

Negative Theology as Illuminating and/or Therapeutic Falsehood

1. Introduction

Continental philosophers are much more likely to approve of apophaticism than analytic philosophers. Apophaticism is keenly aware of the limits of reason. Apophaticism often characterizes logic and language as inherently human affairs. These traits fit naturally with a number of continental philosophical trends; trends that question the omnipotence and species-neutrality of logic.¹ This paper, however, seeks to defend Jewish apophaticism to philosophers in the *analytic* tradition. A much harder sell!

Plato and Socrates thought of *ethics* as the most foundational branch of philosophy. Aristotle shifted the foundation of philosophy to *metaphysics* and *ontology*. Descartes tried to place that weight upon *epistemology*. But, according to David Smith (2013), it was Russell, in the founding moments of the analytic tradition, who sought to establish *logic* as the foundational branch of philosophy. Consequently, analytic philosophers tend towards a doctrine of the sovereignty of logic, and become uncomfortable when we start to talk about the limits of reason.² And thus, perhaps, there is an inherent pull within analytic theology away from apophaticism.

The task of analytic metaphysics is, broadly construed, to give a description of the way the world is, or to engage in conceptual analysis of our most fundamental notions. To be told that God isn't the sort of thing that you can describe, nor the sort of concept that allows for analysis, is then, at least at first glance, to be told that analytic philosophical theology is a non-starter. To date, there has been very little Jewish philosophy conducted in the analytical style. But, we can see from the much more established Christian tradition of analytic philosophy that apophaticism is unlikely to fare well. Christian philosophers in the analytic tradition have tended to reject apophaticism vehemently, or to ignore it altogether.³ Of course, there have been Christian analytic philosophers who have taken apophaticism more seriously – one of whom, Jonathan Jacobs, we'll turn to later – but they form a distinct minority.

In his discussion of the problem of evil, Peter van Inwagen (2006, pg. 19), for example, wants to limit our attention to a Deity with 'just those properties ascribed to God in common by Jews, Christians, and Muslims – the properties that adherents of these religions would all agree belong to God.' He has in mind properties like omnipotence, omniscience and omni-benevolence. But, he makes a telling qualification:

[B]y 'Jews, Christians, and Muslims', I mean 'Jews, Christians, and Muslims who lived before the twentieth century'. If you are puzzled by this qualification, I invite you to examine two quotations from the writings of a theologian of considerable reputation...:

To regard God as some kind of describable or knowable object over against us would be at once a degradation of God and a serious category error.

It is a mistake, therefore, to regard qualities attributed to God (e.g., aseity, holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, providence, love, self-revelation) as though they were features of ... a particular being.

The theologian in question happens to be Gordon Kaufman who certainly held many radical views, but, looking at these two quotations, and nothing else, we seem to be presented with nothing more than a run-of-the-mill apophaticism. And yet, van Inwagen says that 'These words mean almost nothing. Insofar as they mean anything, they mean 'There is no God'.' So, apophaticism is just atheism by another name.

Furthermore, van Inwagen heavily implies that apophatic talk didn't exist among Jews, Christians and Muslims before the twentieth century. He subsequently decides to 'push the date back to 1800, just to be on the safe side,' since Richard Swinburne had pointed out to him that there were some pretty crazy theologians in the nineteenth century too! And thus, on van Inwagen's revised view, there was no apophaticism before then. So, Saadya Gaon, Maimonides, Pseudo-Dionysius and Ibn Sina (any of whom could have penned the two quotes in question) simply didn't exist. And thus, van Inwagen ignores a massive slice of theological history.

Instead of ignoring apophaticism, Alvin Plantinga (2000) vehemently bats it away. He dedicates the first two chapters of his *Warranted Christian Belief* to a rebuttal of apophaticism. He voices three main concerns. First: it struggles to be coherent since, as soon as you start talking about a thing that can't be described, you seem to have violated your own constraint and described it as a thing that can't be described. Secondly: if you escape this absurdity and say that some concepts *can* apply to God and that others can't, then you'll most likely end up with an *ad hoc* and unmotivated form of apophaticism (why apply some predicates and not others, and how do we draw the distinction between which *can* apply and which *can't*?). Finally, apophatic theologians, especially contemporary ones like Kauffman, tend reductively to reinterpret all religious language. The central Christian claim that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, for example, may end up meaning something like, *it's generally a good thing to sacrifice for the greater good of society*. Plantinga is unimpressed (pg. 42):

This [revisionism] is not a matter of pouring new wine into old wineskins: what we have here is nothing like the rich, powerful, fragrant wine of the great Christian truths; what we have is something wholly drab, trivial, and insipid. It is not even a matter of throwing out the baby with the bathwater; it is, instead, throwing out the baby and keeping the tepid bathwater, at best a bland, unappetizing potion

that is neither hot nor cold and at worst a nauseating brew, fit for neither man nor beast.

The challenge is to find a variety of apophaticism that is coherent, and then to ensure that it is well-motivated and isn't offensively revisionist. The challenge is to find a formulation of the view that doesn't offend against the scruples of analytic philosophy. If this can't be done, it looks as if analytic *Jewish* philosophy will have to ignore or reject the apophaticism of Saadya Gaon, Maimonides, the Zohar (which is apophatic about the *Ein Sof* – i.e., God in his transcendence) and the Hassidism (who tend to adopt the apophaticism of the Zohar) – just as certain analytic Christian philosophers tend to ignore or to reject the apophaticism of the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and John of Damascus.

2. Saadya Gaon and Maimonides

Saadya Gaon was perhaps the first systematically apophatic theologian in the Jewish tradition. Having established to his satisfaction that God exists and created everything else that exists, he writes:

There does not, therefore, remain a substance or accident or attribute that was not defined or determined or put together by Him or about which it is not certain that this Creator was its maker. Hence it is out of the question and impossible to declare Him to be anything that he has Himself created.⁴

Gabriel Citron (in an unpublished paper) unpacks this argument into the following steps:

- (1) Whatever is to count as the Creator of everything must have created all substances and properties.
- (2) If *a* created *b*, then *b* is ontologically dependent upon *a*.
- (3) By (1) and (2), all substances and all properties are ontologically dependent upon the Creator.
- (4) For something to be a substance, or have a property, is for it to be ontologically dependent upon that substance or that property.
- (5) If $a \neq b$, and *a* is ontologically dependent upon *b*, then *b* cannot be ontologically dependent upon *a*.
- (6) By (3), (4), and (5), whatever is to count as the Creator of everything, cannot be a substance, nor have any properties.

