

History of Epistemology

Lecture Outline

- I. What is Epistemology?
 - A. Theory of Knowledge
 - B. Relation to Other Branches of Philosophy
 1. Metaphysics-ontology, theory of being.
 - a. Epistemology presupposes ontology.
 - (i) Objects, subjects, and norms of knowledge are objects of metaphysics.
 - (ii) Knowledge is of the *real* (Parmenides, Plato).
 - b. Ontology presupposes epistemology. You can't know the beings of the world without knowing that knowledge is possible, that our epistemic resources are reliable.
 2. Value theory (ethics, aesthetics, economics, "intellectual virtues")
 - a. Value theory presupposes epistemology. Values must be knowable.
 - b. Epistemology presupposes value theory.
 - i) It deals with what we are permitted or obligated to believe.
 - ii) It demands fulfillment of our "epistemic responsibilities."
 3. So ontology, epistemology, value-theory involve one another. Perspectives.
- II. Introduction to Epistemology
 - A. Definitions
 1. Knowledge (adjectives: cognitive, epistemic, noetic)
 - a. Of persons, things.
 - (i) Knowledge by acquaintance vs. knowledge by description.
 - (ii) Knowing God, in Scripture, is the source of wisdom and knowledge.
 - b. Of skills ("knowing how")
 - c. Of facts, propositions: "justified, true belief"
 2. Belief (the subject): a commitment to the truth of a proposition, leading us to think and act consistently with that proposition. (Belief can also be used of persons: the *pisteuein eis eme* of Scripture.)
 - a. action
 - b. reason, logic
 - c. sense, perception
 - d. experience
 - e. emotions
 - f. imagination
 - g. will

- h. intuition
- 3. Truth (the object)
 - a. Facts
 - (i) not things, but states of affairs.
 - (ii) Expressed by clauses, not (as things) by nouns. Usually a *that* is present or implied, e.g., “the fact *that* the world is round.”
 - (iii) Include things, properties, relations.
 - (1) Things: objects, expressed by nouns, noun-phrases.
 - (2) Properties: qualities, attributes, expressed by adjectives or adjectival phrases.
 - (3) Relations: like “to the right of,” “mother of,” typically expressed by prepositional phrases.
 - (iv) Statements of fact
 - (1) Indicative sentences normally intend to state facts, unlike imperatives, questions, etc.
 - (2) Such sentences express *propositions*, the factual content. “The window is open” and “la fenetre est ouverte” express the same proposition. A proposition is a “meaning complex that makes an assertion.”
 - (v) Necessary truths (what *must* be—in any possible world) vs. contingent truths (what may or may not be, depending on causes).
 - (vi) Analytic and synthetic truths
 - (1) Analytic: the predicate is part of the meaning of the subject, e.g., “A square has four sides.” “True by virtue of the meanings of the terms.”
 - (2) Synthetic: the predicate is not part of the meaning of the subject, e.g., “Bill lives in Orlando.”
 - (vii) A priori and a posteriori truths (see below)
 - b. Laws, regular patterns in the facts.
 - c. Particulars: individual objects of thought (as large as you like).
 - d. Universals: general concepts grouping particulars under various labels. *Concept*: “a meaning complex that refers, but does not assert.”
 - (i) expressed by adjectives (e.g. blue, good, great)
 - (ii) or nouns (man, goodness, treehood)
 - e. Interpretations, formulations.
 - f. perspectival relationships
 - (i) To state a fact or law is to interpret experience.
 - (ii) True interpretations are statements of laws and facts.
 - (iii) Laws are facts, and laws describe the working of facts.
 - (iv) If you know all true facts, you will know all laws, all true interpretations; similarly with the others.
 - (v) Universals and particulars interdependent.

- (A) No universals without particular exemplifications.
- (B) No particulars without universals to identify them.
- g. Theories of truth, tests of truth.
 - (i) Correspondence: the idea represents the reality.
 - (ii) Coherence: the idea fits the whole system of truth.
 - (iii) Pragmatic: the idea works in human life.
 - (iv) Theistic: the idea is a proper analogy to God's thought. (embraces the others).
 - (v) Antitheistic
 - (A) Autonomy: I am the final authority as to what is true or false.
 - (B) Neutrality: no initial presupposition in favor of any authority outside myself.
- 4. Justification (the norm)
 - a. knowledge vs. opinion
 - b. theories of justification for believing p
 - (i) Internalism (subjective justification): justification by other beliefs or mental contents. I can justify my own believing by reference to these.
 - (A) Foundationalism: p is derivable from a "properly basic" belief.
 - (1) The foundation
 - (a) self-evident, e.g. $2+2=4$.
 - (b) evident to the senses
 - (c) incorrigible
 - (d) others? God (Plantinga)?
 - (2) The derivation
 - (a) Deduction
 - (i) follows necessarily from premises
 - (ii) warrants certainty if premises true
 - (b) Induction
 - (i) follows with probability from premises
 - (ii) warrants degrees of probability
 - (c) Abduction, retrodution: best explanation of data
 - (B) Coherentism: p fits well the whole system of my beliefs.
 - (C) Pragmatism: believing p enables me to accomplish valid purposes.
 - (D) Direct Realism (Pollock): I believe p because my mental processes lead me to believe it. "Nondoxastic"
 - (E) A belief can be justified without being true.
 - (ii) Externalism (objective justification): the connection with reality that actually makes my beliefs true.
 - (A) Reliabilism: my epistemic equipment is working well.
 - (B) Plantinga: my epistemic equipment is properly functioning, in a proper environment. God determines

what is proper. (For other conditions, see Wood, 172-73).

c. Means of justification

(i) Reason

(A) The human faculty for forming judgments and inferences (sometimes used normatively to cover only *correct* judgments and inferences).

(B) Rationalism: two meanings.

(1) Trust in the human mind as the ultimate judge of truth. In this sense, all non-Christian thought is rationalistic. "Broad sense."

(2) Trust in reason (as opposed to sense experience) as the ultimate test of truth (one non-Christian philosophical movement among others). "Narrow sense."

(C) Irrationalism: belief that human reason is unreliable and that therefore knowledge is not available to human beings. Van Til: in various ways, all non-Christian thought is both rationalist and irrationalist at the same time.

(ii) Logic

(A) Relations of consistency and inference among propositions.

(B) Science of these relationships.

(C) God's and man's.

(iii) a priori knowledge

(A) What is known independently of experience.

(B) Often used to interpret experience (which is considered a posteriori).

(C) Includes logic, but also other truths, in some views.

(iv) intuition

(A) When we know, but can't say how.

(B) Often appealed to for foundational knowledge (Aristotle's *nous*).

(v) sense experience: the information available through our sense-organs. Empiricism: a philosophical movement holding that sense experience is the ultimate test of truth.

(vi) feeling, emotion ("subjectivism"). Irrationalist views tend to be subjectivist, if they allow for any positive account of the epistemic process.

(vii) divine revelation

(viii) testimony

(ix) human authority

(x) interdependence of reason, sense, feeling under God.

B. Problems of Epistemology

1. Nature of God's knowledge.
 - a. Self-referential?
 - b. Exhaustive of all events, past, present, future?
2. Relation of human knowledge to divine.
3. Role of divine revelation in knowledge.
4. Possibility of autonomy, neutrality.
5. Is any knowledge innate? A priori?
6. Relations among different human faculties in knowledge. Reason, the senses. Is there any role for the will? For intuition? For emotions?
7. The nature of truth. (definition, tests)
8. Relations of universals to particulars: "the one and the many." If each is vacuous without the other, how can we even distinguish the two? Assuming we can, how are they related?
9. Relation of fact to interpretation, observation to theory.
10. Nature and means of epistemic justification.
11. Is certainty possible? If so, how, and how may we obtain it? What of skepticism?
12. Paradox of analysis: the only perfect analysis of A is A itself; but that is uninformative.
13. Paradox of ignorance: to learn anything, you must already know it.
 - a. Otherwise, you cannot recognize it as an answer to your query.
 - b. Without such recognition, you remain totally ignorant.
 - c. So we are either omniscient or totally ignorant. (Rationalism, irrationalism)

III. Scripture on Knowledge (DKG)

A. Genesis

1. God creates the world; so everything in it reveals his thought, his planning and wisdom (cf. Psm. 19:1, 104 (esp. verse 24)).
 - a. Corollary: God is omniscient (cf. Psm. 139, Heb. 4:13).
 - b. God knows the future, because everything is the result of his plan (Eph. 1:11, Rom. 11:36).
2. God creates man in his image (1:26-27), so man's mind is significantly analogous to God's.
 - a. Continuity: Man is able to think and act rightly, so as to have dominion over all other creatures (28-30).
 - b. Discontinuity: Only God's thought infinite, eternal, ultimately normative.
 - (i) God's is original, man's derivative.
 - (ii) God's is exhaustive, man's limited.
3. So man may not question God's authority. God's Word is the final standard of truth (2:16-17).
4. Man thinks God's thoughts after him (compare 1:24-25, 2:19-24).

5. Satan questions, then contradicts, God's revelation, setting himself up as a rival authority (3:1-5). He charges God with lying to protect his own interests.
6. Eve's choice is simply a choice over who to believe, a choice between rival authorities.
7. Her acceptance of Satan's authority presupposed an epistemological stance.
 - a. Before accepting Satan's proposal, she conceded his right to argue with God on an equal basis.
 - b. Therefore, neither God nor Satan had the final word. Each had to argue his case. There was, therefore, in her view, no ultimate truth, only various opinions (irrationalism).
 - c. But in another sense, Eve assumed that there was one supreme determiner of truth: Eve herself. So she was both an irrationalist and a rationalist at the same time. This is the key to understanding the history of epistemology. Van Til: "Nobody knows; but you are wrong, and I am right."
 - (i) Intellectual autonomy: important to non-Christian epistemology.
 - (ii) Neutrality: no initial prejudice in favor of any authority outside oneself.

B. Biblical Epistemology

1. God's Lordship (DKG, 12-18, DG, Chaps. 2-7)
 - a. Control
 - b. Authority
 - c. Covenant Presence
2. Knowing God as a Covenant Relationship (DKG, 40-49)
 - a. Knowing About God as Lord
 - b. Knowing Subject to God as Lord
 - (i) He takes the initiative (revelation).
 - (ii) Obedience leads to knowledge.
 - (iii) Obedience is knowledge, and knowledge is obedience.
 - (iv) Obedience is the criterion of knowledge.
 - (v) Knowledge must be sought in an obedient manner.
 - c. Knowing Exposed to God's Presence
 - (i) Factual and personal knowledge.
 - (ii) Knowing God is a personal relationship, as friend or enemy.
 - (iii) Wisdom: both mature knowledge and skill of using it.
 - (iv) Truth
 - (A) Metaphysical
 - (B) Epistemological-propositional
 - (C) Ethical
3. The Effects of the Fall ("noetic effects of sin") (DKG, 49-61)

- a. In the above sense, the unbeliever does not know God (1 Cor. 2:8, 12-14). He is ignorant (Acts 3:17, 17:23, 30, Rom. 10:3, Eph. 4:18, 1 Pet. 1:4, 3:5). His knowledge, in some sense, does not really deserve to be called knowledge (1 Tim. 6:20).
- (i) His thoughts are foolish (Matt. 7:26-27), vain (Rom. 1:21), sinful (Eph. 2:3), futile (1 Cor. 3:20). He is blind (2 Cor. 4:4, cf. Matt. 15:14, 23:16-26, John 9:40-41, 12:40, Rom. 11:7, 25, 2 Cor. 3:14, Eph. 4:18, 1 John 2:11).
 - (ii) Since he has no fear of God (Rom. 3:18), he has no wisdom or knowledge (Psm. 111:10, Prov. 1:7, 1 Cor. 3:18-20).
 - (iii) Since he is of the world, he speaks of the world, not of God (1 John 4:4-5).
 - (iv) Rationalism and irrationalism (compare discussion of Gen. 3)
 - (A) Rationalism because claim to autonomy: Man is the final judge of truth and falsity, so in principle omniscient.
 - (B) Irrationalism: insofar as I *cannot* know the truth, there is no truth to be known. ("What my net can't catch ain't fish.") But what *can* be known with certainty, without divine help? So there is no knowledge.
 - (C) Vacillation between the two.
 - (1) When rationalism fails, one jumps over to irrationalism.
 - (2) The irrationalist asserts his position dogmatically, i.e. rationalistically. Knowing that knowledge is impossible.
 - (3) Rationalism seeks ultimate causes; but one can always ask "why," so the rationalist never reaches the ultimate explanation. So the conclusion must be that there is no explanation (irrationalism).
 - (4) Rationalism seeks to reduce the many to the one, to get a complete explanation; but then the unity is a unity only of itself, not of particulars.
 - (a) Paradox of analysis: If, as a rationalist, you demand perfect equivalence between the analysandum (A) and the analysis, the only solution is $A=A$. But that is entirely uninformative (irrationalism).
 - (b) The rationalist may simply deny the existence of anything that eludes his rational system, relegating it to "illusion." But then the system becomes only a knowledge of itself, $A=A$. E.g.: Ptolemaic astronomy is true, because all counter-examples are illusory.

- (c) The claim to autonomous, absolute truth, typically degenerates into a claim to know only the bare *idea* of truth. (Only at that level can skepticism be decisively refuted.) But that claim leads to no specific conclusions. Knowledge of truth-in-general, with no specific content, no applications, is no different from ignorance.
- (5) Reason is often forced to confront its limits:
 - (a) Heisenberg: the more precisely you try to measure subatomic particles, the more difficult it is to get any measurement at all. Reason meets its limits.
 - (b) Gödel
 - (i) In an axiomatic system there is always at least one proposition that is true, but not provable, in the system.
 - (ii) The consistency of a system adequate for number theory cannot be proved in the system.
- (6) Philosophical examples (see below).
- (v) He cannot receive the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17), so he cannot discern spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). He cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).
- (vi) There is an antithesis between unbelieving and believing thought (Acts 26:18, 1 Cor. 1-2, esp. 2:14, 3:18-23, 2 Cor. 5:7, 6:14-15, Eph. 5:6-11, Col. 2:8), as between the old and new life (Eph. 2:1-10, Col. 3:1-17).
- (vii) So God's grace in Christ is necessary to renew us *unto* knowledge (John 3:3-8, Rom. 12:2, 1 Cor. 2:12, Eph. 4:20-24, Col. 3:10).
- b. Nevertheless, the unbeliever does have a knowledge of God (Rom. 1:21).
 - (i) As with the believer's knowledge,
 - (A) It is based on a revelation of God's Lordship, clearly seen (Rom. 1:20).
 - (B) It is a personal relationship (not *merely* noetic), but in enmity (Phil. 1:21).
 - (C) It is a knowledge about God's Lordship.
 - (D) It is sometimes conscious enough to affect his thoughts, words, and behavior (Matt. 23:3-4, Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34, 8:28, John 3:2, Acts 16:17, James 2:19). The Pharisees and devils are largely orthodox.
 - (ii) Unlike the believer's knowledge,
 - (A) It is a knowledge in enmity rather than friendship.
 - (B) It is repressed (Rom. 1:18, 23-25).

- (C) Their response to God's revelation is therefore fundamentally stupid, irrational. Even when the unbeliever utters truth, he utters it in the service of a lie.
 - (D) So the fundamental direction of his life is to *oppose* the truth.
 - (E) Inevitably, this project will fail. So it is self-frustrating (Psm. 5:10, Prov. 18:7, etc.)
4. Knowing God's World (DKG, 62-75)
- a. Our knowledge of God is central to our knowledge of everything else. For in knowing other things, our concern is first of all to be good covenant servants.
 - b. Objects of Knowledge
 - (i) God's revelation (law, norm)
 - (A) Everything is normative in one way or another.
 - (1) God is the ultimate norm.
 - (2) The world, including ourselves (Gen. 1:26-27), is his general revelation.
 - (3) His written Word, of course, plays a special role among the other forms of revelation (Ex. 24:12, Deut. 6:4-9, Josh. 1:8, Psm. 19, 119, Matt. 5:17-20, 7:24-25, John 6:68, 14:15, 21, 23, 8:31-32, 1 Cor. 14:37-8, Gal. 1:1-10, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:19-21.)
 - (a) It is the Lord's covenant document, the ultimate test of covenant faithfulness.
 - (b) Therefore it is infallible and inerrant.
 - (B) So God's revelation is not something in the world distinct from all other things, but a certain aspect of everything.
 - (ii) The world, our situation
 - (A) Similarly, the situation, broadly speaking, includes everything. (Using "world" more broadly than "creation," our world includes God.)
 - (B) So "situation," like "revelation," is not something in the world distinct from other things; it is the whole of reality, viewed from one perspective.
 - (iii) Ourselves
 - (A) The self is not everything, but all our knowledge comes through the self (through the mind and all its faculties). So all our knowledge is knowledge of self. (Cf. Calvin's *Institutes*, 1.1.)
 - (B) So knowledge of self is a perspective on everything.
 - c. Relationships Among Objects of Knowledge
 - (i) The law and the world
 - (A) The law necessary to understand the world.
 - (B) The world necessary to understand the law.
 - (C) The non-Christian loses both law and world.
 - (1) By removing both from God

- (2) By trying to understand each apart from the other
- (ii) Similarly with law and self, self and world.
- d. Perspectives
 - (i) To think about reality in its normative aspect is to think from the *normative perspective*.
 - (A) This is thought most directly on the contents of revelation.
 - (B) In the normative perspective, we ask, "What does God's Word say about the question we ask?"
 - (C) But to answer this question, we must consult the situation and the self.
 - (1) As we have seen, these *are* revelation.
 - (2) And, as we have seen, revelation is not adequately understood until it is applied to the world and the self.
 - (ii) To think about reality as our situation (facts) is to think from the *situational perspective* (same qualifications)
 - (iii) To think about reality as an aspect of my own experience is to think from the *existential perspective* (same qualifications).
- 5. Epistemic Justification (DKG, 101-164)
 - a. Normative: justifying my belief by its agreement with God's revelation. (Note parallel between ethics and knowledge.)
 - (i) God has the right to tell us what to believe, as he has the right to tell us what to do.
 - (ii) His revelation (particularly his *written* Word, which stands at the top of the hierarchy of norms) is the ultimate criterion of truth; so we should *presuppose* it in all our thinking.
 - (iii) How then shall we justify Scripture itself? By Scripture itself, with a certain kind of circularity.
 - (A) Justification must end somewhere. In this sense, Scripture is "foundational."
 - (B) But we come to understand Scripture through general revelation, and we understand it as it applies to general revelation. So in one sense justification is coherentist.
 - (C) Circularity is justified (and unavoidable) when one argues for an ultimate criterion of truth.
 - (iv) Our level of certainty depends on the extent to which God's Spirit makes us sure of what Scripture teaches.
 - (A) We know that God has given us sufficient resources, in Scripture, in the Spirit, in our Spirit-led minds, to gain certainty (Matt. 14:31, 21:21, Luke 1:1-4, John 20:31, Acts 1:3, 10:20, 1 John 5:13).
 - (B) We sometimes lack certainty, because of
 - (1) Sin
 - (2) Ignorance

