

Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism

What Ethics May Say About Whether and How to Trust God

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Preambles

My question this afternoon is: What is there in contemporary ethics of trust that can shed some light on trust directed towards God, in particular some light on how to answer the question: Is it good to trust God?

I feel like Lewis and Clark, trying to find a passage across land declared impassible. I think I have mapped a route. I know there are trails that do not go through. I invite you to imagine the route, and consider whether the passage I chart is open to the journey I would take. Some of those writing on trust say that trust in God is unlimited, unconditional, and trust in people should be limited and conditional. Therefore there is no conceptual connection between what is good or bad in trust of people and what is good or bad in trust of God. My aim is to show connections, plausible connections, plausible ethical connections, between trusting people and trusting God. Therefore, to trust God is not as a notion a category mistake and not as a practice removed from any ethical evaluation. For today's colloquium with the Marquette Philosophy Department, I ask: What am I missing, what am I misunderstanding?

I. The Divide, In Some Current Ethics and Philosophy

There is a major divide between trusting directed towards human beings and trusting directed towards God, at least in the view of some current thinkers. It may be something about trust. It may be something about God. There is the view that trust in God is, in its very concept, radically different from trust in anything or anyone else, because of something about God--because God is so different. Philosopher Michel Sarot argues, for example, that since God is neither specifiable, nor free to defect, and all other forms of trust involve either specifiability or freedom to defect or both, trust of God is different from all other kinds of trust.¹ From this it could follow that trust of God *should be* crucially different from trust among human beings, because there is no common measure for speaking of trust of God and trust of anything else. A person could not learn about trusting God from reflecting on trusting people.²

A vivid picture of trust in God and the divide between this and trusting people--indeed, a chasm--can be found in an essay of Annette Baier, "Trust and Anti-Trust." As she focuses on trust relationships between those who are unequal, she remarks:

"Trust in God is total, in that whatever one cares about, it will not thrive if God wills that it not thrive. . . . Such total dependence does not, in itself, necessarily elicit trust--some theists curse God,

1. "Why Trusting God Differs from All Other Forms of Trust," *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics* 35, no. 1 (March-April 1996): 101–15. I find Sarot's specifiability to be, ambiguously, either of the object of trust (God) or of the outcome of the trusting, which I take to be an event or state of affairs.

2. Robert Solomon and Fernando Flores make a similar point: "Trust in God requires an unconditional trust unlike any other, a trust that may remain firm and consistent through any number of seeming betrayals. But in this sense, it is exceptional and not the paradigm." *Building Trust: In Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

display futile distrust or despair rather than trust.”³ Annette Baier, thus identifying and contrasting dependence and trust, further addresses trust in God. “The persistent human adult tendency to profess trust in a creator-God can also be seen as an infantile residue of [the] crucial innate readiness of infants to initially impute goodwill to the powerful persons on whom they depend. . . . [W]e might cite the theological contamination of the concept of trust as part of the explanation for the general avoidance of the topic in modern moral philosophy. If trust is seen as a variant of the suspect virtue of faith in the competence of the powers that be, then readiness to trust will be seen not just as a virtue of the weak but itself as a moral weakness, better replaced by vigilance and self-assertion, by self-reliance or by cautious, minimal, and carefully monitored trust.”⁴ Baier wryly imagines that modern moral philosophers have shifted their focus from trust in God to the trust involved when people enter into social contracts, “as if once we have weaned ourselves from the degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God, all our capacity for trust is to be channeled into the equally degenerative form of formal voluntary and unreciprocated trust restricted to equals.”⁵ Here we have a divide because of something about trust.

The Divide, in Philosophy and Theology

Depending on whether her “degenerate form” is appositive or restrictive regarding absolute and unreciprocated trust in God, Baier’s remark calls down an intended or unintended plague upon both the house of degenerative contract-trusting and the house of “the degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God.” But we can find a less trenchant but nonetheless sobering warning about trusting in God from Thomas Aquinas. Trust in God can be done badly: he judges that it is a worse sin to trust God inappropriately than to trust oneself inappropriately.⁶ The reason why it is worse is that going

3. Annette C. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 106.

4. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 107–08.

5. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 119.

6. *Summa theologiae* II-II 21,1, Reply 1. I translate his *inordinate* as “inappropriately”.

wrong in one's dealings with God is a bigger problem than going wrong in dealings with oneself or others. The stakes are higher; mistakes have graver consequences. Here we have a divide because of something about trust *and* because of something about God.

We could expect Thomas Aquinas to follow a lead of Aristotle and indicate that there could be an extreme of too little trust, and an opposing extreme of too much trust. But no, in the matter of trust directed towards God, there cannot be too much trust.⁷ So, inappropriate trust directed towards God is not a matter of too much. Well, then, how *does* trusting go wrong when directed towards God? A person trusts God badly when seeking some good which it is not suitable for God to provide, when it is not fitting or appropriate for God to help.⁸ The obvious set of cases here would be a person's leaving to God the securing of some goods which do not lead to the ultimate good, the beatific presence of God, or presuming that God will save me when I've done nothing to deserve being saved.⁹

While Thomas Aquinas does not simply rule out a common measure for trusting God and trusting people, he does imply problems in assessing trusting God from the standpoint of assessing trusting people--too much trust, for example. There is one important difference. To trust people seems to involve becoming dependent on them. Standard theism has it that all creatures, we humans included, depend on God for our existence and for everything else.¹⁰ Of course dependence and trust are not synonyms. As we saw Annette Baier put it, "total dependence does not, in itself, necessarily elicit trust; some theists display futile distrust."¹¹

7. "[D]ivino auxilio nullus potest nimis inniti" ("no one can trust excessively in God's help"). *Summa theologiae* II-II 17, 5, Reply 2 (Blackfriars translation, 1966).

8. "*Quod non Deo convenit*" (II-II 21, 2, ad 2).

9. *Summa theologiae* II-II 21, 1, c, discussing presumption.

10. And religious feeling can then be proposed as the sense of absolute dependence on God, as Friedrich Schleiermacher emphasized, in his *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche*, reprint, 1821–22 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1980).

11. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 106.

Larger than these are the problems raised by some who hold that in principle there can be no comparisons between the sphere of trusting God and the sphere of trusting humans. Wittgensteinian and Barthian approaches warn against drawing connections between trusting directed towards people and trusting directed towards God. The reason for this is otherness: the Wittgensteinian otherness of religious language and form of life, and the Barthian otherness of God and of God's revelation to humanity. Wittgensteinians declare that when one is engaging in secular ethics discourse, the religious ethics language game is simply not being played. Between secular ethics and religious ethics the rules and ways of proceeding are simply different, and no comparisons are legitimate. The Barthian position is that we learn how to trust God from God, not from the mental vapors which philosophers generate.¹² We would thus look to the religious ethics people, and not to anyone else, for guidance on whether and how to trust God. Again, assessments of trusting among humans and between people and God are not subject to a common measure.

My Project Today: to Sketch a Bridge over the Divide

But I venture on, taking fiducial theism as attempting to speak, not just about God, but about trusting ways of relating to God. My title is "Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism: What Ethics May Say About Whether and How to Trust God." I offer some words of explanation for this title. I work in philosophy of religion, and am bringing to a close a book on trust and God. Mainline philosophy of religion, until fairly recently, wrestled with a standard list of divine predicates: omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, necessity and freedom, and considered God's relation to what is not God as a matter of creation, of things and people.¹³ Religion itself, in the theisms of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam says that the right

12. On direct self-revelation of God, see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 3:1, pp. 6-10, 22, as in Thomas L. Pangle, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 8.

relationships between God and people are relationships of trust.¹⁴ They may label people's relationship to God to be a matter of faith or obedience or love, but at heart it is trust in God which makes possible such love or obedience or other aspects of faith.¹⁵ In the Abrahamic traditions, one is called not to put trust in chariots or in princes or even, sometimes, not in any human being; one is called to trust God. Even the demons hold it to be true that God exists, the Letter of James remarks.¹⁶ Something further is needed to respond to a call to trust God.

Most religions have a soteriological structure, in which what is most real and important is supportive of the human desire to escape what is bad and to change for the better.¹⁷ Found in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, what I call standard theism is the set of beliefs and practices that includes the

13. My own way of doing philosophy of religion has this in common with philosophy of science: philosophy of religion should take religion as it is, akin to the way in which philosophy of science takes science as science is and aims to understand science, especially its key concepts and the reasonableness of its procedures. But there is also a meliorative aspect, when philosophy aims to help science to be better science; similarly philosophy of religion can help religion to be its better self. There is however, among the differences between religion and science an alleged and probable central difference, and that is that religion seems to be essentially contested and science seems to be contested less centrally. I will not follow the trail of the unity and difference among religious traditions; I leave that to others. But I take religion as religion is, with its practices and traditions and ways of proceeding and its ethos and beliefs and belief-systems.

14. For example, Psalms 28:7, 141:8, 144:2; and Hebrews 10:23, 11:11. "Al-Wakil", one of Islam's ninety-nine names of God, means "The Trustee, The Guardian," the one who is relied upon.

15. Joseph J. Godfrey, "Trust, the Heart of Religion: A Sketch," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65, Annual Supplement: *Religions and the Virtue of Religion* (1991): 157–67.

16. Letter of James, 2:19.

17. John Hick proposes understanding religion as soteriological, in the first chapter of his *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990).

belief that there is one God and that God is active in relation to what is not God and is indeed “saving” human beings from a bad condition. The relationship between what is most real and human beings is such that what is most real is most trustworthy, and this makes it rational to trust.

Whether a person takes as a conviction or takes as an assumption both that theism is correct and that God and creatures are real and are dealing with each other, fiducial theism focuses on human creatures and on the call in Abrahamic religions that human beings trust God. So fiducial theism is a theism characterized by people who are supposed to trust God.

People who are not theists can recognize in fiducial theism a hypothetical proposition: If there is a God who is in accord with Muslim, Jewish, and Christian teachings, then people should trust that God. The believer affirms that such a God exists, the unbeliever does not. But both the believer and the unbeliever can examine the hypothetical premise and its connection: what *is* the connection between a God calling for trust and whether it is good or right to trust such a God?

I therefore proceed hypothetically: if religion holds such to be so, then here is what follows. In this case, if religion and if the Christian religion¹⁸ correctly understands God to be an object of trusting, and if trusting is of a particular sort or should be of this sort, then trusting God should be of this sort. Such a “should” is recommendatory: One does well to enact the relationship. To figure where the good is in trusting directed towards God, I start by asking where is the good in trusting directed towards people.

In recent years, some philosophers of religion have turned their attention to philosophical issues in specific religious doctrines. One philosophical issue has been the coherence and consistency, not simply of central predicates about God, but of specific Christian doctrines. Thomas Morris’s *The Logic of God Incarnate* comes to mind. Another has been the making of an argument, not simply for the existence of God, but for a specific Christian doctrine. Richard Swinburne’s *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* comes to mind. I am not arguing that God exists nor am I arguing that trustworthiness is a correct predicate of

18. Which I know best and am personally committed to.

God. I am arguing that it is logically acceptable--or better, that the rejection is mistaken--to argue that trusting directed to God has enough similarity with trusting directed towards human persons for there to be an ethical commending of appropriate fiducial relationships directed towards God. By analogy, since Kant made the argument that from the fact that persons are ends in themselves, it is inappropriate that people be treated merely as things, I make the argument that from the hypothesis that God is a possible object of trust, certain trust-recommendations suitable for human persons are not mis-applied to God. Some ethical recommendations regarding trust *are* appropriately applied to God. I may outline, to use and alter the words of Baier's surmising interpretation, a *non*-degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God. The terms "absolute" and "unreciprocated" will need nuance, however. What I am arguing for is the truth of the first premise, the hypothetical premise, of a *modus ponens* syllogism, addressing the connection between the antecedent and the consequent clauses in the proposition.