Citron observes a flaw in this argument. Premise (4) seems to suffer from two problems. First, to be a substance isn't to be ontologically dependent upon that substance so much as to be *identical* to that substance. Saadya seems to confuse the issue. Secondly, things are not ontologically dependent upon their accidental properties. Rather, one is only ontologically dependent upon one's *essential* properties.

I would raise a further issue. The argument fudges an important distinction. We have only established that *b* is *historically* dependent upon *a*; not that *b* is *still* dependent upon *a*.⁵ By failing to index the ontological dependences to a time, we smuggle in claim (5), which is only true if the dependence of *a* on *b* is indexed to the same time as the dependence of *b* on *a*. God could have created properties that continue to exist without his intervention. Those properties would be independent of him from that point onwards. God can then come to instantiate them. But, his *essential* properties, he presumably always had. So, once again, the argument would be stronger if we focus on essential properties to the exclusion of accidental ones.

Revising in light of these complaints, the argument becomes:

- (1) Whatever is to count as the Creator of everything must have created all properties.
- (2) If *a* created *b*, then *b* is historically ontologically dependent upon *a*.
- (3) By (1) and (2), all properties are historically ontologically dependent upon the Creator.
- (4) To have a property essentially is to be constantly ontologically dependent upon that property.
- (5) If $a \neq b$, and if *a* is constantly ontologically dependent upon *b* (as God would be upon any property that he held essentially), then *b* cannot be historically ontologically dependent upon *a* (as all properties are upon God (cf. (3))).
- (6) By (3), (4), and (5), whatever is to count as the Creator of everything cannot have any properties essentially.

This seems like a valid argument. Is it sound? Admittedly, the first premise might spoil the party. It's not obvious that properties stand in need of creation. Did God create the number 2, and the colour red, or did he rather create all actual pairs of *objects* and all red *things*? Furthermore, if the property of *being-a-creation* (or the property of *being-a-creative-act*) needs to be created before it can be instantiated, then we seem to be in some logically muddy waters (how could any creation occur before such properties exist?). But, if you *do* accept the first premise, it seems as if you've now got pretty good grounds for denying that God has any essential properties.

Van Inwagen might say that this conclusion amounts to atheism. If existence is a property, then it's something that all objects essentially instantiate. And thus, saying that God has no essential properties seems like a long-winded way of saying that God doesn't exist. You might try to get out of this by saying that existence isn't a property. But, as Citron points out, Saadya explicitly accepts that something with no properties doesn't exist and is 'deprived of all reality' (Rosenblatt 1989, pg. 79). Of course, there are ways out of this mess: (a), as already suggested, we could deny that existence is a property; or (b) deny that lacking essential properties makes for non-existence. So I'm not suggesting we should feel compelled to accept Saadya Gaon's apophatic conclusion. But, at least we have a grasp over the sort of argument that lead him there.

Despite its atheistic appearance, Saadya Gaon only presents this argument once he has convinced himself that God exists and created all that is (Rosenblatt, 1989, pp. 38-86).⁶ And thus we find, in Saadya Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Doctrines*, a strange and self-defeating argumentative structure. First, Saadya argues for the existence of a God who created everything that is. At stage two, he argues that if there were such a God, he could have no essential properties, including existence.

A similar question arises for Maimonides. Maimonides formulates a number of arguments for God's existence (e.g. Pines 1974, *II.1*). As a result, God is posited as the first-cause. But this, apparently, entails that God cannot be composite. If God were composed of parts *a* and *b*, you could reasonably ask what causes *a* and *b* to come together in this way; to search, *per impossible*, for a cause that is *prior* to God (Pines 1974, *II, intro. premise 21*).⁷ And thus, God is said to be simple. To make a predication of God, even if you predicate an essential property, is, apparently, to make a distinction between him and his properties; it is to violate his simplicity (Pines 1974, *I.51*). Furthermore, his being the first-cause implies that he cannot fall under any genus or species. If God fell under a genus, that genus would be conceptually prior to God, which the cosmological argument rules out (Pines 1974, *I.52*). We obviously have a problem. Maimonides' argument for God's existence describes God as falling under the genus, 'cause'. And thus, Maimonides' argument for God's existence violates the linguistic constraints that it's supposed to introduce.⁸

The problematic structure we found in Saadya Gaon's thought is thus echoed in the thought of Maimonides. In the face of such incoherence, the nascent movement of analytic Jewish philosophy looks as if it may be compelled to ignore or reject these key claims made by the founding fathers of the Jewish philosophical tradition.

3. Religious Experience

It's important to note that the problem of this paper isn't merely generated by a desire to be faithful to an intellectual tradition. The problem arises long before you've opened a book of medieval theology. Across different religious traditions, people immersed in a religious way of life often claim to experience God. Furthermore, there are two ways in which God seems to be experienced. There are people who claim to experience God as falling under quite straightforward concepts. For instance: people experience God as a source of love, and people experience God as a source of council or calling. These sorts of experience are said to entail the following sorts of predications, 'God loves me' and 'God has called upon me to do *x*'. We'll call these experiences cataphatic-experiences, and the simple subject-predicate claims that they are said to entail, we'll call cataphatic-claims.⁹ Scripture and tradition also make a great many cataphatic-claims.

But, there are also people who claim to experience God in what seem like paradoxical ways. They claim to experience God as a God who defies description. Sometimes these experiences occur in the midst of mystical rapture, but sometimes they are much less dramatic – somebody claims to experience an ‘indescribable presence’ accompanying them in their everyday lives. These experiences, just like Saadya and Maimonides’ arguments, are said to entail the following, paradoxical, sorts of predications, ‘God defies all description.’ Let us call these sorts of experience, apophatic-experiences, and the claims that they are supposed to entail, apophatic-claims.¹⁰

Our religious traditions contain both cataphatic and apophatic-claims. Moreover, the religious life is punctuated by both cataphatic and apophatic-experiences. Indeed, many people reportedly have both types of experience within a single life; even within a single extended experience! And so we have two problems, before we’ve even turned to the philosophical tradition: (1) apophatic-claims seem to contradict cataphatic-claims and yet people often feel compelled to make both sorts of claim (how can God be beyond description if we claim that he is good and that he is the creator?), and (2) the apophatic-claims seem to be internally incoherent (how can God be beyond description if he satisfies the description, ‘beyond description’?).

