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GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF EPISTEMIC DEFEATERS

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God and the Problem of Epistemic Defeaters

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Abstract: Any modern, moderately intellectually mature (MMIM) believer in God faces a variety of epistemic defeaters of their belief in God. Epistemic defeaters challenge the rationality of a belief. After explaining the notion of a defeater and discussing various ways and targets of defeat, this Element categorizes the many defeaters of belief in God into four classes: rebutting, undercutting, base defeaters, and competence defeaters. Then, several general defeaters of theistic belief are examined in some detail: the superfluity argument, the problem of unpossessed evidence, various forms of debunking arguments, and a cumulative case competence defeater. The typical MMIM believer, it is argued, has resources to resist these defeaters, although the cumulative case competence defeater has some force. The strength of its force depends on the strength of grounds for theistic belief and of various defeaters and deflectors for the competence defeater. No easy general defeater of theistic belief is found.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/EPOG_Thurow_Abstarct

Keywords: defeaters, rationality, justification, problems for theism, rationality of faith

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Contents

1	What Is the Problem?	1
2	Defeaters	4
3	Map of Defeaters for Belief in God	13
4	Rebutting and Undercutting Defeaters	25
5	Base Defeaters	43
6	Competence Defeaters	51
	References	64