I keep in mind two dicta of Aristotle, that we should expect only that precision which the subject matter allows, and that, by analogy with ethics, we are undertaking this inquiry not simply to know what trust of God is, but in order to become people of appropriate trust in God.¹⁹

Finally, a word on the "may" of my title "What May Ethics Say." This "may" expresses the tentativeness of my ongoing project, proceeding provisionally. It indicates some hesitancy about what is available from ethicists who are not theologians. Further, it bears the sense of intellectual liceity, of what one is "given permission" to say. It thus has also the flavor found in Kant's third question What may I hope? I ask: when it comes to God, whether and how may I trust?

19. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Chapter 2. There is also a relative disanalogy: more people would agree that virtue is worth studying and pursuing than would agree that trust in God is worth studying and pursuing, perhaps out of epistemological concerns--but not exclusively.

Sketching the Bridges

There are several points of connection between trusting directed towards people and trusting directed towards God.

Vulnerability, Help, and Acceptance

As do others, Annette Baier observes that trust is or implies or has, as a characteristic ingredient, “accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one.”²⁰ But the central issue for trust is not whether someone is vulnerable, subject to being *harmed*. The central issue for trusting is whether the party is subject to being *helped*. I take help here to mean that the trusting party is able to come to an improved situation because of a causal contribution of someone or something. A necessary condition for trusting is the ability to be helped. We do not have a ready word for this in English: we might try “adjutability” or “help-ability.”

Insofar as we are vulnerable in relation to God, we have reason to be suspicious of God. We may then experience impulses to trust God and impulses to suspect God. Instead of saying that vulnerability belongs in the core concept of trust, it seems better to distinguish suspecting impulses from trusting impulses, or to note reasons for being suspicious and reasons for being trusting, because emotions are specified by their objects. In this vale of tears, of course, vulnerability is a constant associate; standardly, trust comes equipped with vulnerability. But vulnerability is not an essential component in trust, because one can think help without thinking harm.

We should distinguish objective vulnerability and subjective vulnerability. Objectively considered, we may be more or less vulnerable. Subjectively, we may feel or think ourselves to be more or less

20. In a definition “on this first approximation.” “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 99. Also, “Trust is accepted vulnerability to another’s power to harm one, a power inseparable from the power to look after some aspect of one’s good.” “Trust and Its Vulnerabilities,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 133.

vulnerable. The problem of evil first appears here, as a reason in support of our subjective vulnerability because of objective vulnerability.

My point is that when it comes to God, for however much there may be help and care available, there is major vulnerability, objectively, as well as typically subjectively. But it remains a question, one stretching beyond this paper, whether vulnerability in relation to God is so great--as well as objective--that that level of vulnerability cannot be overbalanced by the extent and availability of divine care and help.

Letting Take Care

Frequently to trust is understood as to let take care. We need to keep in mind possible nuances of what goes on under the description "let take care." Opposed to letting take care is the *not letting* take care, the personally engaged protecting (and defending). There is also the personally *unengaged* letting care, as when one washes one's hands of a matter, abdicates responsibility, gives away and turns over to another some matter concerning which there is no concern about whether or not that other has an interest in the matter. There is also of course delegating, when the delegater does retain an interest in what happens to the matter put in another's care. And there is also, especially for our purposes, engaged caring, when one lets another care without subtracting or withdrawing one's own care. Joint ventures, cooperation, shared commitments fall into this area of engaged letting take care. In this latter case, the will is not adversarial but conspiratorial: parties are breathing the same air of concern. With this understanding of joint caring, the well-known prayer "Not my will, but thine be done" does not end but rather continues a conversation.

The Promised, the Best, and Discretion

One point in the ethics of trust and in the ethics of trustworthiness is that of the trusted party's faithfulness to the terms of the entrusting. Is it better, or is it obligatory, for the trusted party to take care of what is entrusted by carrying out the terms of the agreement, or it is better or obligatory for the trusted to substitute something even better than the outcome agreed upon? We can find that *non*-discretion is the default position. In non-religious ethics we find Michael Scanlon's proposal that the exact fulfillment of

what is promised is a necessary condition for trustworthiness: “in the absence of some special justification, A must do x unless B consents to x 's not being done.”²¹ I will call this the Scanlon principle, one of hewing or cleaving to the exact doing of what is promised. In Christian religion it is standardly thought that God is faithful, and that this means that God keeps the divine promises. And yet in the Letter to the Hebrews we find that God is admitted to have not kept covenantal promises, but God so deviated from the agreement in order to provide something even better.²²

God has supreme discretion. We are invited to accept that supreme discretion. “Ask and you shall receive” . . . *something*, but maybe not what you wanted or thought you wanted. Furthermore, we apparently have epistemic distance from our own good, and this can be a reason for inviting what an other may contribute to care for what we care for. We may, therefore, accept God’s discretion--albeit with mixed feelings. Job knew all about this.

Gabriel Marcel drew a contrast between constancy and fidelity, a contrast that renders relative the default precision in the Scanlon principle. Constancy is predictable, and is due to the mix of motives that operate to support predictable outcomes. Fidelity is companionship, the accompanying, the “I’m with you” that typically a generous friend grants to a friend without aiming at some specific result. The fidelity of a trustworthy other may therefore be different from the constancy of a predictable or resolute other.²³

21. Thomas Scanlon, “Promises and Practices,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19 (Summer 1990): 208, as quoted in Annette C. Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 322n7.

22. Hebrews 11:39-40: “Yet all these, though approved because of their faith, did not receive what had been promised. God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect.”

23. Resolute trusting is not a topic I address in this paper. It shows up in the biblical “Unless you are firm, you shall not be confirmed” (Isaiah 7:9; cf II Chronicles 20:20): Unless you are steadfast in your

Discretion may free an other to disavow providing specific benefits.

Our Wills

There does seem to be, however, one fairly clear set of matters regarding which we should absolutely not entrust something to God, in the sense of our no longer caring for it because we expect God to take care of it. That something is the exercise and quality of our willing. The quality of our willing does seem to be thoroughly up to us, at least on Molinist grounds, and our turning over to God the ways of our willing is an abdication that would make us puppets, not persons.

This creates a problem for Jesuits, of course, and for others who follow Ignatian inspiration. Should I cross my fingers when I sing: “Take all my will, my mind, my memory”? Oh well, that’s just a figure of speech, or a figure of song, an exaggeration to show how deep my offering goes. David Fleming offers a way of understanding the “take and receive” of Ignatian expansiveness: “The ‘take and receive’ of the Ignatian prayer response does not mean a ‘giving away’, because we remember . . . that lovers share what they have. So we humans can *share* with God our potential for making ourselves who we are--our liberty. . . . [W]e share our will because our will signifies so much of what we want, and so we offer our wants and our choices to God out of a sharing of love.”²⁴

Here ascetical and spiritual writers are way ahead of metaphysicians of divine causality and epistemologists of divine intentions. In any case, trusting God is not a case of Your will against mine, because simply causing my will to be determinate is inappropriate for God (*non Deo convenit*). It is one thing to say that it is incompatible with God’s character; it is also incompatible with *my* character as something other than a puppet!

trust, you shall not receive good. At issue here is not just deferred accountability, but continuing to hold the good within the causal range of God--or to be firmly receptive in the face of threat.

24. David L. Fleming, S.J., “Keys to Spiritual Growth: Remembering and Imagining in Ignatian Spirituality,” in *Spirit, Style, Story: Essays Honoring John W. Padberg*, ed. Thomas M. Lucas (Chicago: Loyola Press, Jesuit Way, 2002), 87.

Baier's Unequals and an Expressibility Test

Granting her expressed reservations about trust of God, Annette Baier offers a promising perspective because she focuses on relationships between people who are not equal in power. She observes that those who promote social contract ethics proceed under the assumption that people are informed and free when as equals they enter into agreements that establish rights and obligations. The trouble is that most people are not equal in power and knowledge and freedom, so taking the contract model for fiducial relationships means working with a model that actually fits rather few people. Most people are involved in relationships of *inequality*, and unequal relationships are her focus.²⁵

Now if there is ever a relationship of inequality, the relation between God and people is that. Taking covenant as a model, even recalling “I call you not servants, but friends,” cannot erase the evident fact that these covenantal partners are not equals. When “God and man at table are sat down,” it is God who sits at the head of the table. We are there by invitation, and we may need a wedding garment or two to deserve our place, whatever place we are given.

To make concrete her reflection, Baier sketches a scenario from a marriage. A man of power delegates to his wife the raising of their daughters, confident that his dominance will ensure that the daughters' upbringing which he has entrusted to his wife will ensure that they adopt his patriarchal values. If he suspects that his wife, however, is raising them as anti-patriarchal Amazons, rebelling against his condescending delegation to one he considers his spousal underling, he would withdraw his trust.

A reciprocal and hostile spousal mismatch does not fit the standard model for divine-human trust, of course. But there are two conditions in what Baier proposes which I find are useful in thinking about trust in God, granted that she is formulating tests for determining whether human parties unequal in power might engage in trusting and being trusted in ways that pass ethical muster. First, she addresses conflict of motives. When there are not but could be conflicting motives, “Trusting is rational [not only] in the absence of any reason to suspect in the trusted strong and operative motives which conflict with the

25. This is her focus at least in her “Trust and Anti-Trust.”

demands of trustworthiness as the truster sees them," but also, when there *are* impulses of suspicion as well as of trust, trusting "can continue to be rational, even when there are such unwelcome suspicions, as long as the truster is confident that in the conflict of motives within the trusted the subversive motives will lose to the conformist motives."²⁶ Second, she proposes what I call a sunshine test. When the unequal parties can express to each other--can bring into conversational daylight--the real motives for their trusting and being trusted without the relationship breaking up when those real motives become known, the sunshine test is passed. It is disclosure of motives that tests the unequal fiducial relationship. Motives that put the unequal fiducial relationship in jeopardy include one party's relying on the other's "nonreciprocated generosity," genial nature, or forgiveness.²⁷

Baier offers a definition, and a moral-test conclusion. "Trust, I have claimed, is reliance on others' competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about which are entrusted to their care. The moral test of such trust relationships which I have proposed is that they be able to survive awareness by each party to the relationship of *what* the other relies on in the first to ensure their continued trustworthiness or trustingness. This test elevates to a special place one form of trust, namely, trusting others with knowledge of what it is about them which enables one to trust them as one does, or expect them to be trustworthy. The test could be restated this way: trust is morally decent only if, in addition to whatever else is entrusted, knowledge of each party's reasons for confident reliance on the other to continue the relationship could in principle also be entrusted--since such mutual knowledge would be itself a good, not a threat to other goods. To the extent that mutual reliance can be accompanied by mutual knowledge of the conditions for that reliance, trust is above suspicion, and trustworthiness a nonsuspect virtue."²⁸

Why not apply this assessment of conflict of motives and this sunshine test to people's dealings with God? It may sound trivial, but I think this test can be useful for assessing the fiducial relationship

26. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 121.

27. "A trust relationship is morally bad to the extent that either party relies on qualities in the other which would be weakened by the knowledge that the other relies on them." "Trust and Anti-Trust," 123.

28. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 128.

between God and humans. What would happen if we express to God our motives, why we are asking God to take care of something? And what can we know of the motives of God in taking on the care of what is valuable to us? The latter question is easier to answer, or at least to point out the source of the answer: What has God communicated or behaviorally shown to indicate God's trustworthiness and why God can and should be trusted? Many a scripture passage purports to shed light on this, and even more do the lives and teachings of the saints. But what about the prior question, What would happen if we express to God our motives for bringing some matter to God for help? The short answer is: Nothing would happen. The mid-length answer is: *We* might get some insight into *our* motives. The long answer in what I call standard fiducial theism consists in God working with us about our motives, working over the years as we grow into adult ways of trusting God. Maybe the sin of disordered trusting consists essentially in declining to grow up in our relation to God. If we are able to grow up and decline to do so--*that's* the sin of presumption, of trusting God badly.

Four Dimensions of Trust

Much depends, as you would expect, on what is meant by trust. By way of interlude and essential background, I distinguish and explain four dimensions of trust.²⁹ Once again, I find a kindred mind in Aristotle, who identifies four dimensions or types of causing, four ways to make a difference. In terms of my mapping metaphor, these four dimensions suggest that ways across the divide include other routes.