The remainder of this paper looks to find ways out of this quagmire, both in order to salvage a major feature of the Jewish intellectual tradition, but, more fundamentally, to make sense of our religious life.

4. Route 1: Apophaticism as True Contradiction

The first route out of the quagmire would claim that we have a real paradox on our hands. That is to say that we have a contradiction (or, more accurately, two contradictions: the contradiction between our cataphatic-claims and our apophatic-claims, as well as the internal contradiction *within* our apophatic-claims)¹¹ and that the contradiction is such that we feel equally compelled to assert both sides of it. This could be because we have equally vivid cataphatic-experiences and apophatic-experiences. Or, it could be because we feel equally committed, say, to Maimonides’ cosmological argument as we do to his argument that apophaticism follows from it. The first route urges us simply to accept apophaticism as a true paradox; a true contradiction.

Most philosophers, especially in the analytic tradition, take for granted the law of non-contradiction. To be a contradiction is to be false, or nonsense. But there are some noteworthy philosophers who dissent, most notably, in the analytic tradition, Graham Priest.

Priest argues that the axioms of naïve set theory provide the best motivated account of what a set is. A set is just a collection of things that share a property: the set of red things, the set of bicycles, the set of sets, etc. Naïve set theory allows us to construct any set we like, and thus it allows us to talk about *the set of all sets that are not members of themselves*. Unfortunately, it

turns out that that set is a member of itself iff it is *not* a member of itself. This paradox, known as Russell's paradox, forced set theorists to develop new conceptions of what it is to be a set. According to non-naïve theories, sets cannot have themselves as members; sets are stratified into a logical hierarchy and can only draw members from logical levels below them. This helps them to escape the paradox.

Priest (2006) argues at length (especially chapter 2), that the alternatives to naïve set theory are often inadequate by their own standards: they often fail to solve the underlying problem, giving rise to new versions of the paradox; they fail to account for all of the mathematical data, 'they produce novel and spurious problems; they bristle with *ad hoc* protuberances; they partake in a degenerating research programme; and so on' (pg 101). By contrast, Russell paradox aside, we have good reason to accept the axioms of naïve set theory. Priest's suggestion is that we drop Aristotle's law of non-contradiction. Given that we have really good reason to accept the axioms of naïve set theory, and given that there are no good alternatives, it looks like we should accept the theory, and therefore accept that this particular contradiction is true. The Russell set is both a member of itself and not a member of itself.

In response, you might argue that it's impossible to believe a contradiction. Priest disagrees (pg. 96):

Many, in fact most, of us believe contradictions. The person who has consistent beliefs is rare.

You might refine your objection. You might suggest that dialetheism, the view that there can be true contradictions, requires us not merely to have inconsistent beliefs but to have *consciously* inconsistent beliefs, and that this is impossible. Priest responds:

Again, this is just plain false. The moment one realises that one's beliefs are inconsistent, one does not *ipso facto* cease to believe the inconsistent things: rather, it becomes a problem, and often a very difficult one, of how to revise one's beliefs to produce consistency. This, of course, takes time.

And thus, you *do* sometimes find yourself consciously believing in a contradiction, albeit, with the hope of finding some way out. The next objection might charge that even if it is possible consciously to believe a contradiction, it can never be rational to do so. In fact, one watermark of rationality might be the disposition never consciously to believe a contradiction, and to seek a repair whenever an inconsistency is found. In a nutshell, Priest rejects this conception of rationality. For a belief to be rational, it is sufficient to have good reasons for holding it. Priest has given us what he takes to be good reasons for adopting the axioms of naïve set theory, and for rejecting its alternatives. This means that he has good reason to believe in the contradiction

that the Russell set is both a member of itself and not a member of itself. Having good reason for this belief is, for Priest, what makes it rational.

If you still need convincing that it can be rational consciously to believe in a contradiction, Priest (pg. 100) invites you to consider the *paradox of the preface*. A conscientious and reputable scholar writes a book that contains a fairly significant number of claims. She believes everything that she's written, with good reason. But, 'she is aware that no factual book [with this number of claims] has ever been written which did not contain some falsehoods. The inductive evidence for this is overwhelming.' So, she is forced into believing the conjunction of all of her theses, as well as the belief that at least one of them is false. Her belief state is inconsistent, and yet she is 'paradigmatically rational'. It might strike you that there is something wrong about Priest's presentation of this example, but it certainly isn't easy to locate the flaw. We'll come back to this example later.

Given a fuller account of what it takes to have good reasons for a belief, Route 1 would argue that the apophatic theist has good reasons to accept her apophatic-claims, and, if she also makes cataphatic claims, that she has good reason to accept them too. And thus, she has good reason to accept the contradiction internal to apophaticism, and, if she also makes cataphatic claims, she has good reason to accept the contradictions that arise between her apophatic and cataphatic-claims. Maimonides and Saadya can claim that they are equally convinced by their arguments for the existence of a God as they are by their arguments for his ineffability; that they have equally good reason to accept both arguments. If the conjunction of these beliefs are contradictory, then so be it. We must have a true contradiction on our hands!

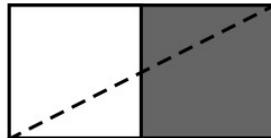
Of course, even if dialethism is true, it won't be the case that all contradictions are true. In fact, we may very rarely have equally good reason to assert both sides of a contradiction. But, if you think that human logic and language is ever predisposed to degenerate into contradictions and paradoxes, then it would be a good bet to wager that it will happen when talking about God.¹² And of course, this form of apophaticism shouldn't really be too much of a threat to analytic theology. We can still *describe* God. Some descriptions will be completely false. He is not evil, for example. And, some descriptions will be true as well as false. For example, he is wise as well as indescribable.¹³

One way of phrasing the central problem of this paper is that apophaticism is host to a *prima facie* absurdity in its claim that we can describe God as indescribable. Route 1 out of the problem would suggest that the *prima facie* appearance of absurdity is illusory, and based upon an ill-motivated allegiance to the law of non-contradiction; a law that sometimes admits of exception. However, and despite Graham Priest's preeminence as an analytic philosopher of logic, his eccentric conclusions have never found favour with more than a handful of his peers. He provides us with some resources, I think, to draw a possible route forward for the analytic Jewish

philosopher who doesn't want to jettison her own apophatic traditions. But, the notion that some propositions can be both true *and* false cuts so deeply against our intuitions that almost any other route would, I believe, be preferable to what I have called Route 1.¹⁴

5. Route 2: Apophaticism as a Truth about Fundamental Truths

The next route seeks to distinguish between different levels of truth. In one of the few 'analytic' defenses of apophaticism, this route has recently been defended by Jonathan Jacobs (2015). He bases his defense of apophaticism on a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental truths. This distinction, he illustrates using the following diagram:



Here are some true sentences about that rectangle:

1. Half of the rectangle is black, and half is white.
2. The area of the rectangle that is black is equal to the area of the rectangle that is white.