- (3) The very mysteriousness of God's revelation.
 - b. Situational: justifying my belief by its correspondence with the facts of experience.
 - (i) Evidence as justification for faith (DKG, 142-144)
 - (ii) But always presupposing the Word.
 - (A) God's Word accompanies his works.
 - (B) God's works occur in a biblically defined context.
 - (C) God's works display the meaning of the Word.
 - (D) God's works prove the truth of the Word.
 - c. Existential: justifying my belief by a godly sense of satisfaction (DKG, 149-164, 335-340).
 - (i) Knowledge is a subjective event; it happens within a subject.
 - (ii) When I say "I know," it reflects an inner state, a "cognitive rest."
 - (iii) Biblically, knowledge is a function of regeneration and sanctification, the inward change wrought by the Spirit.
 - (iv) So believers see the world differently from unbelievers.
- C. Tentative Christian Answers to the "Problems of Epistemology"
1. Nature of God's knowledge.
 - a. Self-referential, and
 - b. Exhaustive of all events, past, present, future.
 2. Relation of human knowledge to divine.
 - a. created to uncreated.
 - b. finite to infinite.
 - c. subordinate to ultimate criterion.
 - d. similar powers on the finite level.
 3. Role of divine revelation in knowledge.
 - a. one perspective on all experience knowledge.
 - b. Scripture as infallible truth and ultimate presupposition.
 - c. Scripture, therefore, as the ultimate *criterion* of truth.
 - d. Scripture interpreted and applied by other forms of revelation as well as itself.
 4. Possibility of autonomy, neutrality. *None*.
 5. Is any knowledge innate? A priori?
 - a. Scripture doesn't tell us if there is innate knowledge.
 - b. Our knowledge of Scripture is a priori in the sense that it serves as a criterion for all other knowledge. However, we come to know Scripture through general revelation as well as through itself. Our ability to use Scripture as a criterion grows as we gain a better knowledge of it through this "spiral" process.
 6. Relations among different human faculties in knowledge. Is there any role for the will? For emotions?
 - a. Man knows as a whole person, the image of God.
 - b. Since God gives all faculties (reason, sense, etc.) they will not contradict one another.

- c. Each faculty depends on the others, so they should be regarded perspectivally, including emotions (DKG, 319-346).
 - d. The will functions both in the suppression of the truth (Rom. 1:18) and in the embracing of it (John 7:17). Although we are not always conscious of willing to believe something, in the long run we believe what we want to believe.
 - e. Cognitive rest is a kind of emotion. It is not wrong to say "I feel that p is true," interchangeably with "I know that p."
7. The nature of truth. (definition, tests)
 - a. Truth is agreement of our ideas with God's.
 - b. Correspondence of our ideas to God's revelation.
 - c. Coherence of our ideas within a biblical system.
 - d. Pragmatic value of our ideas for achieving God's glory.
 - e. These don't conflict in a biblical-theistic approach.
 8. Relations of universals to particulars: "the one and the many." If each is vacuous without the other, how can we even distinguish the two? Assuming we can, how are they related?
 - a. The world is one-and-many because God himself is, in his Trinitarian nature.
 - b. There is no pure oneness or pure manyness.
 - c. Trying to find pure oneness or manyness is trying to find an epistemological starting-point other than in God's revelation.
 - d. Like the Trinity, the relation of oneness to manyness is mysterious. But these are at least perspectival.
 9. Relation of fact to interpretation, observation to theory.
 - a. All facts are pre-interpreted by God. There are no "brute facts."
 - b. We cannot know anything apart from our own interpretative faculties. So all facts we know bear both God's and our own interpretations.
 - c. Seeking brute facts is an attempt to find an epistemological starting-point other than God's revelation.
 - d. So all observations are interpreted, some at the level of sophistication we call "theory."
 10. Nature and means of epistemic justification.
 - a. Internal (my reasons for believing p): p is consistent with God's revelation, applied to my situation and myself.
 - b. External (the actual connection between my mind and the world): belief in p results from God's intention to illumine me, to connect my mind to the world in a way that results in a true belief.
 11. Is certainty possible? If so, how, and how may we obtain it? What of skepticism?
 - a. Certainty is possible, because
 - (i) God says it is.
 - (ii) He has made the world.
 - (iii) He determines the norms of knowledge.

- (iv) He has made our minds to cohere with the world.
 - (v) His redemption frees us from self-deception.
 - b. So we must trust the means he has given us: his Word and Spirit.
 - c. Skeptical arguments reject God's promise.
12. Paradox of analysis
- a. Assumes that genuine human knowledge requires exhaustive analysis.
 - b. God alone understands exhaustively. We seek informative, yet partial, knowledge.
 - c. Our knowledge is partial, but not on that account defective. God assures us of genuine progress when we seek knowledge according to his norms.
13. Paradox of ignorance
- a. Purports to show that human knowledge must either be exhaustive (rationalism) or totally lacking (irrationalism).
 - b. We can recognize truth, not because we are omniscient at some level, but because God's revelation and Spirit illumine the mind. But the knowledge we obtain is not exhaustive, but partial.

IV. Greek Philosophy (attempting to find a rational substitute for the popular religions (Dooyeweerd, *Twilight of Western Thought*)

A. The Milesians (6th century B.C.)

- 1. Figures
 - a. Thales: "All is water"
 - b. Anaximander: "All is indefinite (*apeiron*)"
 - c. Anaximenes: "All is air"
- 2. Significance
 - a. Rationalism
 - (1) Mind is competent, apart from revelation, to determine the most basic principle in the universe, the ultimate explanation.
 - (2) "All is..." - The creator/creature distinction is erased. All of reality is composed of the same stuff. Man is divine--as divine as anything else.
 - b. Irrationalism
 - (1) Looked at from the opposite angle: not only is man divinized, but God is humanized. God is reduced to water, or air, or the indefinite. The most basic principle is mindless, purposeless.
 - (2) Human thought also, then, is reduced to chance developments of an impersonal cosmic process. Van Til: "The man made out of water trying to climb out of the water on a ladder of water."

B. The Eleatics (6th and 5th centuries B.C.)

1. Figures
 - a. Xenophanes: religious teacher advocating changeless pantheistic deity over against the anthropomorphism of popular religions.
 - b. Parmenides: main developer of the Eleatic system.
 - c. Zeno: Argued for Parmenides' position with paradoxes designed to show the absurdity of its opposite.
 - d. Melissus: Attempted positive, direct proofs of Parmenides' doctrine.
2. Parmenides' teaching: the goddess reveals that "being is."
 - a. Anything which can be spoken of or thought of must be. It is impossible to speak or think of anything which is not. Every thought is a thought of something.
 - b. Negation is a meaningless concept.
 - c. There is no change--for every change is a change from what is to what is not. (e.g. a change in color--from green to non-green).
 - d. Being is therefore ungenerated, indestructible, changeless, homogeneous, indivisible, continuous (no parts), perfect, motionless, limited--like Xenophanes' divinity.
 - e. Whence the illusion of change? Parmenides' "second philosophy."
3. Analysis
 - a. Arguments a and c overlook the ambiguities in the concept of "being" and in the concept "think of".
 - (1) Sometimes being includes non-being; sometimes it doesn't. The fact that there are no unicorns is a fact that is the case--part of reality, part of being. To think of a unicorn is in one sense to think of something that is not, but in another sense it is to consider a fact that is the case.
 - (2) There are many kinds of "being"--real, present existence, existence in fiction, existence in the mind, existence in the past, existence in the future, possible existence, necessary existence, contingent existence. Change is, in one sense, change from what is to what is not; but it is also change from one sort of being to another (possible to actual, future to present, etc.)
 - (3) The idea that every meaningful thought must refer to some object is greatly to over-simplify the functions of thought. Thought does many

- things other than referring, and thus bears many different relations to "being."
- b. Note religious coloring: revelation from a goddess, divinization of the world.
 - c. Parmenides system attempts to be as consistently rationalistic as possible.
 - (1) "What can be and what can be thought are one." (Every thought is a thought of something, and what cannot be thought cannot be said to exist. So thought and being are coterminous. Historically typical of rationalism. Cf. Spinoza, "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" and Hegel, "The real is the rational and the rational is the real.")
 - (2) Like Parmenides, rationalists historically have had difficulty with the notions of change, motion, nonbeing, plurality, though not all have accepted Parmenides' arguments.
 - (a) A rational concept ("green," e.g.) denotes a quality common to many individual things. It is difficult through rational concepts to describe what is not common--i.e., what is unique, what distinguishes one thing from everything else. One can attempt this by multiplying concepts ("Only this chair is red and green and purple"), but one never succeeds in describing exhaustively the uniqueness of something. Hence the tendency in rationalism to reduce all things to one, to eliminate uniqueness, plurality.
 - (b) It is similarly difficult for rational concepts to describe what uniquely pertains to one period of time; hence change and motion become suspect.
 - (c) "Non-being" seems to be the very negation of rational being--that to which no rational concept applies; yet "non-being" itself seems to be a rational concept of some sort. The paradox is too great for a rationalist to swallow.
 - (d) Having no infallible assurance about the pluralities and changes in the world of experience, the rationalist claims some

foothold of absolute knowledge in the bare idea of truth (being) itself. If nothing else is certain at least what's true is true! Thus all differentiation is rejected in the interest of an abstract blank.

(e) Christian alternative: God knows, because he has created, the uniqueness of each thing as well as its commonness with other things. He is himself both one and many and therefore finds no conflict between knowledge of unity and knowledge of diversity.

(3) Parmenides' doctrine of "illusion" illustrates the bankruptcy of rationalism. Even Parmenides, the most consistent of rationalists, must appeal to irrationalism at some point. Since his rationalism does not allow for the appearance of change, Parmenides must take refuge in myth.

C. Three Early Alternatives to Parmenides

1. Heraclitus (535-475 B.C.)

a. The primacy of change: *panta rei*, all flows; "you cannot step in the same river twice."

b. Irrationalism?

(1) It would seem that if all things are changing all the time they cannot be captured in rational concepts (recall the rationalist's traditional difficulty with change).

(2) Yet the statement that "all changes" is itself a rational assertion, and the changing nature of the world evidently does not change.

(3) Heraclitus acknowledges a *logos*, a universal reason, governing the changing world according to a pattern.

(4) But then it would seem that the fact of such governance, at least, is an unchanging fact--that not everything "flows".

(5) Heraclitus sees himself as more of a rationalist than an irrationalist, because of the *logos* doctrine. But the doctrine of change has had a strong influence upon philosophical irrationalism. His disciple, Cratylus, holds to a more thorough irrationalism based on Heraclitus's doctrine of flux, and Plato reacts

against it. Essentially we have here another unstable mixture.

2. Atomism: Leucippus, Democritus (460-370), Epicurus (341-270), Lucretius (94-54); cf. "qualitative atomists" Empedocles (495-435) and Anaxagoras (500-428).
 - a. The primacy of plurality: the world is composed of vast numbers of tiny "atoms".
 - (1) Each atom has the qualities of Parmenidean being--it is one, ungenerated, indestructible, changeless (except in its relations to other atoms), indivisible, etc. It is however, in motion, a quality Parmenides denied in being.
 - (2) Solution to problem of change: the atoms change in their relations to each other, but not in their essential nature. (Cf. later statements about God.)
 - b. Determinism and chance:
 - (1) Democritus: all events are determined by the motions of atoms and their resultant relations with each other.
 - (2) Epicurus modifies the system: atoms occasionally "swerve" from the vertical direction, forcing collisions among them, leading to the formation of objects and accounting for free will.
 - c. Rationalism and Irrationalism
 - (1) Attempts to define the ultimate nature of the world--not by relating all to the whole as Parmenides, but by breaking the world down into its smallest constituents.
 - (2) But the rationalism of the system is compromised
 - (a) since mind is reduced to matter and motion,
 - (b) since the Epicurean "swerve" is a totally irrational event,
 - (c) since all things happen by change.
3. Sophists: Protagoras (490-?), Gorgias, Thrasymachus
 - a. Relativism in knowledge
 - (1) No universal truth at all. Only truth "for" the individual-subjective opinion.
 - (2) Slogan. "Man is the measure of all things."
 - b. Rationalism
 - (1) Despite the irrationalistic thrust of sophistic relativism, this approach is highly rationalistic. To say that "man is the measure" is to assert

man's reason as the ultimate standard, and as omniscient.

- (2) Inconsistency: Protagoras did admit that though no opinion was truer than another, some were "better" than others. What criterion of "better" is implicit here?
- (3) Like all irrationalism, Protagoras' position is inconsistent at a deeper level: for why should we believe what Protagoras says? Is sophistry only "true for him" while some other position may be "true for me"? Protagoras wants to eliminate all universal truth while claiming that his system has universal truth. "Self-referential incoherence."

D. Plato, 427-347: First great philosophical synthesis, trying to do justice to all sides of the issues. Convinced that there must be absolute truth, but seeking also to do justice to change, plurality, non-being, the limits of understanding.

1. The two worlds
 - a. The world of our sense-experience
 - (1) From sense experience, no certain knowledge. Senses deceive (a straight stick appears bent in the water, etc.)
 - (2) Since the objects of sense are not objects of knowledge, they cannot be completely real; they are only *representations, likenesses*, of reality.
 - (3) Yet somehow we-do have the ability to correct the mistakes of sense- experience. By reason, we somehow know how things really are.
 - (4) We also know, e.g., what a perfect triangle is, although there are no perfect triangles in this world.
Hence:
 - b. The world of Forms (*eide*), Ideas
 - (1) Our world of sense-experience is a faint reproduction of another world in which are the perfect exemplars (forms, ideas, types), the patterns of which things on earth are copies. The perfect triangle, the perfect tree, perfect greenness, perfect goodness.
 - (2) Unlike objects of sense experience, which can change, the Forms are always the same. A man can be courageous at one time, cowardly at another; but the form of courage never

- changes. Unlike specific goods (wealth, power, etc.), the form of Goodness is *always* good.
- (3) Unlike the world of sense-experience, the world of forms is perfectly knowable, through the faculty of reason.
 - (4) So only the forms are fully real and knowable.
 - (5) All of us before birth lived in the world of forms, beholding them.
 - (6) On earth we arrive at knowledge by recalling our experience of the forms before birth. "Knowledge is reminiscence." In *Meno*, Plato shows how mathematical knowledge can be elicited from an uneducated slave simply by asking him the right questions, questions calculated to provoke his reminiscence. Thus certainty is possible, though error also exists.
 - (7) The forms have characteristics of Parmenidean being: self-existent, ungenerated, indestructible, religious predicates (!)
2. The "receptacle" (*chora*, "place" - similar to Aristotle's "matter")
 - a. If the forms are to be copied on earth, the "receptacle" is the canvas on which the copy is painted. The "receptacle" receives form, takes on the qualities of the forms.
 - b. Since it receives form, the receptacle is itself formless.
 - c. As such it has no predicates; it is non-being.
 - d. Yet (and note here the contradiction in Plato's irrationalism) the receptacle must be described somehow, and thus must have some predicates. Plato describes it as having qualities opposite to the forms: perishability, imperfection.
 - e. The receptacle resists the forms so that the "copies" are inevitably imperfect. It is the source of all imperfection and evil.
 3. The demiurge (Plato's "god")
 - a. Subordinate to and limited by both form and receptacle--a finite god.
 - b. Shapes the world by applying pre-existent forms to preexistent receptacle. Since the receptacle resists formation, he cannot make perfect copies.
 4. Knowledge (Hoitenga, *Faith and Reason from Plato to Plantinga*)
 - a. *Republic*
 - (i) Direct acquaintance with Forms.

- (ii) Infallible
 - (iii) A mental state sharply different from belief.
 - b. *Meno, Theatetus*: justified, true belief ("true belief with an account (*logos*)")
 - c. In both cases: only Forms properly knowable.
 - 4. Summary: Plato's system is both rationalistic (the forms) and irrationalistic (the receptacle). Review general criticisms of the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic.
 - a. The forms, Plato admits, do not account for all reality, all qualities in the world, even though they were postulated for precisely that purpose.
 - b. The forms are supposed to provide absolutely certain knowledge; but the receptacle is a brute, irrational force which produces deviations from "the expected," and thus imperils knowledge.
 - c. Plato's irrationalism, like other forms of irrationalism, claims knowledge of a purely irrational principle. The receptacle is supposed to be formless and thus indescribable. Yet Plato describes it - either making it into a form or admitting that form is not the sole source of rational quality.
- E. Aristotle, 384-322
1. General
 - a. Aristotle demythologizes Plato: the forms are not in another world, but in our world.
 - b. Forms, except for the divine form, always exist together with matter.
 2. Substance: "that which exists in itself"
 - a. The most common substances are individual things - chairs, tables, trees, animals, persons.
 - b. Each is composed of both form and matter, except for the divine substance, which is pure form.
 3. Form
 - a. Form gives to every substance its shape, size, its qualities.
 - b. Things, therefore, are knowable because of their form.
 4. Matter
 - a. Matter is that which is formed, that on which the form operates.
 - b. As such it has no qualities; it constitutes an irrational principle.
 - c. Thus things resist formation and knowledge. Matter is the source of imperfection and evil.
 5. Potentiality and actuality

- a. The acorn grows into an oak as its form is actualized. It is always an oak potentially. But the form is actualized by process.
 - b. As things become more and more actualized, the form predominates over the matter.
 - c. The less actualized things are, the more potentiality ("potency") they have, the more matter predominates over form.
6. The Prime Mover
- a. Accounts for change, the constant movement from potentiality to actuality.
 - b. He is the ultimate cause of motion, but is not himself moved; else he would require a more ultimate cause.
 - c. He is not a creator in time, for in Aristotle's view the changing world is itself eternal. Rather he "underlies" the whole process. (This is the basis for the "cosmological argument for God's existence." See Thomas Aquinas.)
 - d. Aristotle refers to this being in personal terms, and describes him as "god" although it is not clear what in his argument justifies this language. His argument itself, if sound, demonstrates only an impersonal principle of change.
 - e. To this being are ascribed the attributes of Parmenidean being - unchangeability, indestructibility, etc.
 - f. The prime mover is not personally concerned with the world, to know it or love it. His sole activity is "thought thinking thought": i.e., he thinks, and the sole object of his thought is his own activity of thinking.
 - (1) Thought of a lesser object would compromise his supremacy. If he thought of the world, he would be limited by the world; the world would govern his thought to some extent.
 - (2) Cf. comment earlier (1) about "more consistent rationalism". Aristotle doesn't deny the world as does the "more consistent rationalist;" but his god behaves as if there were no world. As such the divine thought becomes trivial--a principle reflecting only itself and explaining nothing outside of itself.
 - (3) Unlike Aristotle's god, the God of the Bible is not so threatened by the world. He can get involved with the world, because he is a person, not a mere abstract principle. And as a person, he rules all things.