The first and most obvious of the four dimensions is what I call reliance trust. Reliance trust consists in my having some good of mine situated within the causal range of another, and to this situation I consent, expecting that the other's competence and good will towards me will cause some good to come of that other's activity in my regard. The key elements in this definition are: first, something good or of value to me; second, its being within the causal range of another; third, my consenting to or seeking this situation of some good being within the causal range; fourth, my desiring to be helped; and fifth, and my judging that

29. For a fuller presentation of of these four dimensions of trust, see "Conceiving Trust for Philosophy of Religion," http://philosophy.georgetown.edu/news_events/papers_2003-2004/godfrey_paper.pdf .

the competence and good will of that other towards me will effect some good. The good effected may be by prior agreement, contractually specified; or, that good may be a surprise, when I afford discretion to the other. Either I may simply find my good within another's range; or I may convey that good into another's ambit by *entrusting*. I may be doing so with much knowledge of the other's competence and character, or with little: I may be rather in the dark about this other and what may eventuate. These five conditions may need further elucidation, but these formulae will do for now. Alternately put, the factors in reliance trusting are: the matter or what the trusting is *about*; the outcome or what the trusting is *for*, the agent or whom the trusting is *by*, and the one trusted, that is, the one the trusting is *of*.

I do not define reliance trust to be good; whether reliance is better than suspicious reserve depends on many factors, typically not antecedently knowable. Hence reliance has its risks.

Another dimension is what I call I-thou trust. The "thou" of this I-thou is lower case; I am not relating myself to God by capitalizing "Thou". But at least asymptotically and episodically I can conceive of some good that is close to being my very self rather than something I *have*, available to another not because of what that other can do but because of who that other is, with an outcome less specifiable as event or state and more identifiable as the relation between us. Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel inspire this kind of conceiving. Such trusting may be the fabric of friendship, in which I may not entrust specific matters for specific purposes, but I make available my very self. Indeed, my friend may be not competent to handle some matters important to me. Imagined graphically, I-thou trust would be charted on a line orthogonal to that of reliance trust. Calling such relating "trust," of course, requires an analogy of relating.

The third dimension I identify is what I term security trust. Security trust is the opposite of what Heidegger termed *angst*. It is a disposition or ability to rest, to be upheld, to be safe, not insofar as there could be a list of factors that instrumentally help, but insofar as there is an environing context that is secure.³⁰ Security trust could obtain when many of the detailed items around me are unreliable. However,

30. I derive this conception of security trust from Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Neue Geborgenheit: Das Problem einer Überwindung Des Existentialismus*, reprint, originally 1955 (Stuttgart; Köln: W. Kohlhammer, 1979).

security trust is not automatically cosmic or general.³¹ What it is that upholds a person has a local habitation and sometimes even a name. It may be in culture, it may be in conscience, but there is a “here” where I am upheld, where I am OK.

The final dimension I call openness trust. Openness trust differs from security trust as a nest differs from a window. Openness trust is a person’s window on the world, a receptivity to what one’s world has to say and do. It is the open hand rather than the grip. It is the mind that welcomes rather than closes.

The correlates of the four dimensions of trust are these. Reliance trusting requires instrumental help. I-Thou trusting requires a/Another. Security trust requires a supportive network or matrix. Openness trust requires self-communicative entities. And these four dimensions are found together, usually. For example, security trust is required for openness trust, just as a schoolchild requires a stable home to learn.

The core idea of these four dimensions of trust is receptivity to what enhances.

One advantage of ringing the changes on such four dimensions of trusting is that some of the disputes regarding trust of God can be softened if what is at issue is recognized as obtaining in a dimension other than the dimension of reliance trust with its specifics. For example, to ask whether God is trustworthy differs as a question if we recognize a relevant difference between (a) God taking care of what I leave to God for my own purposes, and (b) God sustaining me despite vicissitudes. The hand of God may not be doing the work I would want, but nevertheless “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”³² We can then readily admit that for some outcomes God is unreliable. This does not mean that God is untrustworthy. It

31. Robert Solomon refers to a “sense of *cosmic* trust, our overarching emotional sense of being secure in the world.” *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45–46.

32. Deuteronomy 33:27 (RSV).

does mean that God's competence and goodwill do not include some outcomes I would want taken care of: for what I want to receive, God is not giving. And there can be conditions under which my reliance trusting is reduced and my security trust is increased: my circumstances are risky, but I am steady on a grounding I cannot command. And while revelation, human or divine, may not give me a remedy to ease my intellectual unrest, it may bring light that enables me to see matters differently: openness trust is receptivity to being enlightened.

Standards for Trustworthiness: Applying Potter's Criteria

In her *How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness*, Nancy Nyquist Potter offers some criteria for judging someone to be trustworthy. Taking a general Aristotelian approach and appealing to the doctrine of the mean, Potter proposes that someone is trustworthy "who can be counted on, as a matter of the sort of person he or she is, to take care of those things that others entrust to one and (following the Doctrine of the Mean) whose ways of caring are neither excessive nor deficient."³³ While acknowledging that there can be a person of specific trustworthiness for a specific task, Nancy Potter presses on to draw the larger portrait of a person of general or full trustworthiness: "the sort of person who can be counted on, given who one is in relation to diverse others, to have the right feelings toward the right sorts of things, to deliberate and make choices, and to act from a trustworthy disposition. General trustworthiness requires that one be nonexploitative and nondominating not only to particular others in specific contexts but that one attend to the myriad ways that local ways of being affect broader power relations."³⁴ Equally telling for our religious purposes, she elaborates ten further requirements of trustworthiness.³⁵ She proposes that the trustworthy person: (1) give signs and assurances of

33. Nancy Nyquist Potter, *How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 16.

34. *How Can I be Trusted?* 25–26.

35. *How Can I be Trusted?* 26–32, then passim.

trustworthiness; (2) take epistemic responsibility seriously;³⁶ (3) develop sensitivity to the particularities of others; (4) respond properly to broken trust; (5) deal with hurt in relationships--both the hurt inflicted on others and the hurt experienced from others--in ways that sustain connection; (6) have related institutions and governing bodies be virtuous; (7) recognize the importance of being trustworthy to the disenfranchised and oppressed; (8) be committed to mutuality in intimate as well as in civic relationships; (9) work to sustain connection in intimate relationships while neither privatizing nor endangering mutual flourishing; and finally (10) need also to have other virtues.

This is not a bad list for questions about God! The prospect of challenging God and evaluating God's trustworthiness might well feel like some Promethean judgmental affront to the character of God. But such challenging is part of the story of Abraham, as I will propose.

What it is to Trust God: Exemplary Persons

One point of Aristotle provides a lead and another point misleads. Aristotle indicates that in bringing reason to the discovery of what counts as virtue, we can choose according to a mean determined to be relative to us, in accord with "a rule or principle as would take shape in the mind of a man of sense or practical wisdom."³⁷ Who would count as a person of practical wisdom in the matter of trusting God?

36. "Take epistemic responsibility seriously" means not only knowing what we should know but also "an active engagement with self and others in knowing and making known one's own interests, values, moral beliefs, and positionality, as well as theirs. . . . In what way do one's values and interests impede trust with some communities and foster it with others?" This knowing and communicating of one's own standpoint and interests is especially important for those with power and discretion. *How Can I be Trusted?* 27. Does God indicate what God is about, even when God's interests are at odds with at least the surface interests of others? Consider "A bruised reed he shall not break" (Isaiah 42:3); as well as "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8).

37. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 5 (Ross translation).

Further clues come from Chinese ethics, which pays attention to exemplary figures in determining the better ways of acting. Who is the sage we are looking for? Who are the exemplary persons?

We should *not* be looking for the Aristotelian *megalopsychos*, the great-souled person of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Something of an ethical ideal for generosity and other strengths, the great-souled person is however embarrassed to need anything from anyone. For him, virtue means giving, not receiving. Hence the great-souled person is not interested in trusting, since trust entails receptivity to what another can do to care for what is important.³⁸ The person engaged in fiducial theism, however, is someone quite interested in trusting, in having God care for what is important, in accepting vulnerability rather than in standing above it in a great-souled fashion.

Such a bias towards self-sufficiency, also known as autarky, characterizes a fair amount of the North American culture both as taught and practiced.³⁹ Emersonian self-reliance gets morphed into the man--more often a man--who has or seeks to have resources under his control. When a person controls resources, he does not need the goodwill of others. He makes help happen. He does not ask for help; he buys help. Insofar as we are inspired by such great-souled people ancient and contemporary, we are inclined to go it alone even in a theism that would do better to trust.

Exemplary Persons

To illustrate what counts as trustworthiness or trusting badly or well, authors take people from fiction. Russell Hardin, for example, uses the lieutenant colonel and Trifonov from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and also Alberich from Wagner's *Ring* cycle, to illustrate trust and trustworthiness.

38. I owe this insight about the *megalopsychos* to Alasdair MacIntyre in his *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, The Paul Carus Lectures 1997 (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999), 127, regarding Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 3, 1124b 9-10.

39. And in this culture a declaration of *dependence* has much less traction than declarations of *independence*.

Trudy Govier and Nancy Nyquist Potter use many factual cases. Some restrict their scope to particular ranges, to friends, or to people who are unequal, or to people engaged in political life.⁴⁰

We can look at Abraham. The *Akedah* or binding of Isaac by Abraham is a paradigmatic case of trust and distrust.⁴¹ God speaks to Abraham, testing him, directing him to take his son Isaac to the mountain for sacrificial slaughter. Abraham complies. Isaac asks his father, “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” His father Abraham replies, “God will provide.” Upon arriving at the site, Abraham binds his son and raises the knife for the kill. But an angel of the Lord says, “Do not kill your son Isaac.” Abraham then spots in the bushes a ram for the sacrifice.

I make two points. First, while the Lord is testing Abraham, Abraham is testing the Lord, in a kind of brinkmanship. Second, let us juxtapose to the Abraham narrative the outline authentic trust as Solomon and Flores present it, thinking not at all about Abraham and God. They are writing of a business partner faced with suspicious behavior on the part of his associate. Think of Abraham trusting God and of God trusting Abraham. “But here again the appearance of paradox comes into play. He acts *as if* he trusts his associate in order to see if he can trust the associate, or, to put it more pointedly, he acts as if he trusts the associate precisely because he does not trust him and is in effect setting a trap in which the betrayal will be revealed. But here again, the sharp division between trust and distrust is derived from the all-or-nothing model of simple trust. It is inappropriate for authentic trust. Authentic trust, unlike simple trust, is an ongoing, delicate dance of trust and distrust, the tests and trials of commitment, and the careful scrutiny and reassessment of the relationship.”⁴² As the businessman and his associate, and as Abraham and God, each is testing the other, with both commitment and “careful scrutiny and reassessment of the relationship.” Solomon and Flores offer a further angle on their business pair, which we can also apply to Abraham.

40. Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, Russell Sage Foundation Series on Trust, IV (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Trudy Govier, *Social Trust and Human Communities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

41. Genesis 22.

42. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 102.

They write: “Authentic trust consists, to at least some extent, in deciding what to believe, and, more importantly, resolving to create the circumstances in which these beliefs will be justified.”⁴³ That the Lord is faithful became one of the pillar beliefs of the chosen people. The “authentic trust” portrayed by Solomon and Flores in a thoroughly *non*-religious context can be a model in terms of which people may challenge God as Abraham (and Job) did--and, theists may conversely surmise, terms according to which God may challenge people.

Mediation

There is, however, a big problem, which I address while narrowing my scope to Christianity, together with a moderately high Christology. In most if not all dealings with God, the transactions are mediated. It is through and with burning bush, and mountain, and whisper, and Exodus escape from Egypt, and the prophets, and Jesus, that people learn of God. Typically, dealings with God are through items of a human sort, often instruments made by human hands. While sometimes the medium may be purely instrumental and subject to discard when used up, more often the medium shares in the reality of what is mediated, as do the Biblical word of God and the divine Word of God. In history it is human institutions and events that show--and mask--the presence of God, be it in narrative, or in Buberian I-Thou relation with nature, people, or *geistige Wesenheiten*, “spiritual beings.” Indeed, the Ignatian tradition proposes that God is to be found “in all things.”