But, we could imagine a different linguistic community, with a different conceptual scheme, who carve reality up in different ways. Instead of thinking of the significant colour division here in terms of two divided halves, top to bottom, 'they conceptualize it as divided color-wise in half by a dotted line from the lower left corner to the upper right corner... They have a concept for the color of the top left triangle, 'whack', and a concept for the color of the lower right triangle, 'blite'" (Ibid., pg. 161). And thus, using their concepts, the following two sentences are true:

3. Half of the rectangle is whack, and half is blite.
4. The area of the rectangle that is whack is equal to the area of the rectangle that is blite.

Even though we can't deny the truth of 3 and 4, the colour concepts they employ seem 'gerrymandered. They don't, as Plato put it, carve nature at the joints' (Ibid., pg. 162). Following Ted Sider (2012) and Kit Fine (2009), Jacobs wants to argue that sentences 1 and 2 express *fundamental truths* (or, at least, relatively fundamental truths) whereas sentences 3 and 4 express *non-fundamental truths*. This isn't to belittle sentences 3 and 4. By saying that a sentence/proposition is non-fundamental:

You are not saying that it is unimportant. You are not saying that it is mind-dependent. You are not saying that it is metaphorical. It might be literally, objectively, mind-independently, importantly true. You are, however, saying that

it does not carve nature perfectly at its joints, that it is in some way gerrymandered, ontologically imperspicuous (Jacobs 2015, pg. 170).

Jacobs is committed to the following three assertions:

1. Apophaticism makes no claim concerning truths about God's relationship to the world.
2. Apophaticism only makes a claim concerning propositions about God's intrinsic properties.
3. For any proposition, *P*, about God's intrinsic properties, apophaticism will claim that *P* is not fundamentally true, and that *P* is not fundamentally false.

That God is wise, for example, is neither a fundamental truth, nor a fundamental falsehood. But, it can still be (literally, objectively, mind-independently, and importantly) *true*; as a non-fundamental truth. Unlike route 1, route 2 doesn't give up the claim of classical logic that every proposition is either true or false (and never both). The proposition that God is wise, for example, must either be true or false (and not both), even if it is neither *fundamentally* true nor *fundamentally* false. What the apophatic tradition tells us, apparently, is that, while the claims of Judaism (or, in Jacobs' case, Christianity) may be true, those which concern God's intrinsic properties cannot be *fundamentally* true, because there are no fundamental truths about how God is intrinsically.

Jacobs wants to escape the *prima facie* absurdity of apophaticism by claiming that our intuitions against ineffability are only true at the level of non-fundamental truths. At first glance, this doesn't seem to go far enough. On Jacob's account, we still end up claiming that God is fundamentally ineffable, which is, in turn, to say something about what he fundamentally is, which is to contradict oneself. As I understand him, he tries to escape this problem by saying that it isn't *fundamentally* true that he is fundamentally ineffable. It is only non-fundamentally true that he is fundamentally ineffable. This move successfully saves Jacob's view from absurdity.¹⁵

Looking to Saadya and Maimonides, route 2 says the following: the arguments for God's existence (as creator of everything, or as first-cause) are true, but not fundamentally. Furthermore, those non-fundamental truths reveal a further non-fundamental truth about what God is fundamentally: that 'For any proposition, *P*, about God's intrinsic properties, *P* is not fundamentally true, and *P* is not fundamentally false.' The non-fundamental truth of God's being non-fundamentally the first-cause, for example, entails that it isn't fundamentally true that God is fundamentally the first-cause and that it isn't fundamentally true that he *isn't* fundamentally the first cause. There is no internal contradiction within apophaticism. Apophaticism is not the claim that God is indescribable, for that would be self-defeating. The claim of apophaticism actually contains a tacit switch between levels of truth. As Jacobs puts it, 'God is non-

fundamentally effable [hence our cataphatic-claims], and fundamentally ineffable [hence our apophatic-claims]' (Ibid., pg. 166).

Jacobs' defense of apophaticism is elegant and coherent, but still leaves some grounds for concern. We want to say that our non-fundamental truths are grounded in fundamental ones. For example, if sentences 3 and 4, about the rectangle, are true, they will only be true because of some *fundamental* facts about the rectangle. It is the fundamental reality of the white-black colour-distribution that makes those *non-fundamental* claims true. But, if there are no fundamental truths about God, what is it about the world, as it fundamentally is, that makes our cataphatic-claims non-fundamentally true?

Jacobs is aware of this question. His preferred response seems to be this: a non-fundamental truth doesn't have to be grounded in a fundamental-truth, but merely in an *object*. God, rather than fundamental truths *about* God, but *God Himself*, is what grounds the non-fundamental truths of our cataphatic-claims. And thus Jacobs concludes that it is 'perfectly consistent' with his formulation of apophaticism 'to claim that the orthodox Christian doctrines are grounded in *God*' (Ibid., pg. 174). But, even if I accept that an object, rather than a proposition or a fact, might be the grounds for something's non-fundamental truth, it is far from clear that, according to Jacobs, *God* can be the fundamental grounding for any truth. Why? Because, according to Jacobs, the claim that God exists is not fundamentally true. Admittedly, for Jacobs, the claim that God exists is not fundamentally false either (pg. 169). But, it's remarkably hard to see how an object whose existence is not a fundamental matter can be the fundamental grounds to non-fundamental truths about that object!

To put my concern another way: there is something odd about grounding a large number of non-fundamental truths upon a very thin fundamental basis. If nothing can be said about God, fundamentally, then how does that God ground the (non-fundamental) truth of the claims of Orthodox Christianity rather than the claims of Orthodox Islam? I think the only option open to Jacobs is to accept that cataphatic-claims about God, if ever true, are *mysterious*. They are true but they have no grounding. Of course, the difficulty now becomes, why should we believe them? How can we verify them? What privileges the cataphatic-claims of one religion over the cataphatic-claims of another religion? I don't see how any of these questions can be straightforwardly answered if we think cataphatic-truths to be basically groundless. Of course, many in the apophatic tradition seem happy to accept that some things are mysterious. That may even be an essential feature of apophaticism. But, making all cataphatic-truths about God's intrinsic properties groundless might be going too far.