- g. The prime mover is pure form - no matter. Thus perfectly actualized, but also abstract.
7. Human Knowledge:
- a. A process by which the mind abstracts forms from concrete things. The mind absorbs the form, not the matter.
 - b. Strictly speaking, only the forms are knowable, intelligible. But somehow we gain a knowledge of matter.
 - c. Scientific knowledge (*episteme*) by *demonstration*.
 - (i) Premises must be true, primary, better known than the conclusion.
 - (ii) Highest premises indemonstrable, but known. Aristotle opposes circular demonstration. "Foundationalist."
 - (iii) Ultimate premises known by intuition (*nous*).
 - (iv) Foundational premises include the first principles of the sciences. (Aristotle's foundationalism is not "classical.")
8. Summary
- a. Note rationalist (form, prime mover) /irrationalist (matter) dialectic.
 - b. The prime mover does not make the world process any more rational. Though Aristotle tries to remove him from all limitation, he is profoundly limited by the world ("non-Christian transcendence").
 - c. "The many swallowing up the one": matter relativizes all rational explanation.
 - d. "The one swallowing up the many": the ultimate principle, the divine thought, reflects only upon itself as if nothing else existed. The world disappears; there is nothing left to be explained.
- F. Pyrrho (365-270 BC): "Skepticism" (Account of Sextus Empiricus, 2nd and 3^d centuries, AD)
- 1. Pyrrho: "nothing is honorable or base, or just or unjust, and that... nothing exists in truth."
 - 2. Sextus: some claim to have found truth ("dogmatists" like Aristotle, Stoics, Epicureans), others that truth can't be found (the skeptical Academy). Pyrrhonists "continue to search."
 - 3. Not skeptical of what is obvious, evident.
 - 4. Even willing to doubt Pyrrhonism itself.
 - 5. Goal: *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance. Tranquility. Vs. Sartre.
 - 6. *Epoche*, suspension of judgment.
 - 7. Modes (Ten, then five)

- a. Disagreement
 - b. Infinite regress (each reason requires support)
 - c. Relativity (things look different from different perspectives)
 - d. Hypothesis (Every argument assumes something; you can always assume the opposite.)
 - e. Circularity (A requires support that assumes A).
8. Comments (JF)
- a. Shows the need of a norm. If God has revealed himself, then his opinion is authoritative (vs. a), there are sure principles of reasoning (vs. b), there is objective knowledge (vs. c), we cannot always assume the opposite (d), and we know when circularity is justified and when not (vs. e).
 - b. Assumes more than what is obvious: a view of authority, views of logic, of perspectives other than one's own, etc. Doesn't overcome, therefore, the self-refutation problem.
 - c. Rationalist and irrationalist.
- G. Plotinus, 204-269 A.D.: "Neoplatonism"
- 1. Rationalism
 - a. Plotinus tries to do what neither Plato nor Aristotle could do--to find a single principle which accounts for everything, including change, plurality, non-being.
 - b. "Intelligence is the first legislator, or rather, it is the very law of existence. Parmenides therefore was right in saying, 'Thought is identical with existence.' The knowledge of immaterial things is therefore identical with those things themselves."
 - c. The most ultimate principle is the One. It has none of the properties of our experience, because it is the principle behind those properties. Not green, for it is the principle of green, etc. It is strictly wrong even to call it "One;" but that is the closest we can get to conceptualizing its nature. Main point: we are agnostic about it, for only thus can it be a truly rational principle.
 - 2. Irrationalism
 - a. Rationalism which leads to utter agnosticism leads thereby to irrationalism. Concerning the One, we are wholly ignorant.
 - b. We can say only what it is not, nor what it is. All attributes are limitations.
 - c. The One is known, not through discursive reasoning, but through mystical experience. In mystical experience, we know through union with the One.

- d. In the end, reason is like a ladder which we use to ascend the heights, then throw away. It is a tool in achieving a suprarational experience.

3. Participation

- a. The facts of our world are unreal except as they participate in the One, the changeless reality.
- b. "The chain of being": All things "emanate," flow inevitably, from the One, without any diminishing of the source - like light from the sun. cf. Gnosticism.
- c. Some things are further from the source (matter), some things closer (souls). There are no sharp breaks in the scale.
- d. The concept of participation intends to reconcile rationalism and irrationalism; yet in fact it combines the deficiencies of both.
 - (1) Insofar as the emanations are real, they are indistinguishable from the One; there is no reason why they should emanate into lower forms. "One swallowing the many."
 - (2) Insofar as the emanations are less than the One, they are intelligible. They destroy the One as a principle of explanation: "The many swallowing the One."

II. Some Oriental Philosophers

A. Chuang Tzu, 369-286 BC

- 1. Skepticism about language as a tool of knowledge.
 - a. We cannot define terms adequately.
 - b. Language is used to express both truth and falsity, so it cannot always be trusted. Hence, disputes.
 - c. How does anybody know anything?
 - d. Chuang Tzu, dreaming he is a butterfly.
- 2. Union of opposites in the TAO. "In their difference is their completeness."
 - a. "The great Way is not named."
 - b. Mystical knowledge of the TAO.
 - c. Distinctions (true and false, right and wrong, this and that, self and world, self and other selves, ultimately illusory.

B. The Nyaya-Sutras of Aksapada Gotama (sometime between 400 BC, 100 AD); Commentary of Vatsyayana (around 300 AD)

- 1. Similarities to Buddhism
 - a. The four noble truths.
 - (i) Life is suffering.
 - (ii) Suffering is caused by selfish desire.

- (iii) The cure to suffering lies in the overcoming of such desire.
 - (iv) The noble eightfold path.
 1. Right knowledge
 2. Right aspiration
 3. Right speech
 4. Right behavior (five precepts)
 5. Right livelihood (occupation)
 6. Right effort
 7. Right mindfulness
 8. Right absorption (mystical enlightenment)
 - b. So knowledge (eightfold path 1 and 7) is soteric: crucial to ending suffering by ending the cycle of rebirth. (Aksapada: "Supreme felicity is attained by the knowledge...")
 - c. But, in the end, it is only a means to achieving a non-rational state.
2. Epistemological
- a. Parallel to four noble truths
 - (i) Know what should be abandoned (pain).
 - (ii) Know what produces this (misapprehension).
 - (iii) Destroy what should be abandoned.
 - (iv) Determine the means of destruction (true knowledge).
 - b. *Pramanas*: means of knowledge: perception, inference, analogy ("seeing as"), testimony (personal reliability).
 - c. How establish the *pramanas*?
 - (i) If knowledge of them is impossible, the denial of them is also.
 - (ii) And without the *pramanas*, the denial of their reliability cannot be established.
 - (iii) *Pramanas* are like a lamp. They illuminate themselves as well as other objects. Self-attesting; presuppositional.
- C. Nagarjuna (2nd century, AD Buddhist)
1. Critique of Nyaya defense of *pramanas*.
 - a. Perception must be void, because all things are void. (Buddhist "nothingness").
 - b. Must we use perception to attack it? No, because there is no such thing as perception.
 - c. You can defend *pramanas* only by *pramanas*, which results in infinite regress or circularity.
 - d. If *pramanas* are established by something else, then there is some other means of knowing, and *pramanas* are not necessary for knowledge.
 - e. A lamp does not actually illumine itself, as Nyaya claims.

- f. If *pramanas* are established apart from the objects of knowledge, as Nyaya says, then they are *pramanas* of nothing. Object and means of knowledge are correlative.
 2. Comments (JF)
 - a. Note religious basis for skepticism.
 - b. Rationalism-irrationalism: a very rational argument to the effect that means of knowledge cannot be warranted.
 - c. Note how skepticism arises both in eastern and western thought. Fruit of autonomy.
- III. Augustine (354-430 A. D.)
- A. Background: Converted around 386 after involvement with Manichaeism and neo-Platonism. Became priest (391) and Bishop of Hippo (396). For theological autobiography, see *Confessions*.
 1. More aware than earlier Fathers of the philosophical differences between Christianity and other views.
 2. More personalistic than Justin, Origen, et al.
 3. Makes great contributions especially in the doctrines of the Trinity and Predestination, and in the philosophy of history (*The City of God*).
 - B. *Soliloquies* (dialogues with Reason)
 1. "God and the soul, that is what I desire to know. Nothing more? Nothing whatever."
 2. But to know these, one must first learn Truth.
 3. Truth is by nature imperishable, for even if it perishes, it is still true that truth has perished; therefore truth has not perished.
 4. So truth is immutable and eternal, that is, divine.
 5. So God and the soul exist, and the Truth exists in both. (Even if I am being deceived, it is true that I am being deceived, so I exist.)
 6. Forms exist in the mind of God.
 7. Human knowledge, then, is by divine illumination.
 - C. *On the Teacher*
 1. Teaching (especially by signs) is impossible, unless the learner already knows what he is being taught. (Cf. Plato's *Meno* and the "paradox of ignorance.")
 2. So we can learn only because the mind already possesses Truth (compare Plato's theory of reminiscence).
 3. Skepticism about much of sense-experience, particular occurrences. Knowledge mainly of universals in those occurrences, which we know innately. Historical events in Scripture.
 - D. *On the Immortality of the Soul*
 1. But what about error? How can the mind, which is true, turn to "stupidity?"

2. Answer: error, like evil, is a privation of being, a defectiveness in the reality of the mind.
3. This defect cannot destroy the soul altogether, for truth cannot perish.

E. *On the Profit of Believing*

1. Defense of authority: If we had never heard of any religion, we should seek out those famous for their knowledge. Of course, that does not prove their truth.
2. Influential in apologetics for the authority of the Roman Catholic magisterium.

F. Comments

1. One of the first elaborate Christian-theistic epistemologies, though very much under the influence of Plato.
2. Augustine says much about Truth in a rather abstract sense, as if it were a Platonic form. He does, finally, locate Truth in God's mind and identify it with God's own personal nature.
3. As with Plato, the relation between the divine Truth and the human mind that "participates" in Truth is somewhat obscure. Better: God reveals truths to man, by his sovereign control, authority, presence in the world.
4. Difficulties increase when Augustine considers error; for how can error exist in Truth? The "privation" theory is not satisfactory. If God created all and governs all things, the privations as well as the actualities are within his plan.
5. Augustine's skepticism about sense-experience, and about knowledge of particulars, is not biblical. Scripture puts much emphasis on historical narrative and upon testimony based on sense experience (1 John 1:1ff).
6. Nor are we like the ignorant person in *Profit of Believing*. For according to Rom. 1, nobody is religiously illiterate.
7. The combination of abstract Truth and skepticism about sense-experience suggests the rationalist-irrationalist dialectic of non-Christian philosophy.
8. But Augustine seeks to "believe that he may understand."

IV. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

- A. Background: Much influenced by Plato and Augustine. Sometimes called "the second Augustine."
- B.. *Credo ut Intelligam*: Anselm adopts Augustine's slogan, "I believe in order that I might understand."
 1. Suggests that faith precedes reasoning in divine matters. Anselm contrasts this with believing in order to understand. Good; but perhaps it would be better to say that both faith and reason ought to be subject to God's Word.

2. Suggests also that reason is the goal of faith, that reason goes beyond faith or builds upon it in some way. This can be taken in good or bad senses.
- C. *Cur Deus Homo?* ("Why the God-man?")
1. Extremely influential treatise on why Jesus became incarnate and died: as satisfaction for sin.
 2. Somewhat rationalistic in plan: "...leaving Christ out of view (as if nothing had ever been known of him), it (the book) proves, by absolute reasons, the impossibility that any man should be saved without him." The book does, however, smuggle in many biblical assumptions.
- D. *Monologium*: rational arguments on the existence, unity and nature of God, similar to those of Aquinas (below). Note again the plan: "that nothing in Scripture should be urged upon the authority of Scripture itself, but that whatever the conclusion of independent investigation should declare to be true, should...be briefly enforced by the cogency of reason..."
- E. *Proslogium*: "The Ontological Argument for God's Existence"
1. Roots in Parmenides, Plato, Augustine. Rejected by Aquinas and Kant; accepted in various revised forms by the continental rationalists, the idealists, some recent apologists, some language analysis philosophers (N. Malcolm, A. Plantinga), process philosophers and theologians.
 2. Seems like a game with words, but very difficult to refute. Has captivated philosophers of every generation since.
 3. Formulations
 - a. God is "that than which no greater can be conceived."
 - b. A God who exists outside the mind is greater than one who exists only in the mind.
 - c. Thus, if God existed only in the mind, a greater than he could be conceived, namely one existing outside the mind. That cannot be.
 - d. Therefore, God exists outside the mind.
 - e. Simplified form: God is perfect; perfection entails existence; therefore God exists.
 4. This argument can be interpreted in terms of the Platonism of the early Augustine (q.v.): That being which corresponds to imperishable truth must exist. The *idea* of God must have a real being.
 - a. It is true that the ontological argument can be used, and has been used, to prove almost any kind of ultimate. Compare the different "gods"

- proved by Spinoza, Descartes, Hegel, Malcolm, Hartshorne.
- b. One reason for this is that the argument depends on the concept of "perfection," a value-judgment which differs greatly from thinker to thinker.
 - c. Such an analysis ties in well with the Platonic-rationalistic emphasis in Anselm's other writings.
5. But there are some indications that Anselm's formulation of this argument (as opposed to the formulations of Descartes, Spinoza, etc.) tends toward a distinctively Christian presuppositionalism.
- a. The document is written as a prayer, as reasoning in the presence of God. It is clear, then, that the author has no real doubts as to God's existence.
 - b. He asks God to clarify his understanding, recognizing the weakness and sinfulness of his own nature.
 - c. "...I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, - that unless I believed, I should not understand."
 - d. The title "that than which no greater can be conceived" is taken as a *datum* given by revelation - a presupposition.
 - e. When Gaunilo replies "on behalf of the fool" (who says there is no God), Anselm refuses to reply to the fool; he replies only to the "Catholic;" and in replying, he appeals to Gaunilo's "faith and conscience".
 - f. From these considerations, it is clear that Anselm has a particular "God" in mind, and a concept of "perfection" derived from the Scriptures. One could, then, accept this "proof" as a genuine presuppositional argument, setting forth the role of divine existence within the system of Christian faith.
 - g. Even as such it could hardly be persuasive without more epistemological prolegomena.
6. All in all, the nature of the argument is difficult to ascertain. There are elements here both of Platonic rationalism and of genuine Christian insight.
7. Reconstruction

- (1) The proof may be seen as an appeal to one's "presupposition," his "basic commitment," his paradigm of perfection.
- (2) For Christians: the God of Scripture, our paradigm of perfection, must exist; else, all evaluations, predications are meaningless.

V. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- A. Significance: Aquinas is the most important of the medieval thinkers, and until Vatican II his philosophy dominated the thought of the Roman Catholic Church. In response to the challenge of newly discovered writings of Aristotle which were being used against Christianity, Aquinas produced a massive, ingenious synthesis (cf. Origen) between Christianity and Aristotle. Aquinas is also deeply influenced by neo-Platonism, particularly by way of Pseudo-Dionysius.
- B. Faith and Reason
 1. "Natural reason," operating apart from revelation, is able to discover many things, not only about the natural world, but even about God (his existence and major attributes).
 2. Other things are known only by revelation and are received only by faith (the trinity, creation *ex nihilo*, etc.)
 3. Some things provable by natural reason are also revealed, so that those unable to prove them may nevertheless know them.
 4. Comment: This distinction makes reason autonomous within its own sphere, although faith has a "veto power" when reason contradicts something revealed. Thus, Thomas develops his basic metaphysical scheme out of Aristotle and fits the data of Scripture into that scheme as best he can.
- C. Epistemology
 1. Thomas holds, with Aristotle and against Plato, that in general forms are found in things, together with matter, not in some separate world.
 2. Knowledge, then, is a matter of abstracting the forms from the things in which those forms are found.
 3. All knowledge, then, begins in sense experience; but it is not genuine knowledge until the "active intellect" determines the essential or universal properties (forms) of the things it investigates.
 4. Foundationalist account of *scientia*. Foundational premises from direct acquaintance, by which we see that a particular predicate belongs to a particular subject.

5. Since we have no sense experience of God (or angels), we can know of them only by revelation or through their effects.
 - a. "Way of causality" - attributing to God the ability to cause all things known in experience.
 - b. "Way of remotion" (*via negativa*) - since God far surpasses our intellect, we cannot say what God is (his essence); but we can learn what he is not, by distinguishing him from all that is merely finite, creature.
 - c. "Way of eminence" - ascribing to God in utmost degree every perfection known in our experience.
 - d. Comment: At no point in these discussions of method does Thomas demand that the process be subject to God's revelation of himself. There is thus nothing to prevent these reasonings from being caught up in the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic. God will become a larger version of creaturely properties, or an indefinite opposite (remotion) to those properties.
6. Language about God
 - a. No language applies to God and to creatures univocally (in the same sense), as "man" to Socrates and Plato, for univocal predication would place God and creatures on the same level.
 - b. Nor does this language apply to God and to creatures in essentially different ways (equivocally), as "man" to Socrates and to a chess-piece. For between God and creation there are some likenesses and some relations (especially causal).
 - c. Language about God is best characterized as analogical neither purely univocal nor purely equivocal. Cf. "healthy," applied to medicine as cause of health, to urine as sign of health. So the same properties apply to God as to creatures, but in different degrees and different ways.
 - d. Comments:
 - (i) Scholars have debated long over the nature of analogical predication in Thomas. E.g., when we say that God is "holy," are we saying merely that God is the cause or holiness in creatures, or are we saying

more? Thomas is highly agnostic about "what God is" ("in himself"). On the other hand, he claims to know, even to demonstrate, definite information about God. And even to say that God is cause of holiness is to say something definite.