Mediation is a point both of disconnecting and of connecting. God cautions against trusting human agency. Put not your trust in men, but in God. No man can be trusted. Cursed be he who trusts a human.⁴⁴ But there are differences in mediation, in what mediates and to what extent there is light and darkness. There is less mediation in prayer, and more in Church. And mediation in Buberian I-Thou prayer (glimpse through spiritual beings) must also be kept in view, not just instrumental praying.

43. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 107.

44. Jeremiah 17:5.

Mediation is found in spheres other than the religious. Governments and corporations are also mediated. Sometimes in matters of government people trust the known government official more than they trust the government; sometimes they distrust the official while retaining trust in the government.⁴⁵ Some more trust the person than the institution, some more trust the institution than the person. Similarly with the community associated with a religion, I venture to say: sometimes people trust the (religious or spiritual) person they know while distrusting the organization; sometimes they trust the religious institution while mistrusting particular religious officials.

Some people and events mediate translucently, some darkly. And some are more suspect than trustworthy. Enlarging the picture, we can at least pose the question: Does taking a fiducial approach recast the problem of evil? It is beyond my purposes in this paper to trace how different the problem of evil might look when refracted through the lenses of trust and suspicion. But there is a difference between the bird's-eye view of the logical and conceptual problem of evil and the existential ground-level challenge of pain and suffering in one's own life and in that of others. Distinguishing among four dimensions of trust offers multiple perspectives. For example, the difference between being helped on one's projects and being sustained in one's troubles seems worth noting; this difference divides the question of whether reliance is warranted from whether sustaining security is available.⁴⁶ As I indicated earlier, the evil a person faces motivates the subjective feeling and judgment of vulnerability, and it is an open question whether the harm that God does not shield people from outweighs the help looked for by the person who would trust.

Letting God be God

Another text of Solomon and Flores sets a tone for an ethics of trusting: "Failing to trust someone is not merely an omission. It is *unethical* not to trust people when they are plausibly trustworthy, just as it

45. Sam Roberts, "In Government We Trust (As Far as We Can Throw It)," *The New York Times*, 4 January 2004, Week in Review, 4.

46. On the contrast between finding God preventing or removing suffering and finding God affording

is unethical to treat them unfairly. In fact, refusing to trust people may be more damaging to them than treating them unfairly, for the latter fails only to give them what they deserve. The former limits their capacity to act as full human beings.”⁴⁷ If this is true in dealings with people, is it analogously true in dealings with God? Is it unethical *not* to trust God, because it would “deprive” God of acting as fully God? There does seem to be a wisp of truth in speaking thus of trusting God.

These lines from Solomon and Flores about damaging someone by withholding trust find explanation in some lines of Gabriel Marcel, applicable to the expectation that comes with trusting. “To love anybody is to expect something from him, something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfill this expectation. Yes, paradoxical as it may seem, to expect is in some way to give: but the opposite is none the less true; no longer to expect is to strike with sterility the being from whom no more is expected, it is then in some way to deprive or take from him in advance what is surely a certain possibility of inventing or creating.” Here we encounter heady theological waters, where one thinks that letting God take care *enables* God to exercise care--and where, conversely, God does well to trust people, because in keeping care to Himself he leaves people uncreative. People’s narratives of their own dealings with God may here shed more light on trusting and being trusted in relatings between people and God than does a theology of an unchanging God.

Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism

Where are we about the question “Is it good to trust God?” While we do not have a thorough ethics of fiducial theism, we do have a modest sheaf of provisional concluding observations.

First, whether it is good to trust God depends on what is meant by “God”. One’s image of God is

sustaining accompaniment, see the final chapter of Richard J. Hauser, *Finding God in Troubled Times* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, Jesuit Way, 2002).

47. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 79.

crucial. It begins with what is learned from what parents say and do.⁴⁸ It has its fleshing out by what is heard and seen of religious teachers. As Rowan Williams asked of a doubting student: Which God is it that you don't believe in? Maybe it is a God I don't believe in either."⁴⁹

The relevant image of God includes matters historical and personal, but also conceptual. The historical and personal issues stem from the history of God in one's theistic religion and from the personal history of the person who is moved to be trusting or to be suspecting. To what degree has one grown in understanding one's God, perhaps in ways not all that different from growing in understanding one's society, both through greater contact and experience and through better tools for discerning and understanding, whether of society or of God. The conceptual matter is what it means for a person to have or leave or put within the causal range of God some matter which cannot not be within the causal range of God. In dealing with God, we do not *entrust* the way we may do with other people. How can a person decide to trust when she or he cannot decide not to depend? What does a person do when trusting God that is different from what a person is doing when she or he depends on God? Depending is inevitable; trusting is up for decision--at least if the trusting is to be, to use the term of Solomon and Flores, authentic trust.

Because, as I indicated earlier, the core element in trusting is to be receptive, there is a second observation about God. Questions about the metaphysics of being helped by God need not deter a person from deciding to trust God, while wondering whether God can change. If the narrative interchanges of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures do not entail that God changes, still the person's desire to be affected does make fluid a situation which at least subjectively a person could believe to be already quite fixed: the desire

48. An account of development of the concept of God can be found in Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

49. Extra-textual remark by the Archbishop of Canterbury at a lecture: Rowan Williams, "Analysing Atheism: Unbelief and the World of Faiths," Pacem in Terris Lecture March 29 2004 (Georgetown University, 2004).

to be helped and the expectation of help at least renders the trusting person receptive.⁵⁰ The moment when one trusts may be like the dew point shifting moisture in the air to falling rain, that is, shifting dependence to receiving, even if a person's act of welcoming does not add anything to what is within God's causal range. Trusting does not require *entrusting*.

Third, whether it is good to trust God depends on what is meant by "trust". God may be unreliable in those matters where God should be unreliable. But that God not provide what we ask for and be thus untrustworthy for *reliance* trusting is consistent with God affording the basis for security trust, enabling us to be sustained and supported in the ups and downs of attainment and disappointment.⁵¹ To care-for is not the same as to perform-for; to care-for can be to accompany and sustain. The difference is visible in a line of a letter of John of the Cross, "Cast your care on the Lord, daughter, and he will sustain you."⁵²

Continuing with what is *not* meant by "trust", I said at the outset that trust in God needs to be taken with a qualified sense of absolute, unconditional, reserved, and limited.⁵³ There are indeed limits to the reliance trust we should have in God. God is not one to whom I do well to *entrust*, that is to say to *transfer*, the care of something important to me, from myself to God. Thus, I should not imagine trusting God as a matter of *delegating*. As a matter of shared willing, yes. Nor should I imagine entrusting

50. Gabriel Marcel makes a point like this in his *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1962, originally 1944); similarly, William James, in his pithy dictum in "The Will to Believe," "Faith in a fact helps create the fact."

51. Disappointments may suggest that God is the Great Depriver, in the felicitous phrase of Donald Evans (*Struggle and Fulfillment: The Inner Dynamics of Religion and Morality* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981]).

52. As quoted in Keith J. Egan, TOCarm., "Banishing Anxiety," *Spiritual Life: A Journal of Contemporary Spirituality* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 137.

53. In this paper I do not take up Annette Baier's other descriptor of trust directed towards God, "unreciprocated".

something to God as a matter of fobbing off. I do not escape my responsibility of caring for what is a good important for me (even if not *to* me) by leaving it to God. “Let Go and Let God” should not mean “I wash my hands of the matter.”

There are, therefore, always conditions appropriate to place on my trusting God. If I am working this out regarding reliance trust, there are standard conditions regarding the status of the one who trusts, the one trusted, the good in another’s causal range, the competence of the other, the good will towards me of the other, the acceptance by the other and therefore of the other’s actual care, and the discretion I confer and the accountability I postpone or exact regarding that other. God may want to know whether I am a Good Steward; I want to know the same about God.⁵⁴ It matters *how* I would trust, whether in a reliance way, an I-thou way, a resting-security way, or an openness way. For example, under certain circumstances there need be no limits to the security trust and the openness trust I afford to God. What, behaviorally, would it mean to impose or admit or accept no limits to one’s security trust and openness trust in relation to God?

However, what especially would it mean to impose or admit or accept no limits to such trust of God when God’s dealings with us are *mediated*? How can I be secure when even *God’s* people make me anxious, or at least an organized church makes me anxious? How can I be open if Church figures are deceptive? When there is not only a high Christology but also a high ecclesiology, I could have problems with trust of the institution called capital-C “Church”, purportedly of divine constitution.⁵⁵ Such mediated trusting should not be unconditional.

54. One of the issues shadowing this essay is that of appropriate anthropomorphisms. Some address this question by looking for authorized parables.

55. In his *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), political theorist Francis Fukuyama sets forth a conceptual contrast between high-trust and low-trust societies, and explores the confirmations and implications of this contrast for the United States and for other nations. Something similar could be ventured regarding church.

Fourth, the closest analogy to trusting directed towards God is trusting our parents. Awkward or embarrassing though it be, that we are called children of God does suggest a directness and spontaneity and attraction (and childish volatility) that may not be foreign to trust in God. And yet in a classic “both-and,” standard theology has grown-ups as adult children of God. While we continue to be within the causal range of our parents, we are so differently as we grow up to be adults. By analogy, then, to trust God badly is to trust God as someone who refuses to grow up.

Fifth, “empowering” God. Just as by trusting some people we contribute to their becoming worthy of trust, so also by trusting God we afford opportunity for God to show trustworthiness, perhaps not corresponding to reliance trust that would have God as factotum, but the trustworthiness that sustains people in dark days, is available as companion, and enlightens--all of this in mysterious and even opaque ways. Trusting may enable a person to be sustained, companioned, and enlightened by God without that person knowing it.⁵⁶

I think I have mapped one route from identifying some good features of trusting people to identifying good features of trusting God. My route plunges through many thickets and swamps, philosophical and theological. But I think it goes through. As I have in my title today, “Some” ethics can travel the route. Putting the path in terms of a mixed hypothetical syllogism, between the hypothetical premise’s *if* of standard theism’s God and its call to trust of God, and the *then* (not of mere material implication, of course), there is a multi-dimensioned--and not universally unconditional--good in trusting God. The categorical premise needed for *modus ponens* is for religious epistemologists and theologians to marshal support for, *that* God is real and invites trust. But if God is thus real and invites trust, then there are, from some contemporary ethics, discernible ways in which it is good--and ways in which it is not good--to trust God.

56. Just as externalism in epistemology admits a person having genuine knowledge but not knowing that she does.

Put another way, that trusting directed towards God can be ethically permissible and even good follows from, first, that trust in God is not a category mistake, flagged by calling the relationship not “trust” but “faith,” or hived off by contrasting absolute or total trust with relative and limited trust; and second, that there are ways in which trust in God can measure up to norms or ideals used in evaluating other cases of trusting.⁵⁷

If this discourse leads you to say “What’s really new about all *this*?”, so be it. As the Shaker song “Simple Gifts” has it, by this tortuous route we may finally “come down where we ought to be.” Maybe we have been there all along. But without knowing it.

57. Further elaboration of how trusting in God might be good requires exploring what would make trusting God to be sound (I use “sound” rather than “justified” to include as well those instances of trusting which contribute to the one trusted *becoming* trustworthy). In regard to God, the following make for soundness. For reliance trust it is instrumental help provided by God. For I-thou trust, it is divine presence. For security trust, it is divine sustaining. For openness trust, it is divine disclosing. Where and how these occur is topic for a much larger treatment.

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Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism

What Ethics May Say About Whether and How to Trust God

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Preambles

My question this afternoon is: What is there in contemporary ethics of trust that can shed some light on trust directed towards God, in particular some light on how to answer the question: Is it good to trust God?