6. Route 3: Apophaticism as Illuminating or Therapeutic Falsehood

The third route takes its lead from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. At a first glance, the *Tractatus* seems to be after an account of what the world must be like, and what

language must *do*, in order for language to be able to represent the world. But, Wittgenstein's arguments lead him to conclude that language must be incapable of representing how it relates to the world. Unfortunately, this conclusion uproots the entirety of the foregoing book! The *Tractatus*, up until its conclusion, is all about the relationship between language and the world, which the conclusion tells us cannot be spoken about. Once again, we have a conclusion that uproots its premises, just as we had with Saadya and Maimonides.

Wittgenstein tries to remove the sting with the following words:

6.54: My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.

The *Tractatus* is generally read in one of two ways. The most fashionable reading calls itself the 'therapeutic' or 'resolute' reading. Crudely put, the therapeutic reading understands the *Tractatus* as an attempt to cure us of the irrational desire to do metaphysics. Building upon the efforts of Frege and Russell, Wittgenstein had made what he hoped to be the best attempt one could expect to make at describing the fundamentals of reality and its relationship to language. Watching the best possible attempt at such metaphysics descending into nonsense is supposed to teach us that the job simply can't be done. The *Tractatus* is a course of *therapy* to cure us of the desire to do metaphysics.

In contrast to the therapeutic reading, the traditional reading claims that the *Tractatus* really was an attempt to do some serious metaphysics. Wittgenstein hoped that, despite his book's failure to *say* anything about the nature of language and its relationship to the world, it was somehow able to *show* us things – deep metaphysical findings – that simply couldn't be *said*. On the therapeutic reading, the quote that I highlighted above is read as the admission that the whole book was nothing more than the ruse of an anti-metaphysical therapist. The traditional reading reads the same quote as follows: *despite* being nonsensical and failing to say anything about the topics it hoped to cover, the *Tractatus'* nonsense was elucidatory – it was able to *show* us things that couldn't be *said*.

The traditional reading can be divided into two camps. The first camp finds the book slightly ridiculous. To echo Ramsey's famous response, you cannot say what cannot be said, and you can't whistle it either. In his introduction to the *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein 1921), Russell shares his suspicion that some mistake *must* have been made, because, after all, 'Mr. Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said, thus suggesting to the sceptical reader that possibility that there may be some loophole through a hierarchy of languages, or by some other

exit.’ And thus Russell and Ramsey, though appreciative of much of the book, think that there must be some mistake made at some point, since what cannot be said cannot be said, nor shown, and this book is actually a *good* book that manages to say some important things. The second camp, within the traditional reading, thinks that Wittgenstein’s attempt to *show* what cannot be *said* was a commendable philosophical move. The most notable members of this second camp are likewise stalwarts of the analytic tradition: Elizabeth Anscombe (1971) and Peter Geach (1977).

I don’t want to arbitrate between the therapeutic and traditional readings of the *Tractatus*. But I think that each reading can inspire a distinctive form of apophaticism. To start with, I merely seek to ask the following question: if you happen to adopt the traditional reading, why on earth would you side with Anscombe and Geach over Ramsey and Russell? Why not view with suspicion the attempt to *show* the unsayable? Roger White (2010) makes perhaps the best contemporary case for the supportive camp within the traditional reading. In order to explicate the thesis that there are some things can’t be said, but which *can* be shown, White makes the following three claims, which he attributes to Wittgenstein (pp. 24-30)¹⁶:

Preconditions for representation cannot be stated:

One of the main objectives of the *Tractatus* is to sketch what the world must be like in order to make representation possible. Suppose that we conclude our inquiry with the finding that, for representation of a world to be possible, *p*, *q*, and *r* must all be true of that world. As White points out (2010, pg. 24), ‘*Saying* this would lead straight to a contradiction, since we can now form the following description: “a world in which at least one of *p*, *q*, and *r* is false,” which *ex hypothesi* would be a description of an indescribable world.’ The wrong conclusion to draw here, it seems to me (and White, and Wittgenstein), is that there are no preconditions for representation. Indeed, every possible world has a property in common – the property of being representable. It’s just that *Wittgenstein* thinks that we can’t *say* this. Introducing the concept of *being representable* into our vocabulary would be toxic, allowing us, upon its negation, to describe the indescribable. Logical space itself *shows* you what the preconditions to representation are, but they cannot be stated.

Unrestricted generalisations cannot be made:

Language is compositional, built out of elementary building blocks. The possible combinations of those building blocks determine the possible elementary propositions (just like the English dictionary determines the realm of possible English sentences). The limits of what can be said are determined by those propositions and by truth-functions of those propositions. Imagine that *p*, *q* and *r* are the complete set of elementary propositions. What can be said is merely what can be said by them and by their truth-functions. It follows that we can’t make a completely unrestricted generalization. That *p*, *q*, and *r* are *all* of the elementary propositions is, itself, not a truth-function

of p , q , and r , and thus it cannot be said. Rather, if we run out of elementary propositions, we would have been *shown* that, say, p , q , and r , were all of the elementary propositions, but this fact, wouldn't be something that could be said.

The logical type of an *entity* cannot be expressed:

Predicates play a different role, in language, to names. Russell and Frege were led to believe that this deep grammatical distinction was being forced upon them by some deep ontological distinction. On their view, the logical type of the symbol was correlated to the logical type of the entity that that symbol represented. Predicates symbolize one type of thing: say, abstract properties. Names, on the other hand, might represent another type of thing: objects. And thus, we have good motivation to divide our ontology into different types of thing. But, if these different types of entity are distinguished by the different grammatical type of their names, then you can't put the name for one type of entity into the same place as a name for another type of entity. But, if that's the case, then you're not going to be able to draw the distinction to begin with. You won't be able to say something like, '*everything* is either an object or a property.' If you could say such a thing, then the term '*everything*' seems to be functioning as a placeholder, or a name, for both types of thing, but, *ex hypothesi*, no word can name both types of thing, and no space in a sentence can be reserved equally for *both* types of thing. Wittgenstein's solution is to say that *x being an object* is something that is shown to us by the grammar of language, but cannot meaningfully be said. Instead, it can be *shown* to us by the way that its name is forced to behave in the grammar of our language.

