoretical, the person endorses, for example, the proposition that noetic fallenness is not at work in her own beliefs but that it is at work in others'; whereas she should (and is in a position to know that she should) hold that her beliefs are susceptible too. If it is a theory-practice inconsistency, she may endorse the proposition that her own beliefs are susceptible, without acting accordingly – for example, without taking extra care to second-guess her intellectual seemings, or without making an effort to listen to outsiders.

Where is the hypocritical inconsistency in epistemic cold-heartedness? If it is a theoretical inconsistency, I suggest that it lies between a proposition that the person endorses (perhaps implicitly), to the effect that non-believers' accuracy does not matter, and one that she should endorse, that it is important. If it is a theory-practice inconsistency, it may lie between a proposition that she endorses, for example that it is good for everyone to have accurate religious beliefs, and her actions of prescribing epistemic norms that help some and not others.

Epistemic Common Grace

The proponent of divine-help epistemology might object that their view is more innocuous than I have made it seem. After all, divine-help epistemology merely posits a special sort of ability, akin to expertise. This is no different from the expertise of scientists or mechanics. And surely it is epistemically appropriate for experts to take their own views on their domains more seriously than the views of people without special training. If this is so, then two consequences seem apparent. One is that, if epistemic phariseism is

a danger, it is equally a danger for other domains beside religion. The other is that we do not worry about epistemic phariseeism in other domains; of course, it can arise, but it is the exception rather than the rule. Similarly, then, we need not worry especially about divine-help epistemology.

But this reasoning is too quick. Divine-help epistemology does more than posit special epistemic abilities on religious matters. It also claims that these abilities are a gift from God, the morally perfect (or supremely close to perfect) creator and sustainer of the universe, to his specially selected individuals and community. This means that a person's epistemic standing is not just a matter of expert-like abilities, and outsiders' lack of epistemic standing is not just a matter of lacking such abilities. Rather, these things are a matter of the believer's also being in a religiously and morally better position, and the non-believer's being in a religiously and morally worse one. The normativity is not just epistemic; it is religious and moral. The believer has a normative leg up because of her standing in the universe.

This moral inferiority of non-believers is not incidental to divine-help epistemology. As we saw in the discussion of these views' understandings of fallenness, it is an explicit and central aspect. Wainwright (1995, 148) says that unbelief is a 'failure of the heart', Plantinga (2000, 308) calls it a matter of 'love of self' and 'thinking of oneself as the chief being of the universe', and Moser (2008) describes unbelief in such terms as 'selfishness' (e.g. *ibid.*, 105, 116–119, 127), 'selfish fear, self-righteousness, pridefulness, and ingratitude' (*ibid.*, 127), 'twisted self-indulgence' (*ibid.*, 116), and so forth. In other words, each divine-help epistemology claims explicitly that non-believers are worse off not just for incidental reasons that have nothing to do with their moral standing; rather, they are worse off epistemically *because* they are worse off morally.

This heady cocktail of high-powered normativity is absent from run-of-the-mill expertise. Medina's remarks about the connection between authority and epistemic vice are apt here. He argues that, to the extent that you or your social group enjoy authority in your community, and to the extent that this authority is perceived to come with special epistemic advantages, you can become epistemically 'spoiled' (Medina 2013, 30) – subject to vices such as those of epistemic phariseeism. Medina is talking about people in positions of earthly authority. But an analogous worry holds for people and communities who take themselves to enjoy epistemic privilege bestowed by the ultimate cosmic authority. This blend of religious, moral, and epistemic normativity makes divine-help epistemologies importantly different from typical expert communities – and much more prone to encouraging the vices of epistemic phariseeism in believers.

This worry is acknowledged by Westphal and Wainwright, who first articulated the possibility of epistemic phariseeism. And both point towards the same solution: critical self-examination on the part of believers. Wainwright, who endorses a divine-help epistemology, says: 'Intellectual phariseeism is a danger, but I suggest that its corrective is to focus on the ways in which one's own sinful proclivities infect and distort one's thinking about God' (Wainwright 1995, 148). And Westphal (1991, 219) advocates 'a critical examination of the relation of belief and practice in our various Christian communities'.

What should this critical self-examination look like? Wainwright does not tell us. Westphal says more, but what he says exacerbates rather than addresses the problem. He criticizes certain divine-help approaches for treating the religious beliefs of the faithful as 'innocent until proven guilty' – that is, for privileging the evidence of their experiences and tradition without checks or balances. After all, they are not exempt from the noetic effects of a fallen world. He advocates instead that, because of these effects, the beliefs of the faithful be treated as 'guilty until proved innocent' (Westphal 2017). But Westphal does not say how the faithful might prove that their beliefs are innocent. If the noetic effects of a fallen world make our belief-formation a priori suspect, then

this is a problem. For it leaves us in a double bind: we must prove that our belief-forming faculties on religious matters, in any given case, are innocent, but to do so we must use our belief-forming faculties. This is not a solution, but an exacerbation of the problem.

As an alternative solution, I'd like to suggest a different theological idea: grace. Divine-help epistemologies emphasize God's *specific* grace in enabling select people to have accurate beliefs about him. But to my mind they under-emphasize another form of grace, *common* grace – which he bestows on believer and non-believer alike. Traditional sources for the doctrine of common grace include, for some brief examples, the statement that 'the LORD is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made' (Psalm 145:9; cf. Acts 14:17). And God is often portrayed as intervening for good in the lives of the unfaithful, for example when he restrained King Abimelech from touching Abraham's wife, saying 'I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me' (Genesis 20:6). And Paul says that a certain group of Gentiles, despite their non-belief, 'do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law' (Romans 2:14).¹³

In the epistemic case, if *specific* grace is God's special selection of believers, *common* grace amounts to epistemic blessings poured on everyone, or on select non-believers. I suggest that religious epistemology needs both. It must recognize the special epistemic blessings enjoyed by believers in the form of their partialist evidence, but it also puts down safeguards to preserve these blessings against the vices of epistemic phariseeism. These safeguards, I suggest, can come from epistemic common grace.