I feel like Lewis and Clark, trying to find a passage across land declared impassible. I think I have mapped a route. I know there are trails that do not go through. I invite you to imagine the route, and consider whether the passage I chart is open to the journey I would take. Some of those writing on trust say that trust in God is unlimited, unconditional, and trust in people should be limited and conditional. Therefore there is no conceptual connection between what is good or bad in trust of people and what is good or bad in trust of God. My aim is to show connections, plausible connections, plausible ethical connections, between trusting people and trusting God. Therefore, to trust God is not as a notion a category mistake and not as a practice removed from any ethical evaluation. For today's colloquium with the Marquette Philosophy Department, I ask: What am I missing, what am I misunderstanding?

I. The Divide, In Some Current Ethics and Philosophy

There is a major divide between trusting directed towards human beings and trusting directed towards God, at least in the view of some current thinkers. It may be something about trust. It may be something about God. There is the view that trust in God is, in its very concept, radically different from trust in anything or anyone else, because of something about God--because God is so different. Philosopher Michel Sarot argues, for example, that since God is neither specifiable, nor free to defect, and all other forms of trust involve either specifiability or freedom to defect or both, trust of God is different from all other kinds of trust.¹ From this it could follow that trust of God *should be* crucially different from trust among human beings, because there is no common measure for speaking of trust of God and trust of anything else. A person could not learn about trusting God from reflecting on trusting people.²

A vivid picture of trust in God and the divide between this and trusting people--indeed, a chasm--can be found in an essay of Annette Baier, "Trust and Anti-Trust." As she focuses on trust relationships between those who are unequal, she remarks:

"Trust in God is total, in that whatever one cares about, it will not thrive if God wills that it not thrive. . . . Such total dependence does not, in itself, necessarily elicit trust--some theists curse God,

1. "Why Trusting God Differs from All Other Forms of Trust," *Sophia: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Metaphysical Theology and Ethics* 35, no. 1 (March-April 1996): 101–15. I find Sarot's specifiability to be, ambiguously, either of the object of trust (God) or of the outcome of the trusting, which I take to be an event or state of affairs.

2. Robert Solomon and Fernando Flores make a similar point: "Trust in God requires an unconditional trust unlike any other, a trust that may remain firm and consistent through any number of seeming betrayals. But in this sense, it is exceptional and not the paradigm." *Building Trust: In Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

display futile distrust or despair rather than trust.”³ Annette Baier, thus identifying and contrasting dependence and trust, further addresses trust in God. “The persistent human adult tendency to profess trust in a creator-God can also be seen as an infantile residue of [the] crucial innate readiness of infants to initially impute goodwill to the powerful persons on whom they depend. . . . [W]e might cite the theological contamination of the concept of trust as part of the explanation for the general avoidance of the topic in modern moral philosophy. If trust is seen as a variant of the suspect virtue of faith in the competence of the powers that be, then readiness to trust will be seen not just as a virtue of the weak but itself as a moral weakness, better replaced by vigilance and self-assertion, by self-reliance or by cautious, minimal, and carefully monitored trust.”⁴ Baier wryly imagines that modern moral philosophers have shifted their focus from trust in God to the trust involved when people enter into social contracts, “as if once we have weaned ourselves from the degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God, all our capacity for trust is to be channeled into the equally degenerative form of formal voluntary and unreciprocated trust restricted to equals.”⁵ Here we have a divide because of something about trust.

The Divide, in Philosophy and Theology

Depending on whether her “degenerate form” is appositive or restrictive regarding absolute and unreciprocated trust in God, Baier’s remark calls down an intended or unintended plague upon both the house of degenerative contract-trusting and the house of “the degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God.” But we can find a less trenchant but nonetheless sobering warning about trusting in God from Thomas Aquinas. Trust in God can be done badly: he judges that it is a worse sin to trust God inappropriately than to trust oneself inappropriately.⁶ The reason why it is worse is that going

3. Annette C. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 106.

4. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 107–08.

5. Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 119.

6. *Summa theologiae* II-II 21,1, Reply 1. I translate his *inordinate* as “inappropriately”.

wrong in one's dealings with God is a bigger problem than going wrong in dealings with oneself or others. The stakes are higher; mistakes have graver consequences. Here we have a divide because of something about trust *and* because of something about God.

We could expect Thomas Aquinas to follow a lead of Aristotle and indicate that there could be an extreme of too little trust, and an opposing extreme of too much trust. But no, in the matter of trust directed towards God, there cannot be too much trust.⁷ So, inappropriate trust directed towards God is not a matter of too much. Well, then, how *does* trusting go wrong when directed towards God? A person trusts God badly when seeking some good which it is not suitable for God to provide, when it is not fitting or appropriate for God to help.⁸ The obvious set of cases here would be a person's leaving to God the securing of some goods which do not lead to the ultimate good, the beatific presence of God, or presuming that God will save me when I've done nothing to deserve being saved.⁹

While Thomas Aquinas does not simply rule out a common measure for trusting God and trusting people, he does imply problems in assessing trusting God from the standpoint of assessing trusting people--too much trust, for example. There is one important difference. To trust people seems to involve becoming dependent on them. Standard theism has it that all creatures, we humans included, depend on God for our existence and for everything else.¹⁰ Of course dependence and trust are not synonyms. As we saw Annette Baier put it, "total dependence does not, in itself, necessarily elicit trust; some theists display futile distrust."¹¹

7. "[D]ivino auxilio nullus potest nimis inniti" ("no one can trust excessively in God's help"). *Summa theologiae* II-II 17, 5, Reply 2 (Blackfriars translation, 1966).

8. "*Quod non Deo convenit*" (II-II 21, 2, ad 2).

9. *Summa theologiae* II-II 21, 1, c, discussing presumption.

10. And religious feeling can then be proposed as the sense of absolute dependence on God, as Friedrich Schleiermacher emphasized, in his *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche*, reprint, 1821–22 (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1980).

11. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 106.

Larger than these are the problems raised by some who hold that in principle there can be no comparisons between the sphere of trusting God and the sphere of trusting humans. Wittgensteinian and Barthian approaches warn against drawing connections between trusting directed towards people and trusting directed towards God. The reason for this is otherness: the Wittgensteinian otherness of religious language and form of life, and the Barthian otherness of God and of God's revelation to humanity. Wittgensteinians declare that when one is engaging in secular ethics discourse, the religious ethics language game is simply not being played. Between secular ethics and religious ethics the rules and ways of proceeding are simply different, and no comparisons are legitimate. The Barthian position is that we learn how to trust God from God, not from the mental vapors which philosophers generate.¹² We would thus look to the religious ethics people, and not to anyone else, for guidance on whether and how to trust God. Again, assessments of trusting among humans and between people and God are not subject to a common measure.

My Project Today: to Sketch a Bridge over the Divide

But I venture on, taking fiducial theism as attempting to speak, not just about God, but about trusting ways of relating to God. My title is "Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism: What Ethics May Say About Whether and How to Trust God." I offer some words of explanation for this title. I work in philosophy of religion, and am bringing to a close a book on trust and God. Mainline philosophy of religion, until fairly recently, wrestled with a standard list of divine predicates: omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, necessity and freedom, and considered God's relation to what is not God as a matter of creation, of things and people.¹³ Religion itself, in the theisms of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam says that the right

12. On direct self-revelation of God, see Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 3:1, pp. 6-10, 22, as in Thomas L. Pangle, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 8.

relationships between God and people are relationships of trust.¹⁴ They may label people's relationship to God to be a matter of faith or obedience or love, but at heart it is trust in God which makes possible such love or obedience or other aspects of faith.¹⁵ In the Abrahamic traditions, one is called not to put trust in chariots or in princes or even, sometimes, not in any human being; one is called to trust God. Even the demons hold it to be true that God exists, the Letter of James remarks.¹⁶ Something further is needed to respond to a call to trust God.

Most religions have a soteriological structure, in which what is most real and important is supportive of the human desire to escape what is bad and to change for the better.¹⁷ Found in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, what I call standard theism is the set of beliefs and practices that includes the

13. My own way of doing philosophy of religion has this in common with philosophy of science: philosophy of religion should take religion as it is, akin to the way in which philosophy of science takes science as science is and aims to understand science, especially its key concepts and the reasonableness of its procedures. But there is also a meliorative aspect, when philosophy aims to help science to be better science; similarly philosophy of religion can help religion to be its better self. There is however, among the differences between religion and science an alleged and probable central difference, and that is that religion seems to be essentially contested and science seems to be contested less centrally. I will not follow the trail of the unity and difference among religious traditions; I leave that to others. But I take religion as religion is, with its practices and traditions and ways of proceeding and its ethos and beliefs and belief-systems.

14. For example, Psalms 28:7, 141:8, 144:2; and Hebrews 10:23, 11:11. "Al-Wakil", one of Islam's ninety-nine names of God, means "The Trustee, The Guardian," the one who is relied upon.

15. Joseph J. Godfrey, "Trust, the Heart of Religion: A Sketch," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65, Annual Supplement: *Religions and the Virtue of Religion* (1991): 157–67.

16. Letter of James, 2:19.

17. John Hick proposes understanding religion as soteriological, in the first chapter of his *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990).

belief that there is one God and that God is active in relation to what is not God and is indeed “saving” human beings from a bad condition. The relationship between what is most real and human beings is such that what is most real is most trustworthy, and this makes it rational to trust.

Whether a person takes as a conviction or takes as an assumption both that theism is correct and that God and creatures are real and are dealing with each other, fiducial theism focuses on human creatures and on the call in Abrahamic religions that human beings trust God. So fiducial theism is a theism characterized by people who are supposed to trust God.

People who are not theists can recognize in fiducial theism a hypothetical proposition: If there is a God who is in accord with Muslim, Jewish, and Christian teachings, then people should trust that God. The believer affirms that such a God exists, the unbeliever does not. But both the believer and the unbeliever can examine the hypothetical premise and its connection: what *is* the connection between a God calling for trust and whether it is good or right to trust such a God?

I therefore proceed hypothetically: if religion holds such to be so, then here is what follows. In this case, if religion and if the Christian religion¹⁸ correctly understands God to be an object of trusting, and if trusting is of a particular sort or should be of this sort, then trusting God should be of this sort. Such a “should” is recommendatory: One does well to enact the relationship. To figure where the good is in trusting directed towards God, I start by asking where is the good in trusting directed towards people.

In recent years, some philosophers of religion have turned their attention to philosophical issues in specific religious doctrines. One philosophical issue has been the coherence and consistency, not simply of central predicates about God, but of specific Christian doctrines. Thomas Morris’s *The Logic of God Incarnate* comes to mind. Another has been the making of an argument, not simply for the existence of God, but for a specific Christian doctrine. Richard Swinburne’s *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* comes to mind. I am not arguing that God exists nor am I arguing that trustworthiness is a correct predicate of

18. Which I know best and am personally committed to.

God. I am arguing that it is logically acceptable--or better, that the rejection is mistaken--to argue that trusting directed to God has enough similarity with trusting directed towards human persons for there to be an ethical commending of appropriate fiducial relationships directed towards God. By analogy, since Kant made the argument that from the fact that persons are ends in themselves, it is inappropriate that people be treated merely as things, I make the argument that from the hypothesis that God is a possible object of trust, certain trust-recommendations suitable for human persons are not mis-applied to God. Some ethical recommendations regarding trust *are* appropriately applied to God. I may outline, to use and alter the words of Baier's surmising interpretation, a *non*-degenerate form of absolute and unreciprocated trust in God. The terms "absolute" and "unreciprocated" will need nuance, however. What I am arguing for is the truth of the first premise, the hypothetical premise, of a *modus ponens* syllogism, addressing the connection between the antecedent and the consequent clauses in the proposition.