On all of these issues, Wittgenstein may be wrong (and probably is). It's not obvious that the property of being representable gets us into the mess that Wittgenstein thought it did. To admit that there is a class of unrepresentable things is not to represent any of the members of that class, at least not *de re*. The class may be empty. Likewise, the notion that unrestricted quantification is impossible is open for debate (cf. eg. Rayo & Uzquiano 2006). I'm not looking to defend Wittgenstein's reasoning here, so much as to defend his distinction between *saying* and *showing*. The reasons I have canvassed above were (among) the reasons that lead Wittgenstein to that distinction. If we assume – just for the sake of argument – that Wittgenstein's arguments were right, we are led to this *distinction*, and then, even once we discharge our assumption, perhaps concluding that Wittgenstein was wrong about the nature of quantification, for example, we'll still have discovered a distinction that may or may not have uses elsewhere.¹⁷

There may be an immediate temptation to compare Wittgenstein's notion of *showing the unsayable* with the mystical tradition in philosophy and theology that claims there to be a realm of deep truths that cannot be put into words. The temptation would be to save Saadya Gaon and Maimonides by taking a *Tractarian* turn. Indeed, Wittgenstein himself seems to have been drawn somewhat to comparing his views with mystical tradition (Wittgenstein 1922, 6.522). But Roger

White (2010, ft. 22), despite his support for Wittgenstein's general project in the *Tractatus*, thinks that Wittgenstein was ill advised to draw any such comparison, and finds the *Tractatus'* remarks about ethics and religion to be 'deeply unsatisfactory'.

White (Ibid., pg. 31) pushes a key difference between the apophatic tradition and the *Tractatus*:

The earlier mystical traditions were typically concerned with a form of esoteric knowledge of that which transcended normal experience and understanding. Wittgenstein, however, when he talks of "what is shown" is talking about something that is shown by our ordinary everyday use of language, and that is therefore at least tacitly known and understood by all of us – by everyone who has mastered their mother tongue. Consequently many of the difficulties surrounding the supposition that mystical theologians were genuinely engaged in an act of communication when they wrote about the ineffable do no beset the project of the *Tractatus*.

White holds that the *Tractatus* can only communicate its insights to those who already have a tacit knowledge of those insights – making explicit what was only ever known implicitly – but I will say exactly the same thing regarding the arguments of Maimonides and Saadya; no more and no less. Maimonides and Saadya are addressing a religious audience. As we've said, in the religious life, cataphatic-experiences and apophatic-experiences are relatively common place, especially apophatic-experiences, which can be very undramatic (an inchoate sense that something somehow indescribable is accompanying you through the journey of your life)¹⁸.

Simply to utter an apophatic-claim, even though it will be internally contradictory, and thus, nonsensical, has the power to communicate to the religious believer something that she might, as of yet, only know tacitly. She has apophatic-experiences of an undramatic variety. Her religious experiences cause her to know something that cannot be said. When someone tries to describe to her a God who cannot be described, and she sees how the attempt collapses into nonsense, some of those unsayable things that she tacitly knows are *shown* to her, and her knowledge is made explicit. This, I call the apophaticism of *showing*. It is analogous to the way in which utterances of 'x is an object' are supposed to collapse in on themselves, and how, in so doing, they are supposed to *show* speakers of English something that they only knew tacitly until then; some ineffable fact that is shown to them by the grammar of language.

Perhaps the apophatic-claims, though literally false, are here functioning as a *metaphor*, in the way that Elizabeth Camp (2006) pictures metaphors sometimes to function, as almost ostending towards properties that have no literal name (yet) in the language. We *point* to ineffable Divine properties using apophatic metaphors. But, perhaps in the case of apophaticism, it is the very way in which the utterance somehow *collapses in on itself* that helps to point to the ineffable

properties it targets. This is apophaticism as an illuminating falsehood. It *shows* you something that can't be *said*.

Interpreting Maimonides in this *Tractarian* light can help him out of a very particular puzzle. Gersonides couldn't understand why, according to Maimonides, it is good to say that God isn't ignorant, but, it is bad to say that God isn't wise. If Maimonides was really serious about his apophaticism, Gersonides contended, he should have accepted that both negative claims were true: God is neither wise nor ignorant.¹⁹ Well, not necessarily. Perhaps both are false, but perhaps only one is illuminating.

To arbitrate that discussion, we'd need a test for a sentence's illuminating powers. If, for example, the goal is to make certain items of knowledge salient, there's good reason to think that only some theological falsehoods are going to be powerful; just as only certain metaphors about a lover have the power to illuminate what it is you want to say – describing her in terms of a snowflake might just strike you as more appropriate than describing her in terms of a bottle of coca-cola. What we really need, but are still sorely lacking, is a theory to explain what makes certain illuminating falsehoods *apt*. That is a task that lies beyond the scope of this paper; but it's not solely a theological problem, and there's reason to think that such a theory would provide Maimonides with an answer to Gersonides.

Just as there are two mainstream readings of the *Tractatus*, perhaps we can fashion two Tractarian varieties of apophaticism. The apophaticism of *showing* corresponds to the traditional reading of *showing* in the *Tractatus*. But, as I canvassed above, there's also a therapeutic reading of the *Tractatus*. According to the therapeutic reading, the *Tractatus* wasn't trying to illuminate some unsayable something; it was trying to cure you of the desire to engage in ultimate metaphysics. Well, perhaps we could develop a *therapeutic* form of apophaticism.

One of the things that Maimonides and Saadya might be trying to convey to their audience is that they shouldn't be overly confident in their systematic theology. To have a systematic theology isn't just to believe, or even to know, certain things about God. Rather, one has to assimilate those things that you believe/know into some sort of *system*. The system will tell you which theological claims are most significant, and how the different claims interact with one another, and with non-theological theories. Accordingly, let's imagine that you make certain cataphatic-claims: God is wise, God is good, God is loving, etc. But, you know, because of your apophatic-experiences, that there *are*, in addition to these facts, facts about God that you can't reasonably *hope* to describe. You may have had some sort of direct epistemic access to some of these facts, in a religious experience, but you certainly know that you can't do them justice in words. This should make the task of systematizing what you know, daunting, to say the least.

