separated from other islands by gigantic oceans of grotesque deformity."  

How can one viable creature be gradually transformed into another, since most changes are lethal and any that are not cannot be coordinated by top-down design? The best source of empirical data, human interaction with malaria, is not encouraging. As Michael Behe documents in *The Edge of Evolution*, most humans have achieved resistance to malaria by a mutation that deforms hemoglobin and which may lead to sickle-cell anemia, not by the development of a more sophisticated immune system. And there is increasing evidence from developmental biology that DNA mutation cannot explain macroevolution. For example, Newman and Müller argue that the organization of body plans cannot be explained purely by genes because “phenotypic outcomes persist despite extensive derangement in lines of ‘program code.’” They claim that “neo-Darwinism has no theory of the generative. As a consequence, current evolutionary theory can predict what will be maintained, but not what will appear.”

Epigenetic factors—factors outside of genes—are increasingly recognized as dominant in development, and it is these that must change to produce new body plans.

Other chapters include recent speculations on the origin of life (chap. 3) and human evolution (chap. 7), and the impact of Darwinism on philosophy (especially epistemology and ethics), literature and religion (chaps. 10–12). And there are two admirably self-critical chapters on whether any of this is really true (chaps. 8 and 9). Ruse admits that some of the standard evidence for Darwinism is not as strong as some claim, but this, combined with his positive arguments, only makes his case more credible. Although this reviewer has indicated areas of skepticism, he is happy to recommend Ruse’s book as one of the strongest recent defenses of Darwinism.

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BRENDAN SWEETMAN, Rockhurst University

This book addresses “a core issue in the epistemology of religious belief,” the question of whether or not religious beliefs are epistemically justified, by attempting to progress beyond what the author regards as the current standoff between theists and atheists. Bishop takes seriously what he calls the “evidential ambiguity” that leaves open the question of God’s existence, and responds by offering us a meticulously developed, indeed intriguing, modest form of fideism, inspired by the views of William James. Although the argument of the book is detailed and quite technical (perhaps unnecessarily so for what the book ultimately says), Bishop provides plenty of summary comment and a comprehensive glossary to aid readers
as he unfolds his carefully thought out, well-nuanced thesis. He acknowledges that fideism is currently unpopular, yet his attempt to rehabilitate it here, though admirable and very well informed, may still, I believe, be open to serious questions.

Bishop begins by drawing our attention to a number of points he thinks philosophers of religion have not fully appreciated. One concerns the distinction between a belief-state of holding a proposition to be true, and the action of taking it to be true in practical reasoning (the latter includes mental actions of practical commitment to the truth of what is believed). A second concerns the fact that the question of the justifiability of taking a religious belief to be true in one’s practical reasoning is ultimately a moral question, since religious beliefs influence morally significant actions. This point leads to a key question: is it true that practical commitment to the truth of a religious claim is morally justifiable only if its truth is sufficiently supported by the agent’s total available evidence—i.e., does moral justification require epistemic justification, especially with regard to religious beliefs (p. x)?

The “standard answer” to this question is “yes,” on the grounds that we should not act on a belief, at least in the area of worldviews, unless we commit to the truth of the belief, and so we must focus on epistemic reasons, not moral ones, for if a belief is epistemically justified, we generally cannot help acting on it. Bishop rejects this approach (chap. 2), whatever account we may ultimately come to give of epistemic justification, internalist or externalist. His chief objection is that its proponents do not appreciate that the justification of religious belief is mainly a question about the moral justifiability of taking those beliefs to be true in one’s practical reasoning (p. 33). His main argument for this claim is that it is possible to hold a belief but not act on it, and also possible to act on a belief but not be committed to its truth (even though these would not be typical cases because holding a belief and so taking it to be true in practical reasoning is usually automatic, in the sense of being habituated). Bishop believes that “we may be disposed to take a proposition to be true in our [practical] reasoning without that disposition counting as a case of holding it to be true” (p. 39). This is one of the crucial theses of the book, because the author needs it to argue that what a person takes to be true in reasoning is sometimes under the agent’s “direct control,” as opposed to the standard view which says that the beliefs we hold and therefore act on are only under our “indirect control” (e.g., we can “decide” to examine the evidence on a question, but then we should follow it wherever it leads). Bishop wants to argue that because we have direct control over what we take to be true, we therefore bear moral responsibility for what we take to be true, so our taking certain propositions to be true in practical reasoning is subject to moral evaluation, and not just epistemic evaluation (p. 44). If all this were the case, it would mean that “philosophy of religion should not ultimately focus on the epistemic status of religious beliefs, but rather on the moral status of practical commitment to the truth of those beliefs” (p. 48).