I keep in mind two dicta of Aristotle, that we should expect only that precision which the subject matter allows, and that, by analogy with ethics, we are undertaking this inquiry not simply to know what trust of God is, but in order to become people of appropriate trust in God.¹⁹

Finally, a word on the "may" of my title "What May Ethics Say." This "may" expresses the tentativeness of my ongoing project, proceeding provisionally. It indicates some hesitancy about what is available from ethicists who are not theologians. Further, it bears the sense of intellectual liceity, of what one is "given permission" to say. It thus has also the flavor found in Kant's third question What may I hope? I ask: when it comes to God, whether and how may I trust?

19. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Chapter 2. There is also a relative disanalogy: more people would agree that virtue is worth studying and pursuing than would agree that trust in God is worth studying and pursuing, perhaps out of epistemological concerns--but not exclusively.

Sketching the Bridges

There are several points of connection between trusting directed towards people and trusting directed towards God.

Vulnerability, Help, and Acceptance

As do others, Annette Baier observes that trust is or implies or has, as a characteristic ingredient, “accepted vulnerability to another's possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one.”²⁰ But the central issue for trust is not whether someone is vulnerable, subject to being *harmed*. The central issue for trusting is whether the party is subject to being *helped*. I take help here to mean that the trusting party is able to come to an improved situation because of a causal contribution of someone or something. A necessary condition for trusting is the ability to be helped. We do not have a ready word for this in English: we might try “adjutability” or “help-ability.”

Insofar as we are vulnerable in relation to God, we have reason to be suspicious of God. We may then experience impulses to trust God and impulses to suspect God. Instead of saying that vulnerability belongs in the core concept of trust, it seems better to distinguish suspecting impulses from trusting impulses, or to note reasons for being suspicious and reasons for being trusting, because emotions are specified by their objects. In this vale of tears, of course, vulnerability is a constant associate; standardly, trust comes equipped with vulnerability. But vulnerability is not an essential component in trust, because one can think help without thinking harm.

We should distinguish objective vulnerability and subjective vulnerability. Objectively considered, we may be more or less vulnerable. Subjectively, we may feel or think ourselves to be more or less

20. In a definition “on this first approximation.” “Trust and Anti-Trust,” 99. Also, “Trust is accepted vulnerability to another’s power to harm one, a power inseparable from the power to look after some aspect of one’s good.” “Trust and Its Vulnerabilities,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 133.

vulnerable. The problem of evil first appears here, as a reason in support of our subjective vulnerability because of objective vulnerability.

My point is that when it comes to God, for however much there may be help and care available, there is major vulnerability, objectively, as well as typically subjectively. But it remains a question, one stretching beyond this paper, whether vulnerability in relation to God is so great--as well as objective--that that level of vulnerability cannot be overbalanced by the extent and availability of divine care and help.

Letting Take Care

Frequently to trust is understood as to let take care. We need to keep in mind possible nuances of what goes on under the description "let take care." Opposed to letting take care is the *not letting* take care, the personally engaged protecting (and defending). There is also the personally *unengaged* letting care, as when one washes one's hands of a matter, abdicates responsibility, gives away and turns over to another some matter concerning which there is no concern about whether or not that other has an interest in the matter. There is also of course delegating, when the delegater does retain an interest in what happens to the matter put in another's care. And there is also, especially for our purposes, engaged caring, when one lets another care without subtracting or withdrawing one's own care. Joint ventures, cooperation, shared commitments fall into this area of engaged letting take care. In this latter case, the will is not adversarial but conspiratorial: parties are breathing the same air of concern. With this understanding of joint caring, the well-known prayer "Not my will, but thine be done" does not end but rather continues a conversation.

The Promised, the Best, and Discretion

One point in the ethics of trust and in the ethics of trustworthiness is that of the trusted party's faithfulness to the terms of the entrusting. Is it better, or is it obligatory, for the trusted party to take care of what is entrusted by carrying out the terms of the agreement, or it is better or obligatory for the trusted to substitute something even better than the outcome agreed upon? We can find that *non*-discretion is the default position. In non-religious ethics we find Michael Scanlon's proposal that the exact fulfillment of

what is promised is a necessary condition for trustworthiness: “in the absence of some special justification, A must do x unless B consents to x 's not being done.”²¹ I will call this the Scanlon principle, one of hewing or cleaving to the exact doing of what is promised. In Christian religion it is standardly thought that God is faithful, and that this means that God keeps the divine promises. And yet in the Letter to the Hebrews we find that God is admitted to have not kept covenantal promises, but God so deviated from the agreement in order to provide something even better.²²

God has supreme discretion. We are invited to accept that supreme discretion. “Ask and you shall receive” . . . *something*, but maybe not what you wanted or thought you wanted. Furthermore, we apparently have epistemic distance from our own good, and this can be a reason for inviting what an other may contribute to care for what we care for. We may, therefore, accept God’s discretion--albeit with mixed feelings. Job knew all about this.

Gabriel Marcel drew a contrast between constancy and fidelity, a contrast that renders relative the default precision in the Scanlon principle. Constancy is predictable, and is due to the mix of motives that operate to support predictable outcomes. Fidelity is companionship, the accompanying, the “I’m with you” that typically a generous friend grants to a friend without aiming at some specific result. The fidelity of a trustworthy other may therefore be different from the constancy of a predictable or resolute other.²³

21. Thomas Scanlon, “Promises and Practices,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19 (Summer 1990): 208, as quoted in Annette C. Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 322n7.

22. Hebrews 11:39-40: “Yet all these, though approved because of their faith, did not receive what had been promised. God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect.”

23. Resolute trusting is not a topic I address in this paper. It shows up in the biblical “Unless you are firm, you shall not be confirmed” (Isaiah 7:9; cf II Chronicles 20:20): Unless you are steadfast in your

Discretion may free an other to disavow providing specific benefits.

Our Wills

There does seem to be, however, one fairly clear set of matters regarding which we should absolutely not entrust something to God, in the sense of our no longer caring for it because we expect God to take care of it. That something is the exercise and quality of our willing. The quality of our willing does seem to be thoroughly up to us, at least on Molinist grounds, and our turning over to God the ways of our willing is an abdication that would make us puppets, not persons.

This creates a problem for Jesuits, of course, and for others who follow Ignatian inspiration. Should I cross my fingers when I sing: “Take all my will, my mind, my memory”? Oh well, that’s just a figure of speech, or a figure of song, an exaggeration to show how deep my offering goes. David Fleming offers a way of understanding the “take and receive” of Ignatian expansiveness: “The ‘take and receive’ of the Ignatian prayer response does not mean a ‘giving away’, because we remember . . . that lovers share what they have. So we humans can *share* with God our potential for making ourselves who we are--our liberty. . . . [W]e share our will because our will signifies so much of what we want, and so we offer our wants and our choices to God out of a sharing of love.”²⁴

Here ascetical and spiritual writers are way ahead of metaphysicians of divine causality and epistemologists of divine intentions. In any case, trusting God is not a case of Your will against mine, because simply causing my will to be determinate is inappropriate for God (*non Deo convenit*). It is one thing to say that it is incompatible with God’s character; it is also incompatible with *my* character as something other than a puppet!

trust, you shall not receive good. At issue here is not just deferred accountability, but continuing to hold the good within the causal range of God--or to be firmly receptive in the face of threat.

24. David L. Fleming, S.J., “Keys to Spiritual Growth: Remembering and Imagining in Ignatian Spirituality,” in *Spirit, Style, Story: Essays Honoring John W. Padberg*, ed. Thomas M. Lucas (Chicago: Loyola Press, Jesuit Way, 2002), 87.

Baier's Unequals and an Expressibility Test

Granting her expressed reservations about trust of God, Annette Baier offers a promising perspective because she focuses on relationships between people who are not equal in power. She observes that those who promote social contract ethics proceed under the assumption that people are informed and free when as equals they enter into agreements that establish rights and obligations. The trouble is that most people are not equal in power and knowledge and freedom, so taking the contract model for fiducial relationships means working with a model that actually fits rather few people. Most people are involved in relationships of *inequality*, and unequal relationships are her focus.²⁵

Now if there is ever a relationship of inequality, the relation between God and people is that. Taking covenant as a model, even recalling “I call you not servants, but friends,” cannot erase the evident fact that these covenantal partners are not equals. When “God and man at table are sat down,” it is God who sits at the head of the table. We are there by invitation, and we may need a wedding garment or two to deserve our place, whatever place we are given.

To make concrete her reflection, Baier sketches a scenario from a marriage. A man of power delegates to his wife the raising of their daughters, confident that his dominance will ensure that the daughters' upbringing which he has entrusted to his wife will ensure that they adopt his patriarchal values. If he suspects that his wife, however, is raising them as anti-patriarchal Amazons, rebelling against his condescending delegation to one he considers his spousal underling, he would withdraw his trust.

A reciprocal and hostile spousal mismatch does not fit the standard model for divine-human trust, of course. But there are two conditions in what Baier proposes which I find are useful in thinking about trust in God, granted that she is formulating tests for determining whether human parties unequal in power might engage in trusting and being trusted in ways that pass ethical muster. First, she addresses conflict of motives. When there are not but could be conflicting motives, “Trusting is rational [not only] in the absence of any reason to suspect in the trusted strong and operative motives which conflict with the

25. This is her focus at least in her “Trust and Anti-Trust.”

demands of trustworthiness as the truster sees them," but also, when there *are* impulses of suspicion as well as of trust, trusting "can continue to be rational, even when there are such unwelcome suspicions, as long as the truster is confident that in the conflict of motives within the trusted the subversive motives will lose to the conformist motives."²⁶ Second, she proposes what I call a sunshine test. When the unequal parties can express to each other--can bring into conversational daylight--the real motives for their trusting and being trusted without the relationship breaking up when those real motives become known, the sunshine test is passed. It is disclosure of motives that tests the unequal fiducial relationship. Motives that put the unequal fiducial relationship in jeopardy include one party's relying on the other's "nonreciprocated generosity," genial nature, or forgiveness.²⁷

Baier offers a definition, and a moral-test conclusion. "Trust, I have claimed, is reliance on others' competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about which are entrusted to their care. The moral test of such trust relationships which I have proposed is that they be able to survive awareness by each party to the relationship of *what* the other relies on in the first to ensure their continued trustworthiness or trustingness. This test elevates to a special place one form of trust, namely, trusting others with knowledge of what it is about them which enables one to trust them as one does, or expect them to be trustworthy. The test could be restated this way: trust is morally decent only if, in addition to whatever else is entrusted, knowledge of each party's reasons for confident reliance on the other to continue the relationship could in principle also be entrusted--since such mutual knowledge would be itself a good, not a threat to other goods. To the extent that mutual reliance can be accompanied by mutual knowledge of the conditions for that reliance, trust is above suspicion, and trustworthiness a nonsuspect virtue."²⁸

Why not apply this assessment of conflict of motives and this sunshine test to people's dealings with God? It may sound trivial, but I think this test can be useful for assessing the fiducial relationship

26. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 121.

27. "A trust relationship is morally bad to the extent that either party relies on qualities in the other which would be weakened by the knowledge that the other relies on them." "Trust and Anti-Trust," 123.

28. "Trust and Anti-Trust," 128.

between God and humans. What would happen if we express to God our motives, why we are asking God to take care of something? And what can we know of the motives of God in taking on the care of what is valuable to us? The latter question is easier to answer, or at least to point out the source of the answer: What has God communicated or behaviorally shown to indicate God's trustworthiness and why God can and should be trusted? Many a scripture passage purports to shed light on this, and even more do the lives and teachings of the saints. But what about the prior question, What would happen if we express to God our motives for bringing some matter to God for help? The short answer is: Nothing would happen. The mid-length answer is: *We* might get some insight into *our* motives. The long answer in what I call standard fiducial theism consists in God working with us about our motives, working over the years as we grow into adult ways of trusting God. Maybe the sin of disordered trusting consists essentially in declining to grow up in our relation to God. If we are able to grow up and decline to do so--*that's* the sin of presumption, of trusting God badly.

Four Dimensions of Trust

Much depends, as you would expect, on what is meant by trust. By way of interlude and essential background, I distinguish and explain four dimensions of trust.²⁹ Once again, I find a kindred mind in Aristotle, who identifies four dimensions or types of causing, four ways to make a difference. In terms of my mapping metaphor, these four dimensions suggest that ways across the divide include other routes.