If you're reading a novel about a character, you may be led to believe that the character is a wicked individual motivated by evil in all that he does. But, then, in a final twist, perhaps in the very last paragraph of the book, you learn something about that character that changes your interpretation of everything that came before. Upon finding out this final fact about the character, you reappraise everything that you thought you knew about him. And thus, even the beliefs that don't *change* might still receive a new *significance* once you know all that there is to know. Knowing that some or much of God's nature is unknowable to us, should make us very humble. Even the things that we *do* know might be less or more significant than we currently think them to be. And thus, we can already see how apophatic-experience might warrant a course of therapy aimed at encouraging, at least, a certain degree of *humility* in arriving at a systematic theology.

Maimonides and Saadya both lead their readers into a contradiction. They start with certain cataphatic-claims that are supposed to seem really well motivated. They argue, with all of their logical and rhetorical might, for the conclusion that God created all that there is, or that God is the first-cause. They then argue that these conclusions entail, in turn, that you can't say anything at all about God. Of course, they know that there is a contradiction here. Could they have missed that? But what affect should that have? Perhaps they're conducting a certain sort of therapy.

Of course, we could probably find the false premises in the arguments that supposedly give rise to apophaticism, both in the work of Maimonides and Saadya. But, *they* probably thought that their arguments were good. Their hope was that you *wouldn't* be able to find a false premise. I would suggest that the reasonable thing to do, in such a situation, is to continue believing every premise, apart from the ones that are *internally* contradictory (like the explicitly apophatic-claims), but to lower your credence in all of them. One of them must be wrong, but you don't know which! When I say that God cannot be described, I say something that cannot be true, on pain of contradiction. If he cannot be described, then I shouldn't be able to describe him as being indescribable. But, if this falsehood follows from lots of things that I believe, and have equally good reason to believe, then, if I can't isolate the false premise that is guilty for generating my contradictory conclusion, then perhaps it should cause me to lower my credence in each of the things that collectively entails the falsehood. If our best shot at systematic theology gives rise to palpably false conclusions, we should be humble in our theological aspirations.

So, the second type of Tractatus-inspired apophaticism, I call the apophaticism of argumentation. The idea is that once you have seen an argument move from your firmly held cataphatic-beliefs to a nonsensical apophatic-conclusion, you will be shown how little you know of God, and how you should turn down the credence you have in all of your cataphatic-beliefs. This in turn should point you towards your own apophatic-experiences, and to the conclusion that there is much about God that you *cannot* know (at least not propositionally – you might experience some of

these facts, but you can't describe them); and thus you *cannot* know how those unknown or unrepresentable facts would make you reappraise what you currently believe.

Belief isn't a zero-sum game. It comes in degrees (degrees of credence range from 0 to 1. A sufficiently high degree of credence – say 0.51 is necessary (and perhaps sufficient) for belief). In the paradox of the preface, the author believes all of her conclusions to a high enough degree to be characterized as believing in all of them, indeed, to a high enough degree to feel comfortable *publishing* each one. And yet her credence for the *conjunction* of all of the propositions will have to be lower than her credence for any given conjunct. When she finds out that a book of this length almost always contains at least one error, she should probably revise her credences – since she knows (or has good reason to believe) that there's an error somewhere. What should she do?

Since she doesn't know where the error is, but believes that there probably is one, she should lower her credence in each claim of the book, but not necessarily to such a degree that she can't still be said to *believe* in each conjunct. By lowering the degree of credence in each conjunct, she lowers her credence in the whole conjunction even further. Furthermore, she doesn't *know* that her book contains an error. She only believes that it's likely that it does. So she has a certain credence, between 0.5 but below 1, that the book contains an error. Well, if the belief in the very long conjunction of the book's theses, a credence which needn't be *all* that high, added to the belief that there is an error, doesn't exceed 1 – which seems plausible to me – I don't see how there's anything paradoxical going on at all.

By comparison: If you have a long series of propositions about God that you believe, and then you realise that an absurdly apophatic claim follows from them, but you can't figure out which of the propositions is having this toxic effect, I think that this should function to lower your credence in each of the propositions that collectively gave rise to the absurdity, without rescinding your *belief* in any of them. Am I saying that you should engineer a situation in which your belief in the conjunction of the premises that gave rise to the apophaticism should be so low that that when you add it to your near certainty that apophaticism, taken literally, is false, you don't exceed a credence of 1? No. Because here, to believe in the truth of apophaticism in conjunction with your cataphatic beliefs isn't to subscribe to a *logical* contradiction (but to something like a *performative* contradiction - the contradiction between apophaticism and cataphaticism doesn't emerge merely in consideration of logical form, or syntax (see endnote 11, below)). So you're not in exactly the same situation as the paradox of the preface – which is supposed to force a *logical* contradiction upon the author. But I do think, that at the very least, the fact that your theological premises have given rise to an *absurdity* should be a cause of humility. Revise your credences down!

The apophaticism of *showing* recognizes that apophatic claims are false, but thinks of them as *illuminating*. The apophaticism of *argumentation* recognizes that apophatic claims must be false, but sees their emergence from theological arguments as a useful form of *therapy*. Even though the two schools of *Tractatus*-interpretation cannot both be historically accurate, there's no reason to think that the two forms of apophaticism that they inspire cannot rub shoulders more easily. Apophatic claims can be both illuminating *and* therapeutic. I won't make the audacious claim that I have really understood how Maimonides and Saadya justified to themselves the overtly paradoxical argumentative structures of their work. I merely claim that these *Tractatus*-inspired forms of apophaticism give us the resources to salvage something from their work, as the Jewish tradition is dragged into the analytic age.

The problem we hoped to solve was the *prima facie* absurdity of apophatic-claims (as well as their conflict with cataphatic-claims). Route 1 suggests that the appearance of absurdity is illusory – sometimes contradictions can be true. Route 2 also suggests that the appearance of absurdity is illusory because apophaticism is saved from contradiction when we appeal to two distinct levels or types of truth. Route 3, on the other hand, admits that apophatic-claims taken at face value really are absurd. Apophatic-claims are false. They cannot be true. Contradictions can never be true. Nor are they seeking to make a distinction between the fundamental and the non-fundamental. Rather, apophatic claims are falsehoods (or nonsense) with the power (somehow or other) to *show* you things and to cure you of certain intellectual maladies.