In his attempt to show that we have more direct control over what we take to be true, Bishop seems occasionally to confuse cases in which a person holds that p but does not take p to be true in practical reasoning, with cases where a person takes a proposition to be true in practical reasoning without actually holding that p is true. Examples of the former are
commonplace and uncontroversial, such as Bishop’s example of believing, but not acting, on medical advice. But the few examples he offers to support the latter case are not convincing. He cites cases of pretending to believe (that the fugitive is not at my house when it is being searched, for example); yet in these cases, since I am pretending, it is not a true case of not believing, and yet acting, on the belief. The other example he offers is that we might treat a proposition as an assumption or a working hypothesis; yet the problem here is that our practical reasoning in accord with it is conditional, since the hypothesis is subject to confirmation or disconfirmation. His failure to convincingly establish this thesis is a problem for his later argument that we can commit to religious beliefs, even though we don’t know if they are true.

Some will object to his argument so far on the grounds that all moral evaluations of the justifiability of religious beliefs ultimately reduce to epistemic ones anyway, a view Bishop calls “moral evidentialism” (chap. 3). This view holds that “people are morally justified in taking beliefs to be true in their practical reasoning only if those beliefs are evidentially justified” (p. 62). While acknowledging that this view has a long history, he rejects it because it fails to appreciate that even though the evidence for a belief may be ambiguous, we can still commit to the belief in practical reasoning. Bishop holds that theistic beliefs are evidentially ambiguous (another crucial claim in his argument), meaning that after centuries of debate equally intelligent and well-informed thinkers continue to disagree about how to assess the evidence for and against God’s existence. If we accept this, the standard view would therefore entail that theistic faith commitment is not morally justified. But another option is available: the evidential ambiguity of theism is plausible enough to support a fideistic alternative.

Before he develops his version of fideism, he considers but rejects two attempts that accept the evidential ambiguity of theism yet seek to defend the moral justifiability of practical commitment to such beliefs, Reformed epistemology and Wittgensteinian fideism (chap. 4). He rejects the parity argued for by Reformed epistemologists between perceptual beliefs and religious beliefs as a way of avoiding a too liberal view of what might count as basic beliefs, noting that there is a doubt about the veridicality of religious experiences that does not apply to perceptual experiences. He also rejects Plantinga’s externalist epistemology as a satisfactory way of justifying religious belief. Plantinga argues that a belief has warrant if it is produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in an appropriate environment according to a design-plan successfully aimed at truth. This approach only succeeds in showing, Bishop argues (rightly in my view), that “if theistic belief is true, then it seems likely that it does have warrant” (p. 93). But this appears to be question begging because it does not follow that theistic belief actually has warrant. Bishop also raises a familiar problem about Wittgensteinian fideism, that it runs into problems of justification (and indeed relativism) because it cannot justify why we should commit to a language-game in the first place. It does not deal effectively with the question of whether a whole language-game, with all of its internal criteria, could be mistaken. So neither of these views can show that, in the face of evidential ambiguity, commitment to theism is morally justified.
At this point, Bishop appeals to William James to explore whether or not “doxastic venture” is justifiable (chap. 5). A doxastic venture is where we take it to be true in practical reasoning that God exists while recognizing that the total evidence available does not support the truth that God exists (but, crucially, we do believe that God exists). He offers Kierkegaard’s, and, somewhat more controversially, Paul Tillich’s views as examples of doxastic venture. This kind of venture is possible, Bishop argues, appealing to James, because it can be based on non-evidential causes, i.e., on passionate causes (such as emotions, wishes and desires, affiliations, and so on). One of the problems facing this argument is that it is too vague on what the passionate causes are, and on how they can motivate one to a rational belief. Bishop gives the example of a person who is passionately caused to hold it true that God exists because of “being formed or moved by encounter with a theistic religious tradition” (p. 116). Because of this, she has the psychic resources to commit to belief in God, even though she also holds that the belief lacks evidential support. But again, is this a convincing example? What exactly is the passionate cause? It must be something other than a culturally produced desire to participate in a tradition. Even though it is true that she might have the psychic resources to believe, it does not follow that her belief should not be epistemically justified. Don’t we have to show that passionate causes are rationally acceptable, in which case we are back where we started, or failing this, that passionate causes do not need to be rational, and how could we show that?