The first and most obvious of the four dimensions is what I call reliance trust. Reliance trust consists in my having some good of mine situated within the causal range of another, and to this situation I consent, expecting that the other's competence and good will towards me will cause some good to come of that other's activity in my regard. The key elements in this definition are: first, something good or of value to me; second, its being within the causal range of another; third, my consenting to or seeking this situation of some good being within the causal range; fourth, my desiring to be helped; and fifth, and my judging that

29. For a fuller presentation of of these four dimensions of trust, see "Conceiving Trust for Philosophy of Religion," http://philosophy.georgetown.edu/news_events/papers_2003-2004/godfrey_paper.pdf .

the competence and good will of that other towards me will effect some good. The good effected may be by prior agreement, contractually specified; or, that good may be a surprise, when I afford discretion to the other. Either I may simply find my good within another's range; or I may convey that good into another's ambit by *entrusting*. I may be doing so with much knowledge of the other's competence and character, or with little: I may be rather in the dark about this other and what may eventuate. These five conditions may need further elucidation, but these formulae will do for now. Alternately put, the factors in reliance trusting are: the matter or what the trusting is *about*; the outcome or what the trusting is *for*, the agent or whom the trusting is *by*, and the one trusted, that is, the one the trusting is *of*.

I do not define reliance trust to be good; whether reliance is better than suspicious reserve depends on many factors, typically not antecedently knowable. Hence reliance has its risks.

Another dimension is what I call I-thou trust. The "thou" of this I-thou is lower case; I am not relating myself to God by capitalizing "Thou". But at least asymptotically and episodically I can conceive of some good that is close to being my very self rather than something I *have*, available to another not because of what that other can do but because of who that other is, with an outcome less specifiable as event or state and more identifiable as the relation between us. Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel inspire this kind of conceiving. Such trusting may be the fabric of friendship, in which I may not entrust specific matters for specific purposes, but I make available my very self. Indeed, my friend may be not competent to handle some matters important to me. Imagined graphically, I-thou trust would be charted on a line orthogonal to that of reliance trust. Calling such relating "trust," of course, requires an analogy of relating.

The third dimension I identify is what I term security trust. Security trust is the opposite of what Heidegger termed *angst*. It is a disposition or ability to rest, to be upheld, to be safe, not insofar as there could be a list of factors that instrumentally help, but insofar as there is an environing context that is secure.³⁰ Security trust could obtain when many of the detailed items around me are unreliable. However,

30. I derive this conception of security trust from Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Neue Geborgenheit: Das Problem einer Überwindung Des Existentialismus*, reprint, originally 1955 (Stuttgart; Köln: W. Kohlhammer, 1979).

security trust is not automatically cosmic or general.³¹ What it is that upholds a person has a local habitation and sometimes even a name. It may be in culture, it may be in conscience, but there is a “here” where I am upheld, where I am OK.

The final dimension I call openness trust. Openness trust differs from security trust as a nest differs from a window. Openness trust is a person’s window on the world, a receptivity to what one’s world has to say and do. It is the open hand rather than the grip. It is the mind that welcomes rather than closes.

The correlates of the four dimensions of trust are these. Reliance trusting requires instrumental help. I-Thou trusting requires a/Another. Security trust requires a supportive network or matrix. Openness trust requires self-communicative entities. And these four dimensions are found together, usually. For example, security trust is required for openness trust, just as a schoolchild requires a stable home to learn.

The core idea of these four dimensions of trust is receptivity to what enhances.

One advantage of ringing the changes on such four dimensions of trusting is that some of the disputes regarding trust of God can be softened if what is at issue is recognized as obtaining in a dimension other than the dimension of reliance trust with its specifics. For example, to ask whether God is trustworthy differs as a question if we recognize a relevant difference between (a) God taking care of what I leave to God for my own purposes, and (b) God sustaining me despite vicissitudes. The hand of God may not be doing the work I would want, but nevertheless “Underneath are the everlasting arms.”³² We can then readily admit that for some outcomes God is unreliable. This does not mean that God is untrustworthy. It

31. Robert Solomon refers to a “sense of *cosmic* trust, our overarching emotional sense of being secure in the world.” *Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45–46.

32. Deuteronomy 33:27 (RSV).

does mean that God's competence and goodwill do not include some outcomes I would want taken care of: for what I want to receive, God is not giving. And there can be conditions under which my reliance trusting is reduced and my security trust is increased: my circumstances are risky, but I am steady on a grounding I cannot command. And while revelation, human or divine, may not give me a remedy to ease my intellectual unrest, it may bring light that enables me to see matters differently: openness trust is receptivity to being enlightened.

Standards for Trustworthiness: Applying Potter's Criteria

In her *How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness*, Nancy Nyquist Potter offers some criteria for judging someone to be trustworthy. Taking a general Aristotelian approach and appealing to the doctrine of the mean, Potter proposes that someone is trustworthy "who can be counted on, as a matter of the sort of person he or she is, to take care of those things that others entrust to one and (following the Doctrine of the Mean) whose ways of caring are neither excessive nor deficient."³³ While acknowledging that there can be a person of specific trustworthiness for a specific task, Nancy Potter presses on to draw the larger portrait of a person of general or full trustworthiness: "the sort of person who can be counted on, given who one is in relation to diverse others, to have the right feelings toward the right sorts of things, to deliberate and make choices, and to act from a trustworthy disposition. General trustworthiness requires that one be nonexploitative and nondominating not only to particular others in specific contexts but that one attend to the myriad ways that local ways of being affect broader power relations."³⁴ Equally telling for our religious purposes, she elaborates ten further requirements of trustworthiness.³⁵ She proposes that the trustworthy person: (1) give signs and assurances of

33. Nancy Nyquist Potter, *How Can I be Trusted? A Virtue Theory of Trustworthiness* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 16.

34. *How Can I be Trusted?* 25–26.

35. *How Can I be Trusted?* 26–32, then passim.

trustworthiness; (2) take epistemic responsibility seriously;³⁶ (3) develop sensitivity to the particularities of others; (4) respond properly to broken trust; (5) deal with hurt in relationships--both the hurt inflicted on others and the hurt experienced from others--in ways that sustain connection; (6) have related institutions and governing bodies be virtuous; (7) recognize the importance of being trustworthy to the disenfranchised and oppressed; (8) be committed to mutuality in intimate as well as in civic relationships; (9) work to sustain connection in intimate relationships while neither privatizing nor endangering mutual flourishing; and finally (10) need also to have other virtues.

This is not a bad list for questions about God! The prospect of challenging God and evaluating God's trustworthiness might well feel like some Promethean judgmental affront to the character of God. But such challenging is part of the story of Abraham, as I will propose.

What it is to Trust God: Exemplary Persons

One point of Aristotle provides a lead and another point misleads. Aristotle indicates that in bringing reason to the discovery of what counts as virtue, we can choose according to a mean determined to be relative to us, in accord with "a rule or principle as would take shape in the mind of a man of sense or practical wisdom."³⁷ Who would count as a person of practical wisdom in the matter of trusting God?

36. "Take epistemic responsibility seriously" means not only knowing what we should know but also "an active engagement with self and others in knowing and making known one's own interests, values, moral beliefs, and positionality, as well as theirs. . . . In what way do one's values and interests impede trust with some communities and foster it with others?" This knowing and communicating of one's own standpoint and interests is especially important for those with power and discretion. *How Can I be Trusted?* 27. Does God indicate what God is about, even when God's interests are at odds with at least the surface interests of others? Consider "A bruised reed he shall not break" (Isaiah 42:3); as well as "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8).

37. *Nicomachean Ethics*, II, 5 (Ross translation).

Further clues come from Chinese ethics, which pays attention to exemplary figures in determining the better ways of acting. Who is the sage we are looking for? Who are the exemplary persons?

We should *not* be looking for the Aristotelian *megalopsychos*, the great-souled person of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Something of an ethical ideal for generosity and other strengths, the great-souled person is however embarrassed to need anything from anyone. For him, virtue means giving, not receiving. Hence the great-souled person is not interested in trusting, since trust entails receptivity to what another can do to care for what is important.³⁸ The person engaged in fiducial theism, however, is someone quite interested in trusting, in having God care for what is important, in accepting vulnerability rather than in standing above it in a great-souled fashion.

Such a bias towards self-sufficiency, also known as autarky, characterizes a fair amount of the North American culture both as taught and practiced.³⁹ Emersonian self-reliance gets morphed into the man--more often a man--who has or seeks to have resources under his control. When a person controls resources, he does not need the goodwill of others. He makes help happen. He does not ask for help; he buys help. Insofar as we are inspired by such great-souled people ancient and contemporary, we are inclined to go it alone even in a theism that would do better to trust.

Exemplary Persons

To illustrate what counts as trustworthiness or trusting badly or well, authors take people from fiction. Russell Hardin, for example, uses the lieutenant colonel and Trifonov from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and also Alberich from Wagner's *Ring* cycle, to illustrate trust and trustworthiness.

38. I owe this insight about the *megalopsychos* to Alasdair MacIntyre in his *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, The Paul Carus Lectures 1997 (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999), 127, regarding Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 3, 1124b 9-10.

39. And in this culture a declaration of *dependence* has much less traction than declarations of *independence*.

Trudy Govier and Nancy Nyquist Potter use many factual cases. Some restrict their scope to particular ranges, to friends, or to people who are unequal, or to people engaged in political life.⁴⁰

We can look at Abraham. The *Akedah* or binding of Isaac by Abraham is a paradigmatic case of trust and distrust.⁴¹ God speaks to Abraham, testing him, directing him to take his son Isaac to the mountain for sacrificial slaughter. Abraham complies. Isaac asks his father, “Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” His father Abraham replies, “God will provide.” Upon arriving at the site, Abraham binds his son and raises the knife for the kill. But an angel of the Lord says, “Do not kill your son Isaac.” Abraham then spots in the bushes a ram for the sacrifice.

I make two points. First, while the Lord is testing Abraham, Abraham is testing the Lord, in a kind of brinkmanship. Second, let us juxtapose to the Abraham narrative the outline authentic trust as Solomon and Flores present it, thinking not at all about Abraham and God. They are writing of a business partner faced with suspicious behavior on the part of his associate. Think of Abraham trusting God and of God trusting Abraham. “But here again the appearance of paradox comes into play. He acts *as if* he trusts his associate in order to see if he can trust the associate, or, to put it more pointedly, he acts as if he trusts the associate precisely because he does not trust him and is in effect setting a trap in which the betrayal will be revealed. But here again, the sharp division between trust and distrust is derived from the all-or-nothing model of simple trust. It is inappropriate for authentic trust. Authentic trust, unlike simple trust, is an ongoing, delicate dance of trust and distrust, the tests and trials of commitment, and the careful scrutiny and reassessment of the relationship.”⁴² As the businessman and his associate, and as Abraham and God, each is testing the other, with both commitment and “careful scrutiny and reassessment of the relationship.” Solomon and Flores offer a further angle on their business pair, which we can also apply to Abraham.

40. Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, Russell Sage Foundation Series on Trust, IV (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Trudy Govier, *Social Trust and Human Communities* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

41. Genesis 22.

42. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 102.

They write: “Authentic trust consists, to at least some extent, in deciding what to believe, and, more importantly, resolving to create the circumstances in which these beliefs will be justified.”⁴³ That the Lord is faithful became one of the pillar beliefs of the chosen people. The “authentic trust” portrayed by Solomon and Flores in a thoroughly *non*-religious context can be a model in terms of which people may challenge God as Abraham (and Job) did--and, theists may conversely surmise, terms according to which God may challenge people.