(ii) In any case, the distinctions here show the rationalism and irrationalism in Thomas' approach. Building the whole structure on Aristotle's "natural reason," Thomas must either be wholly agnostic about God (equivocism), reduce him to the creaturely level (univocism), or adopt some unstable compromise between these (analogism).

(iii) Biblical alternative: God tells us in Scripture how to speak of him. He gives us a language which refers naturally to him while distinguishing him from creatures. Thomas' problem comes in trying to develop the knowledge of God purely out of extrapolation from "natural knowledge," not developing his basic structure from God's self-revelation.

e. "The analogy or being": Corresponding to this analogous language is an analogous reality. Not only does "holy" apply both to God and to creatures, but there is a property of holiness which is found in God and in creatures in different ways. Hence the "scale of being."

D. Proofs of God's Existence

1. Cosmological (God as adequate cause)

a. From motion

- (i) Every moving thing must be moved by something else.
- (ii) No infinite regress of movers, for without a first mover there would be no second or third mover.
- (iii) Thus there is a first mover, itself unmoved and unmoving.

b. From efficient cause (steps same as above: Every effect must be caused by something else, etc.)

c. From the contingency of the world

- (i) If the whole world is contingent (i.e., if it is possible for everything in the world not

- to be), then at one time the world did not exist.
- (ii) If at one time it did not exist, then it would not exist now, for there would at that time have been nothing to cause its existence.
 - (iii) Therefore everything in the world is not contingent. There must be something which exists necessarily, God.
2. Criteriaological (Sometimes this one is called cosmological, sometimes teleological, sometimes a Platonic reversion to something like the ontological which Thomas had rejected earlier. It doesn't much matter what you call it.)
- a. Things are more or less good, true, noble etc. as they approximate a standard which is the maximum in these qualities.
 - b. This maximum is the cause of all lesser manifestations of the quality.
 - c. Thus (by causal argument) the maximum must actually exist.
3. Teleological (Actually a certain kind of cosmological argument which asks a sufficient cause for the phenomenon of purposefulness.)
- a. Unintelligent beings including natural objects act for an end, a purpose.
 - b. This cannot be unless they are directed by an intelligent being, i.e., God.
4. Comments
- a. The proofs presuppose univocal knowledge of God, particularly in the predicates "mover," "cause," "necessity," and "intelligence." The criteriaological argument suggests that God has creaturely properties in maximum degree. This univocism conflicts with Thomas' emphasis on analogy.
 - b. For Aristotle, God is "cause" of the world, not as its creator *ex nihilo*, but merely as its underlying principle. The world is eternal, for Aristotle. Thomas does not adequately distinguish his concept of cause from that of Aristotle, and thus proves only a god correlative with the world. (Later, he affirms creation *ex nihilo* on the basis of revelation.)
 - c. Hume and Kant: on an empirical basis, one cannot generalize from observed causal and

teleological relations within the world to a cause or purpose for the world. None of us has any experience of the world as a totality sufficient to justify such inference.

- d. Kant: The cosmological and teleological proofs reduce to the ontological, because both proceed from a mere idea of which no experience is possible ("cause of all") to the reality corresponding to the idea.
- e. The proofs nevertheless have some usefulness:
 - (i) Taken as they are, they are useful *ad hominem* devices. If people act on certain assumptions (cause, criterion, purpose) in everyday life, why should they not make the same assumptions at the ultimate level? The only unbelieving response to this consideration is reversion to an irrationalism (as in Hume and Kant), and that is also vulnerable. "Opposing non-Christian irrationalism by non-Christian rationalism."
 - (ii) Revised, they set forth a Christian basis for belief in God.
 - (A) Insist vs. Aristotle that a cause is required not only for the motion of the world, but even for its very existence, even for its matter.
 - (B) Insist vs. Aristotle, Hume and Kant that an empiricist epistemology is inadequate; that all argument must presuppose God's self-revelation.
 - (C) Within a Christian framework, then, we can point out that the concepts of cause, motion, contingency, criterion and purpose presuppose God for their intelligibility. Unless God exists, it makes no sense to speak of anything as cause of anything else, etc. Without God all is an empty blank (rationalism) or unrelated chance happenings (irrationalism).
 - (D) So understood, the proofs are remarkably biblical! For they set

forth areas in which Scripture stresses the clear revelation of God's presence:

- 1) Cosmological: creation (situational perspective)
- 2) Criteriological: God as standard, criterion, law (normative perspective)
- 3) Teleological: God as constantly involved with creation, directing it in providence (situational, existential).

VI. Later Medieval Developments

A. Mysticism (Eckhardt) - Neo-Platonic influence.

B. Irrationalist tendencies:

1. John Duns Scotus (1274-1308)
 - a. More voluntarist emphasis
 - (i) Will is not determined by knowledge of the good; it chooses to do good or evil in the face of its knowledge.
 - (ii) The will is free of all determination.
 - (iii) God's decisions, similarly, are not determined by divine reason. God could revoke any of his own laws (except the first four commandments).
 - b. So less confidence in natural theology, less role for rational demonstration in theology.
2. William of Occam (1280-1367)
 - a. "Occam's razor": Always choose the simplest possible explanation, the one which makes the fewest suppositions, which assumes the fewest entities.
 - b. "Nominalism": Only particulars exist. There are no universals (redness, truth, goodness) existing independently of particular things and situations.
 - c. The existence of God cannot be demonstrated, though it can be shown probable by reason. Articles of faith (trinity, etc.) cannot even be rendered intelligible to reason. There is no particular experience of God, or the soul.
 - d. The authority of the church is no help.
 - (i) The church is nothing more than a collection of believers.

- (ii) Papal claims groundless.
- e. Thus we believe on Scripture authority alone. (What is implicit or explicit in Scripture.)
- f. Comment: Occam's rejection of papal and conciliar authority, his espousal of Scriptural sufficiency and his rejection of speculation had great influence on the reformers. (Luther: "I am from Occam's school.") Yet the irrationalism of Occam's epistemology is not warranted by Scripture. The free-will notion correlative with this irrationalism wrought havoc with the doctrines of sin and salvation. Cf. tendencies in Lutheran anthropology and epistemology - Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 197-209.

VII. John Calvin (1505-1564)

A. The Knowledge of God

1. For Calvin, this involves reverence and love for God (*Institutes*, I, ii, I), not merely intellectual assent.
2. Thus it is of little concern to Calvin whether or how unbelievers may be brought to a point of assent, unless at the same time they are brought out of sin into the love of God.
3. Knowledge of God and knowledge of self are interrelated (I, i, 1). As to which "comes first," Calvin is uncertain.
4. Comment: Though somewhat anticipated in Augustine and in Anselm's *Proslogium*, this approach marks a real advance. It brings the existential and normative perspectives into apologetics with full force. Now apologetics must deal with the inward man, not just the outward evidences; he must appeal to the whole person, not just the intellect; and he must bring God's authoritative saving message, not a bare notion of divine existence.

- B. The Comprehensiveness of Revelation: Calvin's view of divine sovereignty enables him for the first time clearly to declare all things wholly revelational of God. Since God's plan alone determines nature, history and individual life, God is clearly revealed in all of these areas. Thus Calvin opens the full range of created reality to apologetics. All facts are evidence for God, not merely the facts of causality, teleology, etc. Cf. "comprehensiveness of covenant" as definition of Calvinism.

C. Total Depravity

1. Since revelation is comprehensive, the unbeliever is fully responsible - not only for his failure to assent to

- revealed propositions, but particularly for his failure to worship God.
2. The unbeliever, however, rejects entirely the witness of creation, and he has no power in himself to receive the truth.
 3. If, then, he is to be persuaded (=converted), God must work through his special revelation (Scripture) and the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
 4. Unbelieving religions and philosophies, though they display intelligence and insight of various sorts derived from the "sense of deity," show no knowledge of God in the sense defined above. In that respect, their systems are "stupidity and silliness."
- D. Evidences Confirm the Truth: To the regenerate, the excellencies of Scripture and extra-Scriptural evidences (I, viii, 1) serve as secondary aids to confirm faith.

VIII. Continental Rationalism

- A. General
 1. From the tradition of Parmenides and Plato.
 2. New mathematical and logical sophistication.
 3. New arrogance: pretends to ignore tradition and build the edifice of philosophy on a new basis.
 4. Distrust of sense experience: Since the senses deceive us and are corrected by reason, reason must have access to a knowledge not available to sense. The mathematical model.
 5. Seek to allow for "purely rational" science and philosophy unhindered by divine revelation.
 6. Review general critique of rationalism, I above.
- B. Rene Descartes, 1596-1650
 1. Resolves to doubt all except his clear and distinct ideas.
 - a. Skepticism about the senses.
 - b. How do I know I am not dreaming? Can never rule out the possibility.
 - c. And maybe God—or, rather, an evil demon—is deceiving me.
 - d. Note focus on individual subjectivity.
 2. First clear and distinct idea: Since doubt itself implies a doubter, the self must exist - *cogito ergo sum*; I think, therefore I am.
 - a. Not a syllogism, he says, but an intuitive awareness.
 - c. Note: Descartes' own thought is his most basic presupposition.
 3. God exists (various ontological and cosmological arguments, beginning with the idea of God in the human mind.

But Descartes also says of God's existence and veracity that "if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else."

Circularity?

4. The self is a thinking thing, unextended; bodies are extended and unthinking. The influence of mind upon body is impossible in Descartes' philosophy; yet he fudges a bit to allow a tiny influence of mind upon body through the "pineal gland"!
5. Thus nature is subject to purely mechanical explanation, while mind is free from causal determination.
6. But we will still doubt our senses in many areas.
 - a. In the physical world, colors, sounds, smells do not exist, only "quantity," extension.
 - b. Reason alone fully reliable.
7. Comments:
 - a. Rationalist in narrow and broad senses.
 - b. Also subjectivist. The inner contents of the individual human mind become the starting point of reflection. (But compare Augustine, Anselm, Montaigne.)
 - c. Irrationalist in his initial universal doubt, pineal gland theory, etc.

C. B. Spinoza (1632-1677)

1. Uses "geometrical method". All philosophical propositions "demonstrated" by a system of axioms, theorems, etc.
2. Rejects Descartes' method of universal doubt. The road to certainty is the arrangement of propositions in axiomatic form, bringing clarity as to causes and effects.
3. We know an idea is true by direct inspection, not indirectly, as by inspecting its clearness and distinctness.
4. Eliminates the irrationalist elements in Descartes - the mind-body dualism, free will.
 - a. Mind is "the idea of the body."
 - b. So mind and body are two aspects of the one substance, God or nature.
5. There is only one substance, called "God or Nature." Similar to Parmenidean being. Subject to criticisms similar to those against Parmenides.
6. Correspondence and coherence are the same thing, seen under different perspectives.

D. G. W. von Leibniz (1646-1716)

1. Atomistic idealism: The world is composed of tiny, indivisible, mind-like entities ("monads"). Each develops according to its own internal laws.

2. Organisms, as opposed to other bodies, are centered around a "queen monad" or soul with which all the monads work in harmony.
3. God is the supreme monad of the universe. At most, he created the world and let it to operate according to the internal laws of its monads; at least, he is not even creator, but a kind of "queen monad" for the universe in general.
4. Theory of knowledge
 - a. Contingent truths: known much as in empiricism.
 - (i) Based in sense perception.
 - (ii) "Conjectural method a priori": deduce results of hypotheses; like modern scientific method.
 - b. Necessary truths, truths that *must* be the case.
 - (i) Cannot be derived from sense experience, contra Locke.
 - (ii) No *tabula rasa*. There are always thoughts in the mind, though many perceptions are subconscious. The mind's nature is to think.
 - (iii) Necessary truths are innate ideas, including the concepts of substance and cause.

IX. British Empiricism

A. General

1. Closer to Aristotle than to Plato.
2. Opposite to the rationalists in that the empiricists distrust the speculations of reason and insist that all ideas be firmly grounded in sense experience.
3. Tendency toward skepticism, especially in Hume, the most consistent of the empiricists. Review the general critique of irrationalism.
4. A Christian philosophy will reject both rationalism and empiricism; for on a Christian basis, neither autonomous reason nor autonomous sense experience is suitable as an ultimate basis for thought.

B. John Locke, 1632-1704

1. No innate ideas: the mind begins as a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet, to be imprinted by experience.
2. All "ideas" come from experience, but knowledge itself requires reasoning in addition to ideas.
3. Ideas
 - a. sensory perception
 - b. reflection on the operations of our own minds. (Leibniz: doesn't this, after all, involve innate knowledge?)
 - c. simple and complex
 - d. primary qualities: in things as they are in themselves (extension, solidity).

- e. secondary qualities: in things as they appear to us (colors, tastes, smells).
- 4. Thought does not require an immaterial substance (vs. Descartes).
- 5. Nominalism: "all things are particulars." Universal terms are human constructs, not part of the real nature of things.
- 6. Knowledge: perception of connections (agreements or disagreements) of ideas.
 - a. Immediate-intuitive, or mediated (demonstrated) via other ideas.
 - b. Without these, we have, at best, "belief" or "opinion."
 - c. Scientific knowledge: not by deducing properties of things from their definitions or essences, but by observations and experiments.
 - d. Skepticism: No one can really be so skeptical "as to be uncertain of the existence of those things which he sees and feels" (*Essay*, 4.11.3). Basic sensation is not as certain as intuition and demonstration, but it does deserve the name of knowledge.
- 7. Limits of knowledge
 - a. No absolute certainty, only degrees of probability. (Irrationalism)
 - b. About much we have no knowledge, only belief.
 - c. But we know enough for practical purposes.
- 8. Revelation
 - a. may communicate truths that could not be discovered by reason.
 - c. but the truth of a revelation can never be as certain as the principles of reason (rationalist element),
 - d. and reason is needed to determine what alleged revelations are genuine.
 - e. Knowledge necessary for salvation can be learned without revelation (compare deists, enlightenment rationalists).
- 9. Common sense metaphysic: mind, matter, God
- 10. No free will, but personal freedom of action.
- D. George Berkeley, 1685-1753
 - 1. Spirits are the only substances.
 - a. Sensible qualities are ideas in the mind, and they can exist only in minds.
 - b. No material substances exist apart from spirit.
 - c. But bodies and other ideas are real things. The essence of bodies is *percipi*, to be perceived.
 - d. No distinction between primary, secondary qualities. These are equally ideas of the mind.

2. No abstract ideas: you cannot represent to yourself the idea of "house-in-general."
3. Only spirits are true causes.
4. Since we don't control all the ideas within us, another spirit, God, must exist, who causes them. God imprints the ideas upon our minds in regular order.
5. Analysis
 - a. Rationalism: one's own ideas are made the final standard of truth. But this notion leads to the conclusion that we know only our own ideas. Thought thinking thought.
 - b. Irrationalism: Taken consistently, this approach destroys all knowledge beyond knowledge of the self. Berkeley's God is an idea of mine. But even self-knowledge loses its basis, as Hume points out (below).

E. David Hume, 1711-1776

- a. There is neither material nor mental substance; the whole idea of substance as something mysterious which holds together the properties of a thing is without foundation in experience. What we call "the soul" is merely a bundle of perceptions.
- b. Theory of knowledge
 - (i) perception/thought= presence to the mind of impressions/ideas.
 - (A) Difference is that impressions have greater force, liveliness.
 - (B) Ideas occur in the absence of what is thought about.
 - (ii) relations of ideas/ matters of fact
 - (A) former includes necessary truths like mathematics or logic.
 - (B) Relations of ideas understood by pure thought.
 - (C) Former necessary, latter contingent.
 - (D) Only the latter yield factual knowledge.
- c. Reasoning from impressions to absent matters of fact are by cause and effect.
 - (i) But there is no necessary connection between these. We are led by habit to expect certain events to come after others, but there is no power in the "cause" to bring about the "effect".
 - (ii) Thoughts become beliefs through impressions linked to past experience.

- (iii) But reason cannot show that the future will be like the past. We draw such conclusions by way of imagination.
- (iv) Imagination also produces our belief in enduring objects, other persons, and ourselves.
- c. Thus no certainty in knowledge; but in order to live, we must assume certain things about causes, etc. We must act on the basis of our causal expectations.
- d. Thus, no determinism in Spinoza's sense; but no free will either, since we must act on causal expectations even with regard to human actions.
- e. Critique of theistic proofs, especially the argument from design (teleological argument): cannot infer the existence of an infinite, wise, good God from mere inspection of our ideas. But the habit of religion need not be broken.
- f. Analysis: most consistent form of empiricism. Cf. 3, e above. Must we make our own experience the final authority?

X. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

A. Background

1. Devoted to mathematics and physics in his youth. Major discoveries.
2. After a conversion, devoted to service of religion, 1655.
3. Deeply influenced by the Jansenism of the convent at Port Royal, where his sister was a nun. Jansenism was an Augustinian movement within the Roman Catholic Church, condemned as heretical in 1653. Strongly predestinarian, ascetic, critical of the church's hierarchy and sacramental views.
4. His thought also shows influence of Calvinism, either by way of Jansenism or directly.

B. Significance:

1. The most important apologist of the seventeenth century, and possibly the most biblical. During this period other apologists, including the mainstream reformed theologians, had reverted to a sort of Thomist-Aristotelian apologetic, the main alternative being a Cartesian rationalism. In Pascal all of this is rejected.
3. Pascal introduces significant new emphases into apologetics.
 - a. He is perhaps the first Christian apologist to confront seriously the implications of modern science.

