

Philosophy *KATA CHRISTON*

A Pastor's Guided Introduction to Philosophy for the Gospel Ministry

Gregory P. Schulz

Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University Wisconsin
Senior Faculty, DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/wlk316g3dr>



Theology: *Disputata* on the Eucharist (left) and Philosophy: School at Athens (right) by Raphael (c. 1510)

Brief invitation to the course <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/wlk316g3dr>
Session One – Philosophy’s Aboutness <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/f4wewjgsa3>
Session Two – Philosophy’s Mode <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/ejx0b88kd1>
Session Three – Philosophy and Language <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/5oa8ksa5uu>
Session Four – Logic <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/e8vcv118ev>
Session Five – Metaphysics (Ontology + Epistemology)
<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/kg9vohdb3u>
Session Six – Ethics <https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/10w0gqke9g>
Three Socratic Dialogues
<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/2azsb141h0>
<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/jcbqy3qnz0>
<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/phn0e8v73g>

Table of Contents

Prolog	..... Page 2
Augustine's Prayer from <i>Confessions</i> 1	..... Page 3
Session One – Philosophy's Aboutness	..... Page 4
Session Two – Philosophy's Mode	..... Page 8
Session Three – Philosophy and Language	..... Page 10
Session Four – Logic	..... Page 14
Session Five – Metaphysics (Ontology + Epistemology)	..... Page 18
Session Six – Moral Philosophy (Ethics)	..... Page 21
Psalm 22	..... Page 25
Resources	
Three Socratic Vignettes Regarding Knowledge	
Introduction	..... Page 27
1. Mae Noh	..... Page 30
2. Navigating by Capital-T Truth	..... Page 36
3. A Non-Alcoholic Symposium	..... Page 42
What Next?	
PHIL 101 – Narrated PowerPoints, Week by Week	..... Page 48
10 Master Metaphors	..... Page 49

Prologue

My approach to Philosophy *KATA CHRISTON* (see Colossians 2:6-9) is enframed by two texts. Both are prayers to the God who reveals Himself to us human beings in the biblical text, the Holy Scriptures.

The first prayer is from opening paragraphs of Augustine's *The Confessions*. It identifies a central existential reality for us as human beings in our *inquietus* or *Angst* apart from God in Christ.

The second prayer is Psalm 22, a prayer from God to David, from David to Jesus Messiah, from Jesus the Second Person of the Triune God to each of us, to be prayed back to God in the midst of our suffering in our time of grace.

My guiding question: *What can philosophy do for confessional Lutheran thinking and what can confessional Lutheran thinking do for philosophy?* Although I think this conversation ought to include thoughtful persons whatever the level of their commitment to Lutheran thinking, I myself hold an unqualified *quia* subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. I've actually made a public promise to teach in line with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions (in fact, I am an ordained Lutheran pastor with 35-plus years in the public ministry).

We sometimes hear that religious piety undercuts our academic pursuit of truth. I accept and even welcome the tension this creates for me, day in and day out. On the one hand, I come to my intellectual commitments honestly, as the result of my ongoing thinking about Lutheran doctrine, to satisfy myself whether and to what extent (*quatenus*) it agrees with Scripture. On the other, I find that the Lutheran mode of thought -- in particular, our theology of the cross and our doctrine of the means of grace -- is deeply satisfying and winsome.



Disputa - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AK4DBIMyHsE>
School at Athens - see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOrG6jfBzEU>

Book I

INFANCY AND BOYHOOD

Opening prayer and meditation

1, 1. Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise,¹ your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning.² And so we humans, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you—we who carry our mortality about with us,³ carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud.⁴ Yet these humans, due part of your creation as they are, still do long to praise you. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.

Grant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first: to call upon you or to praise you? To know you or to call upon you? Must we know you before we can call upon you? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake. Or should you be invoked first, so