If specific epistemic grace is channelled through partialist evidence, then it makes sense to think that common grace can be channelled through impartialist evidence – evidence that can be understood and affirmed by faithful and non-faithful alike. Examples include the fact that physical constants are fine-tuned for human existence, that there is horrendous suffering in the world, that religious traditions and texts exist, and so forth. These are not special experiences or religious commitments, but part of most people's total evidence, whatever their religious beliefs, that it makes sense to consider when reasoning about religious matters. I argue elsewhere that religious epistemology should place a high value on partialist as well as impartialist evidence (Dormandy 2018a; *Idem* 2021). The reason is that partialist evidence is apt to encapsulate genuine religious insight, but that it does so at the expense of fomenting biases that detract from truth; whereas impartialist evidence can hold partialist evidence accountable, but is less likely to resolve questions about religious reality one way or another. I argue that these two sorts of evidence can work in tandem (*ibid.*); I call this approach *egalitarian epistemology*.

I suggest that egalitarian epistemology can delineate the epistemic roles of specific and common grace. Specific grace is granted through partialist evidence (at least, when the experiences, tradition, and intellectual seemings really are accuracy-conducive), and common grace is granted through impartialist evidence.

Egalitarian epistemology is better placed than divine-help epistemology to safeguard against epistemic phariseeism. For these vices arise, as we saw, from divine-help epistemology's emphasis on the partialist evidence of specific grace. But when you take account of impartialist evidence alongside partialist, the vices of epistemic phariseeism may not gestate so easily. Arguing this fully would take a different article. But intuitively, it is harder to be epistemically self-righteous or epistemically disdainful if you have to heed not just your own partialist evidence, but also evidence that others can take on board too. And to the extent that these vices are less likely, so is meta-blindness. Moreover, egalitarian epistemology, in spreading divine grace more evenly, combats epistemic cold-heartedness, because it emphasizes the importance of finding common ground with those who disagree with you about religious matters, in order to shore up your common stock of impartialist evidence.

Egalitarian epistemology should mesh well with the spirit, if not the letter, of divine-help epistemology. For divine-help epistemology emphasizes the importance of trusting God for accurate beliefs about religious matters. We trust him all the more if we do so not only for specific grace but also for common grace.

Conclusion

Divine-help epistemologies were developed to secure the possibility of positive epistemic status for religious beliefs against counterevidence coming from a fallen world. This is an important ambition. But I have argued that the way in which divine-help epistemologies aim to achieve it makes believers prone to the vices of epistemic phariseeism. Epistemic phariseeism is one way of being noetically entrenched, but it extends beyond this. It is a form of entrenchment involving epistemic self-righteousness, a special kind of epistemic arrogance; epistemic disdain, a special kind of closed-mindedness directed against outsiders; meta-blindness; and epistemic cold-heartedness, not caring about others' epistemic condition. These vices are particular risks of divine-help epistemology, as opposed to other views positing special forms of expertise. The reason is that divine-help epistemology does not just posit an *epistemic* advantage on the part of believers, but attributes this epistemic advantage to believers' moral and religious standing.

Greater self-examination on the part of believers may be an antidote to epistemic phariseeism, but it must rely on divine grace to overcome the effects that our noetic fall-*enness* would exert on the examination process. In addition to the specific grace to which divine-help epistemologies appeal, I have suggested that we need an epistemology of common grace. A suitable epistemic approach is egalitarian epistemology, which acknowledges the importance of specific grace manifested in partialist evidence, operating in tandem with common grace manifested in impartialist evidence.

Since this alternative to divine-help epistemology relies on two kinds of grace instead of just one, with the epistemic improvements that I have argued for, I suggest that it is well placed to accompany a flourishing faith.

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Notes

1. For discussion see Plantinga (1983). The terms 'impartialism' and 'partialism' come from (Dormandy 2018a).
2. Westphal says 'epistemological Phariseeism' (1991, 214) and Wainwright says 'intellectual Phariseeism' (1995, 148).
3. Alternative epistemologies might of course promote other vices, a topic for another paper.
4. Indeed, in Dormandy (2018a, 69) I mistakenly attribute to him a different view.
5. Just as phariseeism is a species of hypocrisy, epistemic phariseeism may be a species of a broader phenomenon of *epistemic* hypocrisy – a matter for further exploration.
6. We saw above that Moser (2008) agrees at least that believers are affected noetically by sin, but that his epistemology does not reflect the idea that they are affected as much as nonbelievers are.
7. Or the writer to the Ephesians.
8. It may seem odd in this context that Paul says (in the same chapter) that 'sin will have no dominion over you [believers]' (Romans 6:14); but by this he does not mean that you will not be tempted to sin, but only that the presence of the Holy Spirit in you gives you a measure of freedom to decide not to.
9. Select examples include Malachi 1:6-2:9, which criticizes priests for corruption, and the above parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.
10. For discussion of this motif in Calvin see (Jeffreys 1997).

11. Westphal (1991, 213–214) says: ‘for believers to draw a line between themselves and unbelievers and to find the noetic effects of sin only on the other side of that line is closer to epistemological Phariseism than it is to taking Paul seriously’.
12. For example, this is how John 9:1–3 is often understood.
13. Calvin too is amenable to the doctrine of common grace; for discussion see Bavinck (1909).

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