Route 3 champions either, or both, of my *Tractatus*-inspired apophaticisms. The apophaticism of *showing* regards apophatic claims as *illuminating* falsehoods, and the apophaticism of *argumentation* regards them as *therapeutic* falsehoods. My argument against Plantinga is that he takes apophatic claims at face-value. I agree with him that there is a *prima facie* absurdity in doing so, but perhaps these claims aren't supposed to be taken at face-value. They are not assertions of fact so much as illuminations of what cannot be discursively described as well as epistemic correctives to arrogant theology.

Apophaticism is part of everyday religious experience. Apophaticism is a large part of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim tradition. Analytic philosophers of religion needn't ignore apophaticism, and we needn't reject it. I have offered three routes towards its adoption. All three routes give rise to coherent theologies, though I would argue that the first is too exotic, and comes at too high a cost, and that the second is home to even more *mystery* than theology generally demands. You can have your apophaticism as a true contradiction, or as a non-fundamental claim about fundamental truths. I, on the other hand, would offer it as an illuminating and/or therapeutic falsehood.²⁰

End Notes

¹ By ‘species-neutrality of logic’, I mean the view that logic isn’t merely a human construct but should rightly regiment all rational thought irrespective of what species we may belong to.

² One can’t really summarise the distinction between continental and analytic philosophy in two paragraphs. I certainly don’t intend to belittle either tradition. I merely intend to illustrate that apophaticism is a more natural fit for continental philosophers than for analytic ones.

³ Michael Scott (2010) documents how recent work in analytic philosophy of religion has adopted the same set of responses to expressivism about religious language, for the same sorts of reasons.

⁴ This translation is Gabriel Citron’s (unpublished), making a small emendation from Rosenblatt’s translation (1989, pg. 111).

⁵ For more on the distinction between historic and continuous ontological dependence, see Amie Thomasson (1999, ch. 2)

⁶ A point that is emphasized by Citron.

⁷ As Mike Rea pointed out to me, it doesn’t follow from the fact that you can reasonably ask a question that the question has to have a good answer. One could say that *nothing* caused God’s parts to come together, they have always been and must necessarily be together in just that way. But, here I’m merely trying to lay out the sorts of considerations that lead *Maimonides* to apophatic conclusions; there may well be faulty premises along the way, indeed, I think that there must be, but that is not my immediate concern here.

⁸ There are more and less radical readings of Maimonidean apophaticism – for a particularly radical account, see Stern 2000

⁹ James 1902 and Alston 1991 provide examples of people claiming to have had cataphatic-experiences and making cataphatic-claims in their wake.

¹⁰ In his unpublished paper, Citron gathers some examples of people claiming to have had apophatic-experiences, and people making apophatic-claims, seemingly on the back of their own religious experiences. For example, Angela of Foligno (1993, pg. 191-2) talks of her personal religious experiences that left her claiming to know ‘with the utmost certainty that the more one feels God, the less is one able to say anything about him’ because of ‘his infinite goodness being so far beyond anything you could possibly say or think.’ Citron also points to the Chassidic master, the *Kedushat Levi* (Levi 1875/6, p. 127), who seems to think that the more you *experience* God, rather than think about him, the more you come to realise that none of your predicates can apply to him, such that you end up calling him, paradoxically, the ‘great nothing’ given that there is *no thing* such that that *thing* can be predicated of God! Clearly, the *Kedushat Levi* is talking about apophatic-experiences.

¹¹ Some of the contradictions won’t be logical contradictions but *performative contradictions*, like the sort that would arise if a person said, ‘I believe that there are no beliefs’. You can assert that ‘God is wise’, call that proposition *p*, and you can assert the proposition that ‘*p* is inexpressible’, call that proposition *q*, and you can assert the conjunction of *p* and *q* without ever falling into a logical contradiction – a contradiction that can be read directly off of the syntax of the claims and allow you to derive both that *p* and that not-*p*. Some of the contradictions here *are* logical (‘God is describable and God is indescribable’) and some of them are *performative*, rather than logical (‘God is wise and one cannot say that God is wise’). Route one should thus be taken to advocate

the claim that some *performative* contradictions are true, as well as the claim that some logical contradictions are true. Thanks to Mike Rea for discussing these issues with me.

¹² For an argument of analytical philosophy that concludes that there may very well be something akin to true contradictions about God, see Lebens (Forthcoming).

¹³ Substantive philosophical theology can still continue, albeit with an unsightly paraconsistent logic.

¹⁴ In his unpublished paper, Gabriel Citron argues for a variation of route 1. He makes his case, mining the works of the later Wittgenstein, instead of the work of Graham Priest.

¹⁵ Mike Rea (in correspondence) has suggested that there may be a contradiction lurking in the background of Jacob's view. Though Jacobs accepts classical logic and therefore the principle of bivalence, it seems that he is committed to the denial of bivalence at the level of fundamental truths. Jacobs thinks that it's not fundamentally true that God is wise, and that it's not fundamentally true that God isn't wise. Fundamental-bivalence would be the view that, for any p , p is fundamentally true or not- p is fundamentally true. Jacob's views about God violate fundamental-bivalence, which may allow us to derive contradictions. In Lebens (2014) I included an attempt to derive such a contradiction, in a footnote, which was, lamentably, based upon a rudimentary error. But I think it fair to fear the denial of fundamental-bivalence for similar reasons (though not identical) to the reasons that might make us fear the denial of bivalence itself.

¹⁶ He actually makes six claims, but I only report three, to illustrate the general thrust of his reading of the *Tractatus*.

¹⁷ For another route to the distinction between saying and showing, see Lebens 2014

¹⁸ Of course, the claim that something is accompanying you through the journey of your life is not apophatic, it's only made apophatic by the qualification that that something is indescribable... of course, it isn't *truly* indescribable: if you can say of it that it is accompanying you then you're describing it, but that's just to point out that apophatic statements are self-defeating.

¹⁹ See Feldman's synopsis in Gersonides 1987, pg. 79, and Gersonides' own argument there on pp. 111-2

²⁰ Thanks to Mike Rea and Dan Howard Snyder, both of whom graciously read an earlier draft of this paper. Their comments were immensely helpful. This paper owes a great deal to conversations with, and the work of, my dear friend, Gabriel Citron. I thank Carl Moser and all my other colleagues at the Centers for Philosophy of Religion at Notre Dame and Rutgers. Thanks also to Michael Fagenblat who helped me to shape this paper into its current form.

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