- b. Emphasis on probability, rather than demonstration.
 - c. Emphasis on the heart, the subjective or existential dimension.
 - d. More sophisticated use of logic and mathematics.
 - 3. At the same time, there are in Pascal elements which were to play into the hands of later subjectivists and existentialists.
 - 4. Pascal is one of the most powerful writers among apologists - cf. Augustine, C. S. Lewis.
- C. Critique of Complacency
- 1. Pascal begins by damning the casual attitude toward religious questions which he finds characteristic of his age. These are matters of life and death and deserve the most passionate attention.
 - 2. The new astronomy shows to man his incredible smallness, yet throws into told relief his greatness, his transcendence underscores the solemnity of the question of man's purpose and destiny.
- D. Religious Epistemology
- 1. Reason (i.e., the method of mathematics and science) depends on the heart for a broad grasp of that reality from which reason abstracts. (Cf. Kuyper, Dooyeweerd).
 - a. Pascal's "heart" is not emotion but intuitive understanding.
 - b. The heart is also that which loves.
 - c. God is known by the heart, not by reason.
 - (1) God is hidden from man because of his sin.
 - (2) God is not an "axiom" or the bare "first cause" of the theistic proofs.
 - (3) Most of our decisions, though informed by reason, are not determined by it. Rational calculation alone will not give us the courage to cross a dangerous bridge. The same for religious decisions.
 - (4) You don't come to love someone by enumerating the rational causes of love, etc.
 - (5) Love of God, in particular, precedes knowledge.
 - (6) Comment: Good insight here on love, etc., and it is certainly true that heart-commitment is prior to reasoning in our relation to God. However, there are here some elements of non-Christian irrationalism, for Pascal almost seems to deny that the evidence for God is compelling.

2. Faith

- a. A function of the heart, not of reason
- b. A gift of God, not worked up by reasoning.
- c. Thus in religion all questions resolved by reference to authority.
- d. But in science faith is out of place (vs. clerical intrusions upon scientific freedom) (Irrationalism).

3. Religious Decision

- a. The Wager
 - (1) If Christianity is true and you bet against it, you lose all.
 - (2) If Christianity is untrue and you bet in favor of it, you lose nothing.
 - (3) Thus prudence dictates a wager in favor of Christianity. (cf. William James, "The Will to Believe")
 - (4) Comment:
 - (a) One common criticism is that Pascal overlooks the other possibilities - e.g. that Islam is true and people will be punished for betting on Christianity. But on Christian presuppositions (which Pascal accepts) there are only two possibilities - Christianity or nihilism; i.e. only one possibility. Pascal's weakness is not emphasizing this fact sufficiently.
 - (i) He does, however, believe he has evidence that gives theism a high probability, vs. other possibilities.
 - (ii) The character of the Christian God and the corresponding benefit to be obtained is distinctive, and must be weighed in the equation.
 - (b) Is this a merely prudential argument? An appeal to one's own best interest, or worse, to fear? Well, Scripture itself sometimes makes such appeals.
 - (c) Do the terms of the wager presuppose that Christianity is only a possibility, something which may or may not be true? Well, we may not derive such a notion merely from the use of "if" for that word may indicate an entirely unreal condition. On the other hand, one suspects that such notions may exist in

the background of the argument, and of course that must be criticized.

- (d) Even if the argument presupposes that Christianity is a mere possibility, it may be a useful device, bringing considerations from non-Christian irrationalism to counter a smug rationalism.
- (e) What is involved in "wagering"? If it involves a decision to reorient one's whole life and thought (including one's conception of "possibility"), if it involves genuine repentance as opposed to mere outward assent, then the idea is unobjectionable.
- (f) The argument shows a real psychological insight into some religious motivations.

b. Acting as if

- (1) If you go to mass, take the holy water, etc., you will eventually be able to believe. Act as if you believe, and eventually you will.
- (2) Comment: Is Pascal here recommending hypocritical participation in worship as a preparation for true faith? This is unlikely in view of his general emphasis on heart commitment. More likely he is talking about people who have intellectual doubts. For them, often, the best advice is not to ponder metaphysical arguments, but to get involved with preaching and worship, to attend to areas of the religious life other than the strictly intellectual. This life-style can create the passional prerequisites for actual Christian belief. Existential perspective. Whether this is preparation for regeneration in the technical Reformed sense, Pascal does not seem to be concerned.

6. Arguments for Christianity (mostly traditional, and in Pascal's mind only probable, but yielding practical certainty. Our evaluation of these depends on to some extent on our heart-condition).

a. Comparative religion:

- (1) Non-Christian religions encourage man's pride or despair; only Christianity rebukes both. (Insightful!)

- (2) Christianity does what we would expect the true religion to do - speaks worthily of God, provides for our needs, etc. (Comment: assumes that the unbeliever can interpret his needs apart from the Gospel, determine what is worthy of God, etc. In fact, Pascal is here using Christian criteria of what is "worthy," and he ought to make that plain. To do so would not diminish the force of the argument, for the unbeliever knows that this is true.)
 - b. The success of the Christian church against impossible odds.
 - c. The character of Christ and the biblical writers - their trustworthiness. (Pascal focuses movingly on Christ here.)
 - d. The character of Christian believers.
 - e. The preservation of the Jews.
 - f. The argument from prophecy.
 - g. The argument from miracle.
 - h. The ring of truth in the biblical accounts, especially their picture of Jesus.
 - i. Resurrection: why would the apostles have lied and put their lives on the line?
 - j. Comment:
 - (1) These arguments do bring forth facts which the unbeliever needs to hear.
 - (3) As appeals to that knowledge which the unbeliever has, yet hinders, these arguments can be effective. Yet Pascal does not stress this context, and thus the unbeliever may be led to feel that his own principles are adequate to judge this evidence.

XI. Joseph Butler (1692-1752)

A. Background

1. Born to Presbyterian family, but becomes Anglican bishop, with Arminian theology.
2. Philosophically indebted to Locke's empiricism.
3. Sober, judicious, opposed to Wesleyan "enthusiasm."
4. The character of Cleanthes in Hume's *Dialogues* may be patterned after Butler.
5. His opponents, in his major work *The Analogy of Religion*, were deists who, though accepting the existence of an "author of nature," denied the distinctive teachings of Christianity.
6. He has had much influence in the history of (especially evangelical) apologetics. Van Til refers to the "traditional method" as the

“Aquinas-Butler method.” Actually, William Paley may be a more influential figure.

B. Epistemology

1. Following Locke, Butler denies innate ideas and insists that all reasoning be based on sense-experience. He opposes the more rationalistic apologetics of Descartes and Samuel Clarke.
2. Rationalism: Nevertheless, he holds that when reason is rightly used (the “reasonable use of reason”) it must have the final say: “Let reason be kept to: and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up.”
3. “Probability is the very guide to life.”
 - a. In empirical matters there is no absolute demonstration. All empirical assertions have only probability in varying degrees.
 - b. Lacking any hope of absolute certainty, we not only *may*, but *must*, base our beliefs and decisions on probabilities. Prudence is a moral obligation.
 - c. Where there is a cumulation of many lines of probable argumentation, the evidence is “not only increased, but multiplied,” so that it produces certainty for all *practical* purposes.
 - d. If we must be governed by probable judgments in other areas of life, then we must be so governed in religion.
 - e. Note that Butler resolves the problem of doubt practically, rather than theoretically, as Hume, Reid, Kant, Nietzsche, Pierce, Wittgenstein, and many others since his time.
4. Analogy
 - a. We come to determine probabilities by forming analogies between the known and the unknown, and between past experience and the present and future.
 - b. We also use analogy to reason from the laws of one realm to those of another. This procedure assumes that the “author of nature” governs all realms by essentially the same laws. Newtonian science had made this assumption plausible to Butler; it was not so plausible to Hume and Kant.
 - c. So it is legitimate to assume that principles governing the natural world will in like manner govern man’s relation to God. (Van Til called this the “principle of continuity.”)
 - d. But since we do not see the whole universe from God’s point of view, and since God is beyond our complete understanding, we must expect also certain *differences* between the two realms (“principle of discontinuity”).

- e. Butler wants to show the deists that there is an analogy between natural revelation (which they claim to accept) and special revelation (which they do not).
 - (i) Reasons for accepting special revelation are similar to, and just as strong as, the reasons for accepting natural revelation.
 - (ii) The problems and mysteries of special revelation are no greater than those of natural revelation.

C. Argument for Immortality

1. We persist through many radical changes in our physical life, from embryo to old age. Thus it is not unlikely that we will persist through the radical but analogous change of death.
2. Natural things and human powers have “momentum”—i.e. when pursuing a certain course, things tend to persist in that course.
3. We know that the powers of the self can persist through apparent inactivity (sleep, coma).
4. Bodily changes do not necessarily affect our ability to think; so it may well be that when the body dies, the mind continues to exist and act.
5. But is there not also an analogy between the death of the body and the death of the soul? Shouldn't we assume that the latter accompanies the former? Here Butler invokes the “principle of discontinuity.” We do not know enough about the source of the soul's powers to say that it expires with the body.

D. Comments

1. Van Til condemned apologetic arguments from probability on the ground that they denied the clarity of God's general and special revelation. I disagree with my mentor: Scripture tells us that the *evidence* for Christian theism is clear; but it doesn't tell us that every *argument* based on that evidence must have a certain conclusion. Any degree of modesty about our arguments may legitimately lead us to claim only probability.
2. And, as Butler said, probability is a normative guide to life.
3. Butler is right to emphasize that there are analogies (and disanalogies!) between nature and Scripture, for one God is author of both.
 - a. In Van Tillian terms, we can say that Butler is telling the non-Christian either to be consistent in his unbelief (by rejecting *both* nature and Scripture and embracing chaos) or to become a Christian.
 - b. But Butler's analogies are sometimes unpersuasive as he states them.
 - (i) The mother hen, who sacrifices herself for her chicks, as an analogy for the self-sacrifice of Jesus. Does this sort of analogy destroy the uniqueness of the atonement?

- (ii) Couldn't we reverse the continuity and discontinuity of the argument for immortality?
 - (A) The analogy would be between the death of the body and the death of the soul.
 - (B) The disanalogy would be between the changes of life and the major change from life to death. Who is to say that these are identical?
- 4. Although Christianity does meet all legitimate demands of reason, as Van Til said, Butler's "Let reason be kept to" is a highly misleading principle. It seems to put reason ahead of Scripture.
- 5. Butler does not set forth the gospel clearly, particular in its relevance to human thought. He does not challenge men to intellectual repentance.

XII. Thomas Reid (1710-1796)

A. Background

1. Scottish Presbyterian minister, dominated the "Scottish Common Sense School" of philosophy (Turnbull, Hutcheson, Dugald Stewart, William Hamilton).
2. That philosophy came to dominate the teaching of Princeton University and Theological Seminary through the 1800s.
3. Reid's thought was eclipsed through much of the twentieth century, but was rediscovered by some recent analytic philosophers such as Keith Lehrer, Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff.
4. Today, his influence is great among professional philosophers, especially in the English-speaking world.

B. Faculties of the Mind

1. Innate powers of the mind, giving rise to concepts of qualities and of sensed objects.
2. Not reducible to sensations, as in Hume. Concepts, as opposed to sensations, have *objects*. They are always concepts of something. (Cf. later phenomenology.)
3. This process creates immediate, irresistable convictions, which are justified beliefs.

C. Why Should We Trust Our Faculties?

1. Else, we are lost in skepticism.
2. Our faculties provide us with first principles.
 - a. These are "common sense," accepted by people in everyday conversation and business.
 - b. They cannot be justified by Cartesian arguments or by reduction to sensation, as in Hume.
 - c. But they don't need that sort of justification. You may accept them without being able to justify them, without

even being able to show why they belong to common sense.

- d. They do display some “marks” by which they can be recognized:
 - (i) early appearance of its operation
 - (ii) universality in mankind
 - (iii) irresistibility (they “force assent”).
3. Examples of first principles (non-exhaustive)
 - a. The reliability of consciousness in showing us what exists.
 - b. Conscious thoughts reveal a *self, mind, or person*.
 - c. Reliability of memory.
 - d. Personal identity continues through the course of remembered events.
 - e. General reliability of sense perception.
 - f. We have free will.
 - g. General reliability of all natural faculties (“reason”).
 - h. Others also have life, intelligence.
 - (i) “The problem of other minds.”
 - (ii) Some evidence is possible: “their words and actions indicate like powers of understanding as we are conscious of in ourselves.
 - (iii) Belief in God a subclass of these beliefs. (Cf. Plantinga, *God and Other Minds*.)
 - i. Physical features and actions of people reveal their minds.
 - j. Regard due to human testimony and authority.
 - k. People’s actions are more or less regular.
 - l. The future will be like the past.

D. Comments

1. Reid and Empiricism

- a. Hume, too, recognized that for practical purposes we must set our skeptical doubts aside and follow “custom.” One could read Reid as giving a systematic analysis of custom. But as such, he exposes Hume’s effort as a trivial exercise, having nothing to do with what “knowledge” is, in the real world, at best a philosophical refutation of consistent sensationalism.
- b. Empiricism had made the common mistake of trying to explain the obvious by the obscure, and then explaining away the obvious by reference to the obscure. What, actually, are we most directly acquainted with? Humean “impressions?” Or are those abstractions from our everyday knowledge of objects?

2. Reid and Christian Theism

- a. Reid is true to his Presbyterian theology in regarding the faculties of the mind as divinely implanted and therefore as trustworthy.
- b. How is God known? See principle h, above. We conclude his existence from an argument based on his actions and effects. (Plantinga, however, influenced by Reid, makes the existence of God a foundational principle.)
- c. Reid does not recognize any dependence of our faculties, evidence, arguments, upon divine revelation. (autonomy, rationalism)
- d. There is also, however, a certain arbitrariness in Reid's approach. He seems to be saying that if there is something we all want to believe, but we can't prove it, we should make it a first principle. ("When in doubt, presuppose.") Irrationalism?
- e. Reidians, however (like John Gerstner and R. C. Sproul), sometimes suggest a transcendental argument for God's existence.
 - (i) We must trust our senses, reason, etc.
 - (ii) But these have no meaning unless God exists.
 - (iii) So we must believe in God as the ground of these faculties.
 - (iv) This argument seems to me to be functionally equivalent to Van Til's transcendental argument.

XIII. Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804

- A. General
 - 1. The most important philosophical syntheses have been those of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas - and Kant. Kant develops the basic framework of thought which has controlled every non-Christian philosophy, and every liberal theology, since his time.
 - 2. Kant attempts to reconcile continental rationalism with British empiricism. As an empiricist, he wants to curb the pretensions of speculative reason (hence the "critiques" of reason); as a rationalist, he wants to establish the certainty of knowledge in science and mathematics.
- B. The "Transcendental Method": Kant rejects the mathematical method of the rationalists and the inductive-introspective method of the empiricists. He asks "What are the conditions which make experience possible - its presuppositions?" Cf. idealism, Van Til, Dooyeweerd.
 - 1. For Kant, the transcendental question reduces to the question, "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" For these terms, see introduction. For Kant, a priori judgments are

especially marked by universality and necessity, and for that reason cannot be derived from experience, which is always limited and contingent.

- a. Analytic judgments are always a priori, for they are not based on experience ($a=a$).
 - b. Normally, we think that synthetic judgments, judgments in which the predicate adds something to the concept expressed in the subject, must be based on experience.
 - c. But Kant thought there were synthetic a priori judgments that are crucial in the sciences.
 - (i) All mathematical propositions.
 - (ii) In physics, propositions like "every change has a cause."
 - d. Knowing synthetic a priori judgments requires intuition: Visualize a cube, and you will see that it must have 12 edges, though having twelve edges is not part of the concept. (JF: I'm not sure why "12 edges" cannot be considered part of the concept.)
 - (i) But this is not a priori, if the intuition is like another sense, conforming to its object.
 - (ii) So Kant supposes that the reverse is true: the object conforms to the intuition.
 - (A) the Copernican revolution.
 - (B) Parable of the intelligent jelly jars.
2. But what sort of object conforms to intuition? Not things in themselves. So, unless there is another sort of object, intuition cannot be trusted.

C. Kant's Basic Distinction: Phenomena and Noumena

1. Noumena, "things in themselves" (the *ding an sich*)
 - a. This is reality as it really is, apart from any experience of it.
 - b. Although we know that the noumenal world exists, we can have no knowledge of it beyond that. Since by definition the noumenal world is beyond our experience, it cannot be known. Here Kant accepts Hume's skepticism.
 - c. This is the irrational side of Kant; cf. Aristotle's "matter," Heraclitus' "flux." Cf. our earlier critique of irrationalism. Like other irrationalists, Kant here is forced into the inconsistency of talking about something unspeakable, of discussing what is unknowable.
2. Phenomena, things as they appear to us
 - a. Within this area, reason is fully competent. It may attain certainty. This is Kant's rationalistic side.

Here Kant reverses Plato, for whom the world of experience was the realm of "mere opinion" and another world, the world of the supremely real forms, was the world of certain knowledge.

- b. The structure of the phenomenal world, in fact, is not only apprehended by the mind but contributed by the mind. (Assumes that there is only one kind of cognitive faculties. But it is contingent that we have the kinds of faculties we have.)
- (i) "Transcendental Aesthetic"
- (A) Deals with sense-experience, and with the *intuition* by which we are acquainted with individual sense-objects.
- (B) Sense-experience is possible because the mind contributes the spatio-temporal order in which the raw data of sensation are placed. Space and time are ways in which the mind perceives.
- (ii) "Transcendental Analytic"
- (A) Deals with understanding, and the *concepts* that unite particulars together under common features. [In Kant's view, all knowledge requires both sense-experience and concepts ("Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind").]
- (B) Understanding is possible because the mind contributes the "categories" by which sense-experience can be rationally analyzed; categories such as substance, unity, plurality, causality, possibility, etc. The mind prescribes the laws of nature.
- (iii) "Transcendental Unity of the Apperception": The previous two steps in turn presuppose that all categories are manifestations of a single synthesis, a single unification of experience. I can have concepts, because I can apprehend multiple representations in my mind at once. Without this, no concepts.
- (iv) Thus, cause and effect, e.g., are invariably conjoined, not because of some mysterious power in the natural world, (Hume) but because the mind invariably arranges all experience in causal order. The jelly has a

- spherical shape, not because of some property of the jelly, but because of the shape of its jar.
- (v) Since, however, all structure to knowledge is contributed by the mind, the mind really knows nothing but itself (cf. Berkeley). The problem of relating form to matter is not solved in Kant.
 - (vi) Kant does not overcome skepticism, for he offers us objective knowledge only of appearances, nothing of reality.