Bishop develops (chaps. 6 and 7) James’ argument to tease out the necessary and sufficient conditions that would justify this kind of doxastic venture. He holds that such a venture must satisfy these conditions: the proposition p must be a “genuine option,” (in James’ words, one that is “living, forced and momentous”), and must be one which cannot be decided by its nature on intellectual grounds (a stronger requirement than James,’ which was that the evidence did not clearly point one way or the other). Bishop argues that theistic belief satisfies these conditions, while acknowledging that the conditions commit him to moral pluralism about faith ventures in particular (and perhaps also moral relativism?), but thinks he can head off the worry about his view being too liberal in allowing morally pernicious faith ventures by insisting on a further condition: “that p’s being true conforms with correct morality” (p. 165).

There are two problems with this latter condition. The first is that a sincerely believing Nazi could believe he was satisfying “correct morality.” Bishop acknowledges this but points out that he would still be wrong on the basis of objective morality, and notes that it is a problem all world-views must face. The second problem, however, is more complex. This is the problem that in order to form true beliefs about correct morality we would have to develop our moral values independently of our religion, a view that divorces morality from religion, and that assumes moral values are not similarly evidentially ambiguous (and so would not require their own “doxastic venture”). Bishop does not give this question sufficient attention, but he argues that Abraham’s trusting the message from the angel as he was about to sacrifice Isaac is a paradigm case of applying the requirement that faith ventures should conform to correct morality.
Bishop further defends this fideistic view in concluding chapters by arguing that commitment to faith ventures understood in this way is justified as long as one goes beyond, but not contrary to, the evidence. We are still responsible for looking at whatever evidence is available, and for holding consistent and coherent beliefs. His view therefore is a robust fideism that places genuinely objective conditions on morally permissible faith-ventures; yet this shows only that fideism is undefeated, not that it is established. Therefore the debate with hard line evidentialist approaches (which insist that we should withhold assent to religious beliefs) ends in an impasse, in the sense that neither evidentialism nor fideism is established. Bishop also warns correctly against the temptation to adopt a hard line evidentialist view because one is antecedently committed to naturalism, in which case one is in the same boat as the fideist. His final word is that the impasse may have to be solved politically, and vaguely suggests that some Rawlsian view might be the right way to do this (p. 213). This is a disappointing conclusion, given that the Rawlsian approach is generally inhospitable to religion, and that it would require us to decide in advance of the debate between religion and secularism what can count as properly belonging in the debate.

The implications of Bishop’s fideistic view are a moral pluralism, thus a rejection of religious exclusivism; also rejection of any view that holds that the question of theistic faith beliefs must be settled before we can establish a theory of “correct morality”; it also might entail the rejection of all classical views of God on the grounds that correct morality could rule out the traditional God on the basis of the existence of evil. In general, our (individual?) accounts of “correct morality” will define what can count as acceptable religious beliefs on this view. Although Bishop’s argument is sophisticated, complex and carefully developed, it faces some clear difficulties, especially concerning whether one should commit to a belief without adequate evidence, about relativism, and about whether we should accept the evidential ambiguity of theism in our personal beliefs (as distinct from settling the matter in our own minds, while recognizing that, as on many subjects, others may come to a different conclusion). Despite these misgivings, his attempt to defend a modest, but robust, fideism is one of the most interesting in recent times.


T. J. MAWSON, University of Oxford

This is a very well-written and clear book, one which brings together ‘knowledge arguments’ from the fields of the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion for instructive ‘parallel processing’ and fruitful interplay.

It is divided into four parts. In part one, Nagasawa considers the conceptual background to knowledge arguments: “Knowledge arguments attempt to transform, via alchemical processes, the base metal of epistemological pre-