Mediation

There is, however, a big problem, which I address while narrowing my scope to Christianity, together with a moderately high Christology. In most if not all dealings with God, the transactions are mediated. It is through and with burning bush, and mountain, and whisper, and Exodus escape from Egypt, and the prophets, and Jesus, that people learn of God. Typically, dealings with God are through items of a human sort, often instruments made by human hands. While sometimes the medium may be purely instrumental and subject to discard when used up, more often the medium shares in the reality of what is mediated, as do the Biblical word of God and the divine Word of God. In history it is human institutions and events that show--and mask--the presence of God, be it in narrative, or in Buberian I-Thou relation with nature, people, or *geistige Wesenheiten*, “spiritual beings.” Indeed, the Ignatian tradition proposes that God is to be found “in all things.”

Mediation is a point both of disconnecting and of connecting. God cautions against trusting human agency. Put not your trust in men, but in God. No man can be trusted. Cursed be he who trusts a human.⁴⁴ But there are differences in mediation, in what mediates and to what extent there is light and darkness. There is less mediation in prayer, and more in Church. And mediation in Buberian I-Thou prayer (glimpse through spiritual beings) must also be kept in view, not just instrumental praying.

43. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 107.

44. Jeremiah 17:5.

Mediation is found in spheres other than the religious. Governments and corporations are also mediated. Sometimes in matters of government people trust the known government official more than they trust the government; sometimes they distrust the official while retaining trust in the government.⁴⁵ Some more trust the person than the institution, some more trust the institution than the person. Similarly with the community associated with a religion, I venture to say: sometimes people trust the (religious or spiritual) person they know while distrusting the organization; sometimes they trust the religious institution while mistrusting particular religious officials.

Some people and events mediate translucently, some darkly. And some are more suspect than trustworthy. Enlarging the picture, we can at least pose the question: Does taking a fiducial approach recast the problem of evil? It is beyond my purposes in this paper to trace how different the problem of evil might look when refracted through the lenses of trust and suspicion. But there is a difference between the bird's-eye view of the logical and conceptual problem of evil and the existential ground-level challenge of pain and suffering in one's own life and in that of others. Distinguishing among four dimensions of trust offers multiple perspectives. For example, the difference between being helped on one's projects and being sustained in one's troubles seems worth noting; this difference divides the question of whether reliance is warranted from whether sustaining security is available.⁴⁶ As I indicated earlier, the evil a person faces motivates the subjective feeling and judgment of vulnerability, and it is an open question whether the harm that God does not shield people from outweighs the help looked for by the person who would trust.

Letting God be God

Another text of Solomon and Flores sets a tone for an ethics of trusting: "Failing to trust someone is not merely an omission. It is *unethical* not to trust people when they are plausibly trustworthy, just as it

45. Sam Roberts, "In Government We Trust (As Far as We Can Throw It)," *The New York Times*, 4 January 2004, Week in Review, 4.

46. On the contrast between finding God preventing or removing suffering and finding God affording

is unethical to treat them unfairly. In fact, refusing to trust people may be more damaging to them than treating them unfairly, for the latter fails only to give them what they deserve. The former limits their capacity to act as full human beings.”⁴⁷ If this is true in dealings with people, is it analogously true in dealings with God? Is it unethical *not* to trust God, because it would “deprive” God of acting as fully God? There does seem to be a wisp of truth in speaking thus of trusting God.

These lines from Solomon and Flores about damaging someone by withholding trust find explanation in some lines of Gabriel Marcel, applicable to the expectation that comes with trusting. “To love anybody is to expect something from him, something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfill this expectation. Yes, paradoxical as it may seem, to expect is in some way to give: but the opposite is none the less true; no longer to expect is to strike with sterility the being from whom no more is expected, it is then in some way to deprive or take from him in advance what is surely a certain possibility of inventing or creating.” Here we encounter heady theological waters, where one thinks that letting God take care *enables* God to exercise care--and where, conversely, God does well to trust people, because in keeping care to Himself he leaves people uncreative. People’s narratives of their own dealings with God may here shed more light on trusting and being trusted in relatings between people and God than does a theology of an unchanging God.

Some Ethics for Fiducial Theism

Where are we about the question “Is it good to trust God?” While we do not have a thorough ethics of fiducial theism, we do have a modest sheaf of provisional concluding observations.

First, whether it is good to trust God depends on what is meant by “God”. One’s image of God is

sustaining accompaniment, see the final chapter of Richard J. Hauser, *Finding God in Troubled Times* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, Jesuit Way, 2002).

47. Solomon and Flores, *Building Trust*, 79.

crucial. It begins with what is learned from what parents say and do.⁴⁸ It has its fleshing out by what is heard and seen of religious teachers. As Rowan Williams asked of a doubting student: Which God is it that you don't believe in? Maybe it is a God I don't believe in either."⁴⁹

The relevant image of God includes matters historical and personal, but also conceptual. The historical and personal issues stem from the history of God in one's theistic religion and from the personal history of the person who is moved to be trusting or to be suspecting. To what degree has one grown in understanding one's God, perhaps in ways not all that different from growing in understanding one's society, both through greater contact and experience and through better tools for discerning and understanding, whether of society or of God. The conceptual matter is what it means for a person to have or leave or put within the causal range of God some matter which cannot not be within the causal range of God. In dealing with God, we do not *entrust* the way we may do with other people. How can a person decide to trust when she or he cannot decide not to depend? What does a person do when trusting God that is different from what a person is doing when she or he depends on God? Depending is inevitable; trusting is up for decision--at least if the trusting is to be, to use the term of Solomon and Flores, authentic trust.

Because, as I indicated earlier, the core element in trusting is to be receptive, there is a second observation about God. Questions about the metaphysics of being helped by God need not deter a person from deciding to trust God, while wondering whether God can change. If the narrative interchanges of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures do not entail that God changes, still the person's desire to be affected does make fluid a situation which at least subjectively a person could believe to be already quite fixed: the desire

48. An account of development of the concept of God can be found in Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

49. Extra-textual remark by the Archbishop of Canterbury at a lecture: Rowan Williams, "Analysing Atheism: Unbelief and the World of Faiths," Pacem in Terris Lecture March 29 2004 (Georgetown University, 2004).

to be helped and the expectation of help at least renders the trusting person receptive.⁵⁰ The moment when one trusts may be like the dew point shifting moisture in the air to falling rain, that is, shifting dependence to receiving, even if a person's act of welcoming does not add anything to what is within God's causal range. Trusting does not require *entrusting*.

Third, whether it is good to trust God depends on what is meant by "trust". God may be unreliable in those matters where God should be unreliable. But that God not provide what we ask for and be thus untrustworthy for *reliance* trusting is consistent with God affording the basis for security trust, enabling us to be sustained and supported in the ups and downs of attainment and disappointment.⁵¹ To care-for is not the same as to perform-for; to care-for can be to accompany and sustain. The difference is visible in a line of a letter of John of the Cross, "Cast your care on the Lord, daughter, and he will sustain you."⁵²

Continuing with what is *not* meant by "trust", I said at the outset that trust in God needs to be taken with a qualified sense of absolute, unconditional, reserved, and limited.⁵³ There are indeed limits to the reliance trust we should have in God. God is not one to whom I do well to *entrust*, that is to say to *transfer*, the care of something important to me, from myself to God. Thus, I should not imagine trusting God as a matter of *delegating*. As a matter of shared willing, yes. Nor should I imagine entrusting

50. Gabriel Marcel makes a point like this in his *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1962, originally 1944); similarly, William James, in his pithy dictum in "The Will to Believe," "Faith in a fact helps create the fact."

51. Disappointments may suggest that God is the Great Depriver, in the felicitous phrase of Donald Evans (*Struggle and Fulfillment: The Inner Dynamics of Religion and Morality* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981]).

52. As quoted in Keith J. Egan, TOCarm., "Banishing Anxiety," *Spiritual Life: A Journal of Contemporary Spirituality* 50, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 137.

53. In this paper I do not take up Annette Baier's other descriptor of trust directed towards God, "unreciprocated".

something to God as a matter of fobbing off. I do not escape my responsibility of caring for what is a good important for me (even if not *to* me) by leaving it to God. “Let Go and Let God” should not mean “I wash my hands of the matter.”

There are, therefore, always conditions appropriate to place on my trusting God. If I am working this out regarding reliance trust, there are standard conditions regarding the status of the one who trusts, the one trusted, the good in another’s causal range, the competence of the other, the good will towards me of the other, the acceptance by the other and therefore of the other’s actual care, and the discretion I confer and the accountability I postpone or exact regarding that other. God may want to know whether I am a Good Steward; I want to know the same about God.⁵⁴ It matters *how* I would trust, whether in a reliance way, an I-thou way, a resting-security way, or an openness way. For example, under certain circumstances there need be no limits to the security trust and the openness trust I afford to God. What, behaviorally, would it mean to impose or admit or accept no limits to one’s security trust and openness trust in relation to God?

However, what especially would it mean to impose or admit or accept no limits to such trust of God when God’s dealings with us are *mediated*? How can I be secure when even *God’s* people make me anxious, or at least an organized church makes me anxious? How can I be open if Church figures are deceptive? When there is not only a high Christology but also a high ecclesiology, I could have problems with trust of the institution called capital-C “Church”, purportedly of divine constitution.⁵⁵ Such mediated trusting should not be unconditional.

54. One of the issues shadowing this essay is that of appropriate anthropomorphisms. Some address this question by looking for authorized parables.

55. In his *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), political theorist Francis Fukuyama sets forth a conceptual contrast between high-trust and low-trust societies, and explores the confirmations and implications of this contrast for the United States and for other nations. Something similar could be ventured regarding church.

Fourth, the closest analogy to trusting directed towards God is trusting our parents. Awkward or embarrassing though it be, that we are called children of God does suggest a directness and spontaneity and attraction (and childish volatility) that may not be foreign to trust in God. And yet in a classic “both-and,” standard theology has grown-ups as adult children of God. While we continue to be within the causal range of our parents, we are so differently as we grow up to be adults. By analogy, then, to trust God badly is to trust God as someone who refuses to grow up.

Fifth, “empowering” God. Just as by trusting some people we contribute to their becoming worthy of trust, so also by trusting God we afford opportunity for God to show trustworthiness, perhaps not corresponding to reliance trust that would have God as factotum, but the trustworthiness that sustains people in dark days, is available as companion, and enlightens--all of this in mysterious and even opaque ways. Trusting may enable a person to be sustained, companioned, and enlightened by God without that person knowing it.⁵⁶

I think I have mapped one route from identifying some good features of trusting people to identifying good features of trusting God. My route plunges through many thickets and swamps, philosophical and theological. But I think it goes through. As I have in my title today, “Some” ethics can travel the route. Putting the path in terms of a mixed hypothetical syllogism, between the hypothetical premise’s *if* of standard theism’s God and its call to trust of God, and the *then* (not of mere material implication, of course), there is a multi-dimensioned--and not universally unconditional--good in trusting God. The categorical premise needed for *modus ponens* is for religious epistemologists and theologians to marshal support for, *that* God is real and invites trust. But if God is thus real and invites trust, then there are, from some contemporary ethics, discernible ways in which it is good--and ways in which it is not good--to trust God.

56. Just as externalism in epistemology admits a person having genuine knowledge but not knowing that she does.

Put another way, that trusting directed towards God can be ethically permissible and even good follows from, first, that trust in God is not a category mistake, flagged by calling the relationship not “trust” but “faith,” or hived off by contrasting absolute or total trust with relative and limited trust; and second, that there are ways in which trust in God can measure up to norms or ideals used in evaluating other cases of trusting.⁵⁷

If this discourse leads you to say “What’s really new about all *this*?”, so be it. As the Shaker song “Simple Gifts” has it, by this tortuous route we may finally “come down where we ought to be.” Maybe we have been there all along. But without knowing it.

57. Further elaboration of how trusting in God might be good requires exploring what would make trusting God to be sound (I use “sound” rather than “justified” to include as well those instances of trusting which contribute to the one trusted *becoming* trustworthy). In regard to God, the following make for soundness. For reliance trust it is instrumental help provided by God. For I-thou trust, it is divine presence. For security trust, it is divine sustaining. For openness trust, it is divine disclosing. Where and how these occur is topic for a much larger treatment.

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