D. Critique of Metaphysics

1. In Kant's view, the mind errs whenever it attempts to make judgments about matters beyond experience, i.e., about the noumenal world.
2. Specifically ("Transcendental Dialectic")
 - a. Arguments for an immaterial, immortal soul are paralogisms, i.e. they confuse different senses of "self," "subject," etc.
 - b. Arguments for a unified structure in the universe as a whole fall into antinomies, i.e. it is possible to prove both the thesis and its opposite with equal validity.
 - (i) The world had a beginning in time or did not.
 - (ii) Bodies are infinitely divisible or are not.
 - (iii) There is free will, or all is determined.
 - (iv) There is an absolutely necessary being, or there is not.
 - c. Arguments for the existence of God: the teleological is the most persuasive, but it and the cosmological rest on the ontological, which is worthless.
3. Metaphysical speculation does have a legitimate use, however.
 - a. These notions have no constitutive use (establishing the existence of things beyond experience).
 - b. They do have a regulative use.
 - (i) The notion of an ultimate structure in the world is useful to unify our scientific methodology, even if it has no objective reality. It prods us to keep on looking for higher and higher causes.
 - (ii) Similarly, the notions of God and the soul contribute unity to our thinking about physics and psychology.
 - (iii) Thus we ought to assume that certain things are true of the noumenal world, even

- though we cannot establish their truthfulness by experience. Cf. pragmatism.
- (iv) God, freedom and immortality must be presupposed also for the sake of moral decision-making. We must act "as if" God exists.
 - (v) Ethics and theology, however, are autonomous in the sense that they may never be bound by any alleged revelation.
 - (vi) The positive, regulative use of these "Ideas" is more emphasized in Kant's later writings.
- c. Comment: If we are really to "act as if" God exists, must we not, among other things, believe that he really exists and obey his revelation? Since all of life is ethical, including our belief-decisions, then surely our epistemological and metaphysical judgments must be determined by our ethical commitments. Kant, however, fails to see this. He urges us to act as if God exists, but only in certain artificially compartmentalized areas of life.

E. Implications for Theology:

a) Contra-Natural Theology

- (1) Kant refutes traditional theistic arguments and arguments for the existence of the soul or the objective world. These, he thinks, make an illegitimate logical jump from phenomena to *noumena*. They seek to reason from human experience to what is beyond experience.
- (2) Metaphysical speculation does have a legitimate use, however:
 - (a) Notions like God, world, self, have no constitutive use (naming things which exist beyond our experience).
 - (b) They have a regulative use. if we act "as if" God, the world and the self existed, we will make more progress in science, ethics. (But how can we act as if, if we don't believe they exist? Isn't such a belief part of "acting as if?")

b) Contra-Special Revelation

- (1) Kant insists over and over again on the principle of rational autonomy.
 - (a) God is noumenal, and so does not appear or speak in the phenomenal world.

- (b) If he did, he would appear to speak, not as God, but as a finite reality, subject to the categories of the rational understanding.
 - (c) Moral-religious principles cannot be established by miracles or by any event in space and time; for it is immoral to accept a moral principle on any ground other than its rationality.
 - (d) Revelation is unnecessary, because it cannot tell us anything we cannot find through (practical) reason.
 - (e) Nothing in the phenomenal world can disclose what is eternally necessary.
 - (f) Reason knows the moral law directly, while revelation is indirect at best.
 - (g) Revelation is limited in time and place, and thus cannot be the source of a universally binding religion-ethic.
 - (h) Revelation cannot be accepted unless it is verified by reason.
 - (i) Revelation is external to the self; but we can accept ethical principles only by an act of free will.
 - (j) A revelation must be verified and interpreted by scholars; rational faith is available to everyone. It is self-authenticating, self-interpreting.
 - (k) Other points; rational faith is an end, revelation a means; rational faith is complete, revelation inadequate, etc.
- (2) All liberal, neo-orthodox and contemporary "fashionable" theology is Kantian in its basic structure:
- (a) Thought is autonomous, not subject to any propositional revelation.
 - (b) The phenomena/noumena distinction is reproduced in various theological forms: *Historie/Geschichte*, I-it/I-thou, reason/ faith, historical Jesus/Christ of faith, flesh/spirit, etc., all without biblical warrant. These represent the rationalist/irrationalist dialectic.
- c) The Kantian structure allows the theologian to use much biblical language, but to integrate that language into a fundamentally unbiblical structure.
- (1) "Revelation"
 - (a) In Kant's *Religion*, revelation must always be tested and judged by reason. This is the main theme of the book.
 - (b) For theologians influenced by Kant, it is possible to understand revelation as the non-propositional influence upon us of the noumenal world, which of course we must analyze and formulate by our autonomous reason. Revelation in this sense may challenge us, but only in the sense of non-Christian irrationalism - by reminding us that there is no final truth.

- (2) "Grace" - All of our experience comes in some mysterious way from the unknown noumenal. But (see Kant's *Religion*) we must restrict our attention to what we do for God, rather than to what he does for us.
 - (3) "Faith" - Our realization that the ultimate cannot be found in phenomenal experience.
 - (4) Cf. "the square." The horizontal lines show how biblical rhetoric can be used both within an authentic biblical structure and within an unbiblical one.
- d) In Kant's thought, the autonomous self plays the role of God.
- (1) Serving as norm for knowledge and ethics.
 - (2) Creating the world.
 - (a) Kant inverts Plato: for Kant, the forms are "down here" (experience, the phenomenal), and the raw matter shaped by the forms is "up there" (the noumenal).
 - (b) All the forms are contributed by the human mind.
 - (c) The matter, the noumenal, seems to transcend us. But it cannot be spoken of. It plays no role in our thinking. Indeed, as with Aristotle, it is in a sense nothing. So we are creators of everything that actually is.
 - (3) Saving our souls. Kant's *Religion* reinterprets grace as works-righteousness.

- XIV. Idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Green, Bradley, Bosanquet, Royce, Bowman--Boman was Van Til's teacher, Blanshard). The most important figure in the movement was G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). In general, the following discussion focusses on Hegel's position.
- A. Idealism abandons the Kantian noumenal, the *Ding an sich*.
 - 1. If there is such a thing, it cannot be spoken of, and therefore it cannot play any role in a philosophical system.
 - 2. Thus we must assume that what reason discovers is the objective nature of the world.
 - 3. Hence, rationalism: "The real is the rational and the rational is the real."
 - 4. As for non-being, the unknown, it must be integrated into the knower as part of a general system of knowledge.
 - 5. "The truth is in the whole" - a comprehensive structure including non-being within it.
 - B. Thought progresses through negation and synthesis. "Dialectic".
 - 1. When we assert some things, we gain, among other things, the insight to see some truth in the opposite assertion.
 - 2. A deeper insight comes when we combine the truth of the original assertion with that of its negation. "Thesis-antithesis-synthesis". Cf. the Platonic dialogues where a broader perspective is developed out of the conflict

between two opposing viewpoints (the justification for dialogue papers in AP 601!)

3. "The real is the rational: By such "dialectic," we come to see what the world is really like. Nature and history reflect the process of development through conflict.
4. The earlier stages (of thought and being) are *aufgehoben* in the later. Hegel plays on the varied meanings of this term: preserved, canceled, lifted up.
5. The later stages are implicit in the earlier. Every idea is true when its peculiar perspective is taken into account. ("All trees are gray" conveys a truth when we learn that the statement was spoken at night.)
6. Here there is an irrationalistic element in Hegel. For at any stage of thought, a further negation and synthesis are to be expected. Hegel, inconsistently, thought that the process had ceased in his own system; but this was an arbitrary dogmatism unwarranted by his general principles.

C. The Process of Knowledge Parallels That of Nature and History
(Indeed, these two processes are identical - with some paradox. See above, C, 6).

1. The bare idea of "being" - Hegel's starting point.
 - a. It has so little content that we can scarcely distinguish it from nothingness. Close your eyes and try!
 - b. If "being" and "nothing" are meaningful at all, they must refer to a world of specific "beings" in the process of "becoming." ("Becoming" combines being and nothing; it is the process of transition from being to non-being and back again: dialectic through negation.)
 - c. Thus the "pure idea" of being leads us to belief in a natural world (hence, Hegel's "philosophy of nature").
2. Idea and nature, then, are reconciled in man, who is both spirit and matter. "Subjective Spirit"
 - a) Man as corporeal, sentient
 - b) Man as conscious
 - c) Man as ethical, self-conscious. Eliminates "subject/object" distinction.
3. "Objective Spirit": Distinctions among various finite spirits are overcome when we see their transcendental ground: the human spirit of mankind seen as a whole.
4. "Absolute Spirit": Distinction between God and the human spirit is overcome when we see the former as transcendental ground of the latter.
 - a) Art: limited revelation of Spirit.
 - b) Religion: Spirit reveals self Christologically
 - (1) Since Christ is God and man, the distinction between the two is overcome.

- (2) On the cross, both God and man died.
- (3) In the resurrection, both are raised, but in a consummate form: united in the Absolute Spirit. (Merged)
- c) Philosophy: Takes the symbols of religion and interprets them according to dialectical reason (above).
 - (1) Hegel strongly opposes a "positivistic" understanding of Scripture (literal interpretation).
 - (2) But he seeks to overcome traditional skepticism as well. We don't simply reject biblical teaching; indeed that "positive teaching" is our starting point. But through the dialectical method we discover Hegel's philosophy as the true meaning of the Scriptural symbols. The literal interpretation is *aufgehoben* in the "Spiritual."
- D. The culmination of the process: the "Absolute" or "God"
 - 1. Thought not merely corresponds to reality, but is identical with it. Else there would always be a discrepancy between thought and object, between rational and real.
 - 2. Hence "idealism": nature and history have the character of thought. They are a universal reason expressing itself.
 - 3. The Absolute is the final stage in this process--where all contradictions are resolved.
 - 4. However, the Absolute is also present during the earlier stages (cf. 2, e above). Hence:
 - 5. "History is God coming to self-consciousness."
 - 6. "Truth is in the whole": only in this ultimate context is thought fully adequate.

F. Comments

- 1. Rationalism/irrationalism: The truth is in the whole (rationalism); but we don't have the whole (irrationalism). How, then, do we have any knowledge at all? Through the assumption that somehow the whole, the absolute, is already present and known.
- 2. God/man, transcendence/immanence: Thus the whole (the absolute, God) is infinitely far from us, yet wholly identical with us. No biblical creator/creature distinction. The world and God need each other; neither is intelligible without the other.
- 3. Subject/object: supposedly Hegel overcomes this distinction, but I don't see how. Rather, from different points of view, each pole is lost in the other.
- 4. Anti-abstractionism: Hegel teaches, ultimately, that distinctions within the world are grounded in unity. Nothing can be understood "apart from" everything else. Abstract concepts *aufgehoben* in the concrete.
- 5. Autonomy of thought.

6. No place for the biblical gospel. Any alleged divine acts in history must be given a "spiritual" meaning, as dim symbols of Hegel's sophisticated philosophical concepts. Thus the actual meaning of Scripture is set aside.
7. Some positive points
 - a) Value in "transcendentalism": It is important to seek out the presuppositions of knowledge. That quest ought to lead to the God of Scripture.
 - b) Insight that knowledge grows through process of negation. But to any statement many negations are possible, and there are many ways of resolving those negations. And why should we start this process with "being?"
8. Has Hegel really gotten beyond Kant? No. The "not-yet absolute" functions, in practice as a Kantian noumenal. The "already" absolute is like the phenomenal, at least in that it guarantees certainty of knowledge up to a point. Like the Kantian concepts, the "already" and "not-yet" require one another, yet defeat one another.
9. Hegel's influence
 - a) D. F. Strauss, F. C. Baur, L. Feuerbach, K. Marx
 - b) Kierkegaard reacted strongly against Hegel (in a Kantian direction, I would say); but Hegelian structures are discernible in his thought.
 - c) Cf. "dialectical theology": For Tillich, absolute truth is found in the negation of absolute truth; for Barth, God is free to turn into his opposite, and reprobation is an aspect of election; etc. Kierkegaard rejects Hegel's "system" and his rationalism, but maintains the dialectic: "Christianity the absolute paradox."
 - d) Recent theology, especially since 1950 or so, has become less Kantian, more Hegelian: Tillich, death-of-God theology [see above, D, 5, b), (2)] secular theology, theologies of hope and liberation, Pannenberg.

XV. Gotthold E. Lessing (1729-81)

- A. Literary critic, who sought truth through public debate.
- B. Published writings of H. S. Reimarus, advocating critical approach to Scripture.
- C. No religion possesses "the truth."
 1. God reveals only what man can assimilate in a particular situation.
 2. Judaism and Christianity are preliminary stages to a third, the "Gospel of Reason."
 3. The validity of a religion is established by the behavior of its adherents. The parable of the rings.
- D. "On the Proof of Spirit and Power"
 1. How can miracles continue to serve as a basis for Christianity when we now have no miracles, only miracle reports?

2. "If no historical truth can be demonstrated, then nothing can be demonstrated by means of historical truths. That is: the accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."
3. Historical truths and metaphysical/moral truths are in two entirely different categories. "That, then, is the ugly great ditch which I cannot cross, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make this leap."
4. "So what does bind me? Nothing but the teachings themselves."
5. "But what does it matter to me whether this story is false or true? Its fruits are excellent."

E. Comments

1. Enormously influential upon later theology.
2. Motivated liberal theologians to abandon any historical basis for the Christian faith.
3. Can historical truth be demonstrated? Yes, given biblical norms (1 Cor. 15).
4. Can historical truth provide a basis for metaphysics and ethics? Yes, given biblical norms.

XVI. Frederich Schleiermacher (1768-1834): "The father of modern theology."

A. Background

1. Father a Reformed minister; exposed to Moravian-pietistic influences.
2. 1817: union in Prussia of Lutheran and Reformed churches under Frederick Wilhelm III. Time ripe for a new theology!
3. Apologetic concern: wrote "Speeches to the Cultured Despisers" of Christianity. He wants to make Christianity more credible to the intellectuals of his day. (Heresy often arises from missionary motives!)
4. Unsatisfied, however, with earlier liberal theologies. He felt they were inadequate on the uniqueness of religion and of Christianity as a religion. (The "conservative drift")
 - a) Vs. rationalism, for it tries to derive theology from nature, philosophical reasoning.
 - b) Vs. moralism, as in Kant's approach to reduce Christianity to morality.
 - c) Seeks to make much more use of the doctrines of the church's confessions, the Scriptures; he wants a Christ-centered theology. Thus his major systematic work, *The Christian Faith*, deals with the range of traditional doctrinal *loci*. He is interested in the Chalcedon formulae, the offices of Christ, original sin, election, justification by faith, the trinity, the church.
 - d) Thus, Schleiermacher is more credible than his predecessors in his allegiance to the Christian tradition. For this reason he had much more influence in the theology of the churches than did

Kant and Hegel. In my opinion, of course, that influence has been largely harmful.

- B. The Essence of Religion. Feeling of Absolute Dependence (*Gefühl schiechtinnigen Abhängigkeit*)
1. Meaning of *Gefühl* here disputed
 - a) Feeling, emotion? But how can “dependence” be literally “felt?”
 - b) Intuition?
 - c) Intuitive sense of the unity (ultimately God) underlying all the diversities of experience? (cf. Hegel)
 2. *Gefühl* underlies all human thought and culture: art, poetry, thought as well as religion. (The existential perspective) It does not give propositional information directly, but propositions may be learned as we reflect on it.
 3. Religion, therefore, is not reducible to ethics or philosophy. It has its own distinctive basis, in its particular “feeling.”
- C. Christianity
1. All religions seek to articulate the “feeling of absolute dependence” in various ways. None are false, but all are more or less incomplete.
 2. Christianity, however, does it best.
 3. Christianity is the “religion in which the sense of dependence is defined by faith in Jesus Christ as savior.” In Christianity, this feeling is understood as a consciousness of redemption from sin by Jesus Christ.
 4. Distinctives
 - a) Ethical monotheism: Absolute dependence is not materialistic or mechanical, but teleological - God showing us the law of our being. (cf. Kant)
 - b) Salvation is the full development of the religious consciousness.
- D. Theology
1. “Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech.”
 2. “Canon for dogmatic statement:” “We shall exhaust the whole compass of Christian doctrine if we consider the facts of the religious consciousness, first, as they are presupposed by the antithesis expressed in the concept of redemption, and secondly, as they are determined by that antithesis.”
 3. Method: On each subject, look at the two chief opposing views (e.g. the opposition between orthodoxy and enlightenment). Seek to resolve the problem by going back to the religious consciousness which both parties are seeking, however fallibly, to articulate.
- E. Revelation
1. Clearly, “experience” or “feeling” is, for Schleiermacher, the ultimate standard for theology, and in that sense the ultimate form of revelation. This is “Christian experience,” but Christian experience interpreted by Schleiermacher's concept of general religious experience.

- a) Revelation cannot consist of concepts or propositions because God is beyond all concepts, though presupposed by them.
 - b) Revelation is not given in the “abstract,” i.e. objectively, but is always “for us.”
 - c) Revelation may never be “directly given,” for it is always exposed to counter-influence by the recipient.
 - d) Revelation may never be something external. Anything which I don't accept inwardly cannot be revelation to me.
2. Natural theology: Schleiermacher rejects this as advocated by enlightenment rationalism. Theology presupposes a distinctively religious consciousness, faith.
3. Scripture
- a) The Scriptures “have arisen out of the Christian religion;” they are themselves a human attempt to express religious affections in words.
 - b) Thus they do contain errors.
 - c) Nevertheless, Christian theology is restricted to them in one sense. No dogmatic statement can be accepted which cannot be derived from Scripture in some way. Scripture defines that content which is distinctively Christian. Thus Schleiermacher is “conservative” in that he proposes a “positive” starting point for theology.
4. Tradition, confessions
- a) In *Speeches on Religion*, he commends the “desposers” of Christianity for denying traditional dogmas and reminds them of the necessity to distinguish between the propositions of religion and religion itself.
 - b) In *The Christian Faith*, the emphasis, at least, is more conservative: “All propositions which claim to place in an epitome of Evangelical doctrine must approve themselves both by appeal to Evangelical confessional documents, or in default of these, to the New Testament Scriptures, and by exhibition of their homogeneity with other propositions already recognized.” (p. 112)
 - c) Since, however, Schleiermacher regards Scripture and the confessions as containing error, and since, in any case, they are to be interpreted according to Schleiermacher's understanding of the religious consciousness, the two emphases above are reconcilable. Schleiermacher's true authority is *Gefuhl*, interpreted autonomously. Other authorities merely provide the definitive list of symbols which must be used in a Christian interpretation of that *Gefuhl*.

F. God

- 1. “...in the first instance signifies for us simply that which is the co-determinant of that feeling.” “God” is the name we give to that

reality upon which we feel absolutely dependent. Initially, that is all we know about him.

2. Pantheism? Panentheism? Much debate here. Obviously, Schleiermacher wants to draw at least a religious distinction between ourselves and that on which we feel absolutely dependent. But there is a lot of pantheistic language in Schleiermacher, and it is not clear just what sort of distinction (beyond the religious) he would allow between God and the world.
3. Personal? Also problematic in Schleiermacher. He finds problems in personalistic language about God, similar to the problems noted by Tillich: that language tends to make God "a" being "among others." (Transcendence principle - anti-abstractionism).
4. Attributes: The qualities we ascribe to God are expressions of our relationships to him. Schleiermacher opposes any talk of the essence of God in abstraction from his relations to us.
5. Trinity: "the coping stone of Christian doctrine"
 - a) Derived from the doctrine of salvation.
 - b) Represents different ways in which God relates to man and the world.
 - c) Point: it is the same God who is at work in providence, in Christ, in the Spirit who is in the church. Else, disunity.

G. Man

1. Predisposition to good - inalienable God consciousness (*Gefuhl*)
2. Sin
 - a) Not violation of a particular command in history ("external" "legalist") Schleiermacher considers it arbitrary to think that man's eternal life or destruction can be made contingent upon one decision or one man at one moment of time.
 - b) Definition: sensuous consciousness
 - (1) Preoccupation with this world rather than God
 - (2) Thus sin is the opposite of religious "feeling."
 - c) Part of man's original constitution, universal, unavoidable
 - (1) No possibility of a perfect Adam.
 - (2) Man was not fully developed spiritually at his origin, and since then his biological and intellectual development has progressed more rapidly than his spiritual and moral development. The discrepancy between these is sin. So is not "no," but "not yet" (Tillich)
 - (3) Christ anticipates our future state.
 - d) Sin can be understood only as a privation of good; therefore our basic goodness (God-consciousness) continues despite sin.

H. Christ (center of theology, object of faith - vs. Kant, enlightenment)

1. Historical Jesus
 - a) Had religious feeling in unique measure
 - b) Crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, return

- (1) Schleiermacher believes these, thinks them important to the doctrine of Scripture.
 - (2) They are not, however, important to our understanding of the person of Christ. One can believe in him without knowing about these facts.
 - (3) Redemption does not come through such historical events ("external," "accidental"). Vs. "artificial theories."
2. Christ as savior
- a) Not only example, but archetype of what man essentially is in union with God (inalienable God-consciousness).
 - b) Thus, he embodies possibilities inherent in human nature. Christ is important in showing us those qualities which already exist in us. (Man never in abstraction from Christ or *vice versa*)
 - c) He anticipates our future state (see G, c, 2, above) (cf. Pannenberg)
 - d) He is "sinless"
 - (1) Because there is no sin in our essential God-consciousness
 - (2) We confess the sinlessness of Christ, not as a historical conclusion, but from an analysis of the Christian religious feeling concerning Christ.
 - e) He "bears our sins"
 - (1) Vs. "external" sin-bearing - our obtaining forgiveness through the suffering of another. An artificial theory.
 - (2) He sympathizes with our imperfect condition.
 - f) The three offices
- I. Grace
1. Election in Christ (since we are potentially Christ in ourselves).
 - a) The decree of salvation is ultimately the same as the decree to create, since the latter ordains the development of religious consciousness from potential to actual.
 - b) Thus "Christ even as a human person was ever coming to be simultaneously with the world itself."
 2. Thus grace merely ordains the development of human potential. Man is always free to accept or reject it, but the historical purpose of God's decree will be fulfilled.
- J. Church
1. Theology is the work of the church, not individuals (see E, 4, above).
 2. The church is the historical organism which is determined by God-consciousness (*Gefuhl*).
 3. As such, it continues the incarnation of Christ, for that is what he is.
 4. Since all have the potential for full development of God-consciousness, the church is destined to include all men.
 5. Since it derives from a single experience, it ought to seek unity in organization.
 6. The church ought to exclude heresy (the "positive" starting point); but it ought not to reject other religions as false.

K. Ethics

1. Describes the ways in which the Christian's communion with God influences his actions.
2. Essentially a struggle to maintain unity, "peace" between apparently (but not actually) conflicting realities: spirit and flesh, ideal and real, reason and nature, individual and universal, production and appropriation.
3. Favors reforms in the condition of the poor, etc.
4. Disparages "law" in the name of "love." (As modern situationists)
 - a) Law "does not pierce behind the outward act." Thus it cannot deal with motives.
 - b) The two commandments (Matt. 22:36-40) of love therefore, are not commandments at all!

L. Eschatology

1. Modern man can dispense with the idea of judgment.
2. "Realized" eschatology: synthesis with modern cultural aspirations.

M. Comments

1. Principle of rational autonomy: Schleiermacher does not want to derive Christianity from autonomous reason, but he allows no revelatory controls to be placed on the use of reason.
2. He does seek to derive Christianity from autonomous feeling—feeling which he assumes to be intelligible apart from the revelation of God.
 - a) It is not wrong to regard feelings as "fundamental" in some senses. As I have argued elsewhere, reason cannot function in the absence of feelings - a feeling of unrest in the face of inadequate reasoning, a feeling of satisfaction with adequate reasoning. A "valid argument" is, in one sense, an argument that we "feel" satisfied with - after, of course, our feelings have undergone refinement! Seeing feelings as fundamental is simply viewing matters from the existential perspective.
 - b) However, it is wrong to view those feelings as autonomous - i.e., as independent from God's word. Feelings, like reasoning, must be "refined," taught, as they learn to respond to the values and criteria of Scripture. Schleiermacher not only neglects this principle, but he denies it. His doctrine of Scripture will not produce such criteria. Thus he is caught in the rational/irrational dialectic.
3. Note, however, the "conservative drift," suggesting a greater allegiance to Scripture and tradition than Schleiermacher actually has:
 - a) The "positive" starting point in Scripture and the creeds. Schleiermacher here is simply noting the obvious fact that the distinctives of Christianity are defined by these primary documents. He is not, however, giving any substantial authority to these documents.

- b) The thoroughness with which Schleiermacher goes through all the traditional *loci* (making his own use of them!) in contrast with the reductionism of the enlightenment rationalists and the sketchiness of Kant and Hegel. The christo-centric focus.
- 4. The God/man dialectic, transcendence/immanence.
 - a) God beyond predication, not “a” being.
 - b) God found in our deepest *Gefuhl*; pantheistic language used.
- 5. Subject/object dialectic
 - a) Schleiermacher basically a subjectivist, opposed to any truth “in itself” or “apart from us.”
 - b) Historical events as such can have no saving effect, only the change in us through preaching is revelation. (Cf. Bultmann) His argument, characteristic of many liberals after him, is not that these events didn't take place, but rather that believing them is not “necessary” for faith. Confusion here on the concept of necessity.
 - c) Still, in line with the principle of rational autonomy, Schleiermacher allows “objective” scholarship perfect freedom to tell us what did or did not happen in history.
- 6. Salvation
 - a) Christ is reduced to potentialities in human nature. Cf. Kant.
 - b) Salvation is reduced to works-righteousness.
 - c) The history of salvation becomes a mere metaphor for the development of man's religious sensibility from potential to actual.
- 7. Anti-abstractionism: with a vengeance, finding unity behind all “divisions”
 - a) No God, truth “apart from us”
 - b) Everything “in relation to Christ”
 - c) Vs. “external” relations to God, “artificial” views of salvation.
 - d) This vague rhetoric is often the only sort of argument Schleiermacher uses. By it, God and man, God's grace and human nature, are virtually identified. If we resist these conclusions, then we must concede that this sort of argumentation is at best ambiguous and inadequate.

XVII. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889)

A. Background

- 1. Vs. Kantian moralism - but deeply influenced by the Kantian phenomenal/noumenal scheme, more than was Schleiermacher.
- 2. Vs. speculation - though originally a student of the Hegelian Baur
 - a) Dismisses doctrines thought to have arisen from Greek speculation, e.g. the preexistence of Christ.
 - b) Vs. “general ideas, unconnected with revelation” (anti-abstractionist)

- c) “Back to Jesus via Scripture and the reformation” (conservative drift)
 - 3. Vs. “Christian consciousness” as starting point (as in Schleiermacher)
 - a) Start with historical facts
 - b) Through autonomous historical scholarship, get back to the historical Jesus.
 - 4. Impact
 - a) The so-called “older liberalism” of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is more directly influenced by Ritschl than by Schleiermacher. Herrmann and Harnack were known as “Ritschlians.”
 - b) Barth tends to give Ritschl short shrift -does not take him nearly as seriously as he takes Schleiermacher.
- B. Epistemology
- 1. Historical scholarship
 - a) Seeks to base his theology upon an autonomous historical analysis of Jesus' life and teaching.
 - b) As a historical scholar, Ritschl is critical of the biblical record, but somewhat more “conservative” than earlier scholars like F. C. Baur and David Straus.
 - (1) Earlier dates for N.T. materials.
 - (2) Vs. the idea of a conflict within the apostolic circle: main conflict is between the apostles and the Judaizers.
 - c) Ritschl, however, seeks a ground of certainty more ultimate than that which can be found in historical scholarship. Hence:
 - 2. The Value Judgment
 - a) Knowledge of God is not a knowledge of historical facts, but in the values discerned in those facts.
 - (1) “Values” are chiefly ethical, but not only so. Ritschl sees them as aspects of reality.
 - (2) Knowledge of God, then, is of “value judgments evoked by revelation.”
 - b) Thus, we study history only to find its value for our lives.
 - c) Theology is practical, not theoretical.
 - (1) “All theological propositions have for their aim the explanation of the phenomena of the Christian life.”
 - (2) We can't know things in themselves, but only as they are connected with us. (cf. Kant, anti-abstractionism)
 - (3) The theoretical/practical distinction here is reminiscent of Kant, but Ritschl, unlike Kant, believes that one can develop a theory of the laws of spiritual life.
- C. God
- 1. Does not exist “in himself,” only in connection with us. (Application of the anti-abstractionism of the value-judgment concept)
 - 2. Fundamental principle of nature, morality.

3. His character: love for all men (hence, universalism)
4. Personal?
 - a) Yes, because spirit is prior to nature.
 - b) Divine personality is understood via our own: his lacks the restraints which we must contend with. (But does such negative theology lead us to the personality of God, or only to abstract nothingness? - JF)

D. Man, Sin

1. Ritschl assumes that moral life is always an individual achievement. Thus, no imputation of righteousness or of sin. Imputation “abstracts from the subject who produced it.”
2. Sin is not a legal category, not transgression of law. Since God is love, we are not subject to a “legal world order.”
3. Sin is actually an abuse of freedom; it disturbs the proper relation between freedom and moral value. Ignorance.

E. Christ

1. Important is not his nature, but his value for me. A doctrine of Christ must show how he can make me morally better.
2. Thus we know him by knowing what he does for us. (Revelation as event.)
3. Vs. doctrines from “Greek metaphysics”: pre-existence, eternal equality with God.
 - a) These have no practical value for us.
 - b) They create a great gulf between Christ and us, make it impossible for us to imitate him.
4. Deity
 - a) Rightly understood, this is an ethical judgment, Jesus receives the divine title because he has been supremely faithful to the task given him by God.
 - b) We confess his deity because of his unique value for us. He is a man whom we value as God.
 - c) Thus his saving work is all the more valuable.
 - (1) His righteousness is not guaranteed by metaphysical deity: like us, Jesus must struggle to maintain his righteousness from moment to moment.
 - (2) Thus he is capable of imitation by us.
 - (3) All of us, therefore, are capable of sharing Jesus' divine attributes.

5. Resurrection: Historically dubious, soteriologically unimportant.

F. Salvation

1. Actualization of the potential for moral improvement in all men.
2. Jesus sacrificed himself for the community, but this act is not the source of our salvation. Faith is directed, not to Jesus' past, but to his present to the moral change he accomplishes in us today. Ritschl polemicizes against the orthodox view of Jesus' atonement as a satisfaction for sin.

3. No imputation of righteousness in the orthodox sense (above, D); but imputation may be reinterpreted: we are taken into God's love where the roots of our own humanity are to be found. As such, forgiveness is gracious, creative, not based on pre-existing merit.
4. Universalism
 - a) Because God is most fundamentally love, for all.
 - b) Because human nature and personality is one. Possibility of moral improvement is innate in all.

G. Ethics

1. Spirit is prior to nature, establishes its value.
2. Spirit uses nature to its purposes.
3. Thus, the Christian life is action to bring nature under the dominion of man's spiritual purpose.
4. Result of this activity: the kingdom of God
 - a) The common moral end of God and man
 - b) "Union of men for mutual, common action, for the motive of love."
 - c) Emphasizes communal nature of this venture, vs. individualism.
 - d) Not an eschatological concept; within the range of present possibility.
 - e) Hence the evolutionary optimism of the "social gospel."

H. Comments

1. "Value-judgments"
 - a) Truth is in order to godliness; theology is application. It is true that we are interested, not in some "bare facts" about God, but in his value for our lives.
 - b) Certainly the confession of Jesus' deity, e.g., consists partly in an affirmation of his supreme value to us.
 - c) Problems:
 - (1) Ritschl seeks to ascertain these values autonomously, not submitting to Scripture's account of what those values are.
 - (2) He seems to think that in some cases, anyway, the nature of a thing or person is irrelevant to its value.
 - (a) Clearly that is not right Christ would not have supreme value to us if he were not God by nature.
 - (b) Implicit in our value-judgments are metaphysical judgments. We cannot grant "supremacy" to someone who is merely one of us. (See my *Doctrine of God*)
2. Anti-abstractionism: seeks to overcome all "dualisms," but with very little clarity. God/man, righteousness/agent, fact/value.
3. Emphasis on intellectual and moral autonomy central.
4. Immanence of God emphasized; transcendence if found in the fact/value dichotomy, Ritschl's unwillingness to say anything about what God is.
5. Subject/object dialectic
 - a) Value/fact, anti-metaphysics

- b) Polemic vs. “legal” world-view, vs. righteousness “external” to us. Reinforces autonomy.
- 6. Salvation: works-righteousness again. This is the only “salvation” possible, once we reject all “legal,” “external” righteousness, and once we humanize Christ as Ritschl does. Without a clear creator-creature distinction, too, grace is unintelligible.
- 7. Conservative drift: for all this, Ritschl's thought has a more orthodox “feel” than Schleiermacher's.
 - a) More emphasis on history.
 - b) More emphasis on reformation distinctives (justification, etc.)
 - c) More conservative biblical scholarship.

XVIII. Wilhelm Hermann (1846-1922)

A. Influence

- 1. Teacher of Barth and Bultmann. Both rebelled against him in various ways, but his positive influence upon both is quite discernible, even in the development of their distinctive views.
- 2. His “personalism” contributes importantly to the “personal encounter” theology of Brunner and others, and to the existentialist theologies of Bultmann, *et al.*
- 3. J. Gresham Machen studied with him in Germany, was greatly impressed.
 - a) “Deep religious feeling, contagious earnestness”
 - b) “If ever a man was devoted to Christ, it was Hermann.”
 - c) Machen came to reject Hermann's liberalism, but only after a struggle.
 - d) In my view, it was this struggle with liberalism at its best, at its most attractive, that made Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* such a cogent critique.

B. Revelation, Faith, History

- 1. Revelation is only that which serves as a foundation of my faith.
- 2. Thus, faith is not based upon any historical judgment.
 - a) Mere history passes into the past, leaving us with a Christ no different from other historical figures.
 - b) Faith is based upon a present reality, an experience in which we apprehend Christ as immediately as did the first disciples.
 - c) We are concerned, however, with history (vs. Schleiermacher); for we wish to understand and something of the inner life of Jesus as a model for our own present faith.
- 3. Scripture
 - a) The words of others cannot be revelation to me unless I accept them in faith, (cf. Barth)
 - b) In rejecting this principle, orthodoxy warrants only intellectual assent, not true faith in which Christ is apprehended directly.
 - c) Scripture gives probable evidence (but not certainty) concerning the history of Jesus.

- d) Reading Scripture can bring Jesus close to us; without Scripture there can be no encounter between us and Jesus.
- C. God
- 1. A religious, not a cognitive concept.
 - 2. God paradoxical. (cf. Barth)
 - a) Hidden, near
 - b) Inner confidence resolves apparent contradictions.
 - c) But Hermann will not accept what he believes is a real contradiction, we cannot be resolved through that inner confidence.
 - d) No contradiction between God's nature and personality, nature and work.
 - e) God found, not in nature, but in history.
- D. Man: emphasizes unity, freedom of personality.
- E. Christ
- 1. We know he existed by the fact of his influence; but that is not sufficient as a basis for faith.
 - 2. Resurrection
 - a) No way of knowing what actually happened.
 - b) But the “appearances” generated faith in the disciples and gave birth to the church. That is sufficient for us.
 - 3. Exaltation: again, the important thing is that the early church somehow came to believe that salvation on earth should be consummated.
 - 4. The most important thing about the historical Jesus is his inner-life-as-model for our faith.
- F. The Church: Enables us actually to feel the impact
- G. Comments
- 1. Rationalism/irrationalism: autonomous historical scholarship/faith beyond all historical judgments.
 - 2. Transcendence/immanence:
 - a) God hidden/near, etc.
 - b) God beyond concepts, but identified with our experience.
 - 3. Revelation as present, subjective change. falsely accuses orthodoxy with denying this. The real contrast is that Hermann makes inner change to be the whole of revelation, while denying those objective aspects of revelation affirmed by orthodoxy.
 - 4. Salvation: works, again Imitating the inner life of Christ. Human potential
 - 5. “Conservative drift”: powerful rhetoric against mere formalism, intellectualism; apparent affirmation of the reality of God, personal character of our relationship to him. Actually such rhetoric is belied by Hermann’s theology in which God's relation to us is vaguely mystical.

XIX. Adolf Harnack (1851-1930)

- A. Importance
1. Leading N.T. scholar and church historian.
 2. Also influenced Barth, Bultmann.
 3. Wrote influential popular treatment of liberalism, *What is Christianity?*
- B. History and Faith
1. Historical criticism necessary to separate kernel from husk in Scripture. (Actually, however, Harnack takes somewhat more conservative positions than his predecessors on matters of biblical scholarship. He recognizes, especially, much historical value in the Lucan narratives. Thus we may trace the “conservative drift” from Strauss and Baur through Ritschl to Harnack).
 2. Faith not based on historical events
 - a) Religious truth not discoverable through sensation.
 - b) Faith affirms God against the world (paradox).
 - c) Nor is it based on some future eschatological expectation concerning the external world.
 - d) The truths it affirms are timeless.
 3. There are no miracles, but the concept of miracle helps encourage a sense of freedom from nature (cf. Bultmann).
 4. Faith is practical, not theoretical; has no interest in the philosophical concepts of orthodoxy, derived from Greek philosophy (cf. Ritschl).
- C. Reductionism
1. The genius of Protestantism, says Hermann, is to reduce theology to its basics, vs. the complications of philosophical theologies.
 2. The N.T. teaches:
 - a) The kingdom of God and its coming
 - b) The fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul
 - c) The higher righteousness and the commandment of love.
- D. God
1. The gospel proclaimed by Jesus concerns only the Father, not the Son.
 2. All men are children of God.
- E. Christ
1. Jesus is not the object of our faith (even in respect to his inner life, as in Hermann)
 2. He was the first to bring the gospel to light.
 3. His pure spirituality, filial piety show us how to be true sons of God.
 4. He dissociates the concept of Messiahship from its external, legal Jewish associations.
 5. Ontologically, he is a mere man, but an example to us .
 6. The resurrection: faith that he gained victory over death.
- F. The Gospel
1. Dichotomies: spirit/flesh, God/world, good/evil, soul/world
 - a) Original unity prior to disunities.
 - b) Seek or use nature for spiritual ends (cf. Ritschl)
 2. Don't serve transient, external things.

- G. Comments: Not too different from Ritschl, though something of a simplified form of Ritschlianism. A kind of bridge between Ritschl and Bultmann.

XX. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

A. Importance

1. We are taking Kierkegaard out of chronological order, because his major impact on theology did not begin until about 60 years after his death.
2. His writings were perhaps the most important factor in motivating Barth and Bultmann to move beyond Ritschlianism. Barth later sought to distance himself from Kierkegaard - especially from his time/eternity dialectic; but the basic structure of his thought (in my opinion remained very close to Kierkegaard.
3. Kierkegaard has also had much influence upon secular philosophers - one of the few modern Christians to have such influence.
 - a) Existentialism - especially Heidegger. Some would dispute the existentialists' use of Kierkegaard.
 - b) Wittgenstein, the language analyst, read Kierkegaard before it became fashionable to do so. This may account for a number of Wittgenstein's views, particularly his analysis of religious language.
4. For all of his influence upon liberal theology and secular philosophy, it is not at all clear that his thought should be classified with either of those two traditions. He is at least arguably evangelical; at least, one can find edification in his writings in a way that one cannot find in such as Barth and Bultmann.

B. Background

1. Personal problems
 - a) Anxiety-ridden childhood
 - b) Broken engagement
 - c) Persecution by the press
2. His concern: how to become a Christian within "Christendom" - i.e. the formalism of the state church.
3. Reaction against Hegel's attempt to reduce Christianity to a philosophical system.
4. Very well educated, but did not (except occasionally, usually with satiric intent) write in an "academic" style.
5. Wrote using pseudonyms.
 - a) Admiring Socrates, he wanted to convey truth, not simply by describing his views, but by presenting various alternatives to the reader, producing an internal "dialogue."
 - b) Thus, he would not be suspected of reducing the truth to a "system."
 - c) This is a form of "indirect communication" (below).

C. Vs. System (anti-abstractionism)

1. Abstract concepts cannot adequately describe individual existence, motion.
 2. Arguments, propositional knowledge never, in themselves, force one to choose, to act.
 - a) Arguments are in hypothetical form ("if p then q"). They yield a conclusion only if the premise is accepted; but that requires a free decision.
 - b) Once a conclusion is granted, another free decision is necessary if one is to act upon that conclusion.
 3. Such decision and action is what is most crucial to human nature. Therefore abstract concepts and arguments are quite limited in value.
 4. What is needed is concrete description of the nature of decision; but that is difficult to convey in words which by their nature are somewhat abstract. "Indirect communication" seeks, without abstract description, to give one sense of how this takes place.
 5. There are additional reasons why Christian faith, as a human decision, cannot be conveyed through the communication of abstract concepts. See below.
- D. Stages on Life's Way (You can't get from one stage to another by thinking; you must make a "leap.")
1. The Aesthetic Stage
 - a) Uncommitted, irresponsible, dedicated to pure enjoyment; selfish.
 - b) Won't take a stand for fear of boredom.
 - c) May be diabolical, manipulative.
 - d) Growing weariness, self-disgust, despair.
 - e) Key: Unwilling to choose a way of life; simply living from moment to moment. No "either/ or."
 2. The Ethical Stage
 - a) Kantian obedience to absolute moral law.
 - b) Mutual obligation, not living as a mere spectator.
 - c) Universal standard: do what is right for all men -- vs. individual inclination.
 - d) Incorporates the aesthetic stage, deepens it: Only the ethical is truly beautiful.
 - e) Find your duties based on your station in society (idealism).
 - f) Frustration, however: we do not in ourselves have the power to keep the moral law.
 3. "Religion A"
 - a) All forms of religion, including paganism, formalized Christianity, which fall short of true faith (religion B).
 - b) Trying to relate to God, absolve guilt, based on your own resources.
 - c) Recognition of divine -- essentially passive relation to him.
 - d) Characteristics

- (1) Resignation (renounce relative goals)
 - (2) Suffering (sorrow over resignation, need of transformation)
 - (3) Guilt
 - (a) Recognizes partially severed fellowship.
 - (b) With unknown god
 - e) Passive participation in ceremonies, ordinances, religious duties (as in the Danish state church).
4. "Religion B"
- a) True Christianity, governed by faith alone.
 - b) At God's initiative (incarnation, establishing a relationship with men).
 - c) Object: the absurd, the absolute paradox, the eternal entering time.
 - (1) Not a real contradiction, but an apparent one.
 - (2) Eternal truth related to an existing individual (cf. C, above)
 - (3) Not resolvable in a higher "synthesis" as in Hegel
 - (4) Beyond Religion A: not just going beyond the evidence, as in religion A, but belief in something which itself is paradoxical.
 - (5) Also transcends moral law (Abraham and Isaac).
"Teleological suspension" of the ethical norms.
 - d) Thinks of God as a person, not a mere idea, as religion A.
 - e) Not a doctrine, but an "existence-communication" by which we are actually transformed. No "direct communication."
 - f) Sense of sin
 - (1) Can't be explained, but only experienced (How can an innocent person fall into sin?)
 - (2) Genesis 3 -- not historical, but describes everyman.
 - (3) Unlike the "guilt" of religion A, this is an offense against a personal God.
 - (4) Thus the break in fellowship is seen to be far more radical.
 - g) Living in the spirit/life of the flesh. vs. formal religion.
 - h) Can give reasons, but cannot await all the facts (like marriage).
 - (1) Don't choose because of promises of blessing; Jesus offers only sufferings.
 - (2) Vs. Platonic recollection: here the moment is decisive; the moment in which we are actually transformed.
 - (3) Unlike other knowledge, the person of the teacher is important to the learning of it. His willingness to die for truth.
 - (4) Grace is decisive.
 - i) Religion B combines the immediacy of the aesthetic sphere with the decisive choice of the ethical, Almost like a Hegelian dialectic, though Kierkegaard, would resist the comparison.
 - j) Thus Religion B is not conveyed through assent to propositional truth, It is possible to believe all true religious propositions without true faith, without the passionate inwardness which constitutes "subjectivity."

E. God

1. Emphasis on transcendence, wholly-otherness, yet “contemporary”
2. The true God is *incognito* - i.e., he cannot be reached through the rational processes of science and philosophy. He can be grasped only in passionate inwardness.

F. History

1. Kierkegaard is basically orthodox on the events of redemptive history.
 - a) He does question the historicity of the fall (above).
 - b) Somewhat suspicious of “higher biblical criticism;” generally accepts the text as is.
 - c) Many positive statements about Scripture: see Nygren in Geisler, *Biblical Errancy, Kierkegaard's Authority and Revelation*.
2. However, he does not believe that historical knowledge provides an adequate basis for religious certainty.
 - a) History warrants only probability; faith requires certainty.
 - b) History does not necessitate a decision of faith. (Lessing's ditch)
 - (1) Being persuaded of the historicity of the resurrection will not necessarily make you a believer.
 - (2) Thus, no “direct revelation in history” (“revelation” being understood in the subjective sense). No matter how great the evidence, we must decide.
3. Thus the historicity of biblical stories is less important for Kierkegaard than for most evangelicals.
 - a) In comparison with the moment of faith.
 - b) In comparison with the present life of faith: one's faith in Christ, indeed, in the resurrection, ascension, etc. , is shown more by how he lives than by his verbal profession. The meaning of these beliefs is found in their use (cf. Wittgenstein)
 - c) In the moment of faith, we become “contemporaneous” with Christ. The passing of historical time cannot affect this.
4. May faith, for Kierkegaard, be authentic even when its object is false? Consider this famous passage from the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (pp. 179-180): “If one who lives in the midst of Christendom goes up to the house of God, the house of the true God, with the true conception of God in his knowledge, and prays, but prays in a false spirit; and one lives in an idolatrous community prays with the entire passion of the infinite, although his eyes rest upon the image of an idol: where is there most truth? The one prays in truth to God though he worships an idol; the other prays falsely to the true God, and hence worships in fact an idol.”
 - a) Note that Kierkegaard uses “true” in two different ways in this passage.
 - (1) “True conception,” “true God” before the first semicolon: objective truth. Kierkegaard never denies the existence of objective truth.

- (2) "Truth" in "where is there most truth?" This is what Kierkegaard calls elsewhere "truth as subjectivity" -- i.e. an authentic, proper personal response to truth through decision. "Doing" the truth.
- b) Thus, Kierkegaard does not concede any objective reality to the object of idolatry, nor question the objective reality of the true God.
 - c) At the level of "subjective truth," certainly he is right in his account of the nominal Christian. In an important sense, he is worshipping an idol; for only an idol could respond to his trust in mere formalism.
 - d) What of K's account of the pagan? Here it is harder to defend K., and his account certainly opens the door to, e.g., Tillich's equation of passionate doubt with faith, or the claims to faith of the "Christian atheists." On the other hand, there is John 7:17. It is not possible for the Spirit of God to give to a pagan a passionate desire to know the true God, a desire which only at a later point will be fulfilled in a more accurate conceptual understanding? On the Reformed view, this is what God does in regenerating infants.

G. Comments

1. Much of Kierkegaard's thought can be given a favorable interpretation from an evangelical point of view, if we keep in mind his distinctive preoccupation with the subjective side of the gospel, with the application rather than the accomplishment of redemption.
 - a) He does not deny the objective truth of the creedal doctrines (on the whole).
 - b) But he (rightly' especially in his situation) stresses the need of appropriating salvation, the hopelessness of one who "assents" but does not trust.
2. It is certainly true that the truth of a proposition or the validity of an argument will not force anyone to accept it, let alone act upon it One must decide to submit to truth.
3. May we define faith as assent to the propositional truth of Christianity? Gordon Clark would say yes, Kierkegaard, no. In my view, it is important to distinguish different strengths of assent.
 - a) It is possible to believe a proposition with little intensity or constancy, perhaps mingled with belief in its opposite (inconsistent), so that the proposition has little effect upon behavior. Clearly such assent is not the life-changing faith of the N.T.
 - b) But if an assent is held strongly and consistently enough to dominate one's behavior (and certainly this is the chief test of whether one believes something), then that assent may be described as "faith." But such an "assent" could also be described as Kierkegaard's "passionate inwardness."

- c) Clark, then, errs in failing to distinguish these different degrees or strengths of assent.
 - d) Kierkegaard errs in his assumption that assent is something altogether different from a decision to behave differently. In fact, assent and decision are inseparable. Each involves the other.
4. Much psychological and conceptual insight in Kierkegaard's account of the "stages."
 5. Does faith act in the absence of adequate evidence? No; the evidence is adequate. (Romans 1, I Cor. 15; and Abraham did hear the voice of God.) But is often contrary to what the unbelieving mind is willing to accept as evidence (I Cor. 1-2).
 - a) This does not mean that every believer must be a scholar. The "evidence" is obvious, available to all. Thus we are never faced with the need to "wait until the facts are in."
 - b) Kierkegaard does not distinguish, as we have, between believing and unbelieving criteria for evidence. As such, he implicitly (though not intentionally) grants validity to the unbelieving criteria. He ought to have rejected those criteria rather than rejecting the sufficiency of the evidence.
 6. Is Christianity "paradoxical?"
 - a) Depends on what you mean. As long as we remember that Kierkegaard does not have "real logical contradiction" in mind, we can accept what he says about Christianity transcending rational categories.
 - b) Does faith involve a "teleological suspension of the ethical?" I would say no for "the ethical" is in Scripture nothing more or less than the will of God. When God declares an exception to a general ethical principle. Now it may seem that all of this amounts to a quibble over the definition of "ethical;" but once we allow for an "ethical" sphere based on something other than God's will, we have conceded the possibility of "neutrality."
 7. Is faith independent of history?
 - a) In saying that historical study warrants only probable conviction, Kierkegaard is conceding the "neutral," unbelieving concept of history advocated by Lessing. We can be certain about history when our historical information comes to us through God's word.
 - b) Does historical knowledge (even when held with certainty) warrant faith? This is a special case of the question about faith and assent discussed above (3). I would respond to it similarly here.
 - c) May we believe in the absence of a true object? See F, 4 above.
 8. Is Kierkegaard a liberal or an evangelical? Hard to say.
 - a) Some motifs join him to the liberal tradition:
 - (1) Rationalism/irrationalism: Conceding neutrality to the secular historian, etc., while stressing the limitations of reason in the realm of faith.

- (2) Transcendence/immanence: God wholly other, yet contemporary.
- (3) Subject/object: Emphasizes revelation in the subjective sense as opposed to objective revelation in history.
- b) But there are reasons to regard him as evangelical:
 - (1) He does not proclaim the autonomy of human thought, though like many evangelicals he inadvertently concedes neutrality to secular thought in some areas.
 - (2) He is not, for all his talk of paradox, a “dialectical” thinker in the usual modern sense. His dialectical language is essentially the affirmation of a certain emphasis.
 - (a) Rationalism/irrationalism: He really doesn't believe that faith contradicts rational standards, but he stresses what he conceives to be the limits of reason. Similarly he does not concede autonomy to reason at any level.
 - (b) Transcendence/immanence: He does not deny the objectivity of God's saving acts in history.
 - (c) Subject/object: see b. He emphasizes the subjective, but does not deny the objective.
- 9. His worst error, as I see it, was to concede neutrality to unbelieving thought in various areas (history, philosophy, ethics). Having done that, he had to formulate the faith-relation as something transcending thought, history, ethics. In doing this, he plays into the hands of the liberal tradition, though other evangelicals have done the same.
 - a) His thought, therefore, is not as clearly biblical as it ought to be.
 - b) He has unwittingly given a new set of tools, arguments, to the liberal tradition—tools by which the liberals can make their views appear more convincingly “conservative.”
- 10. Note strong anti-abstractionist thrust. I agree with Kierkegaard that abstract concepts in themselves cannot do justice to individuality. However, whenever we seek to “understand” or “use” abstract concepts, we are already “applying” them to our individual situations (meaning is application.) At that point, we are not dealing merely with abstract concepts; we are dealing with abstract concepts plus our own decisions to use them in certain ways. Thus in practice the use of abstract concepts can determine behavior. At any rate, there is no evidence that any sort of “indirect” communication can do better.

XXI. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)

A. Nihilism

- 1. Kant had destroyed traditional metaphysics. No knowledge of reality in itself. For Nietzsche, no universal a priori categories either.
- 2. Traditional religion had lost its power in modern culture—“the death of God.”
- 3. Schopenhauer's response: pessimism. Nietzsche sought a life-affirming alternative.

- B. Response: a “transvaluation of all values.”
1. Accept joyfully the death of God and its naturalistic implications.
 2. Reject moral and religious principles that restrict the full expression of your will to power. Christianity a “slave morality.”
 3. Aspire to be an *ubermensch* (overman, superman), who achieves more than the “herd” through superior creativity.
- C. Epistemology
1. “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”
 - a. “Knowledge,” as usually understood, is a fiction, feeding human pride.
 - b. The intellect is a tool to secure our own interests, get along with the crowd.
 - (1) The “desire for truth” never disinterested. Just a desire for a pleasant life.
 - (2) No interest in knowledge for its own sake.
 - c. Language
 - (3) A word is just a “copy in sound of a nerve stimulus.” We may not infer a cause of that stimulus from something outside ourselves.
 - (4) Language is essentially metaphorical: applying the same word to unlike things.
 - (5) Logic same. A kind of prison. If we were different kinds of beings, we would use different logics.
 - d. At most, there is an aesthetic relation between subject and object.
 - e. Illusions not always bad. We should use the imagination self-consciously to create metaphors (mythology, art), *good* deceptions, to enhance the quality of life.
 2. *The Cheerful Science*
 - a. “We simply lack any organ for knowledge, for “truth”: we “know” (or believe or imagine) just as much as may be *useful* in the interests of the human herd, the species: and even what is called “utility” is ultimately also a mere belief, something imaginary and perhaps precisely that most calamitous stupidity of which we shall perish some day.”
 - b. More radical than pragmatism: we can be wrong even about what is useful.
 3. Perspectivism
 - a. No facts, only interpretations.
 - b. Self-refuting? But interpretations not necessarily false.
 - c. Nietzsche acknowledges truth of specific facts, but not of general theories.
 - d. Assertions can be compared with one another in particular situations, but no criteria are applicable to all.
 - e. Irresoluble disagreement, however, is a fundamental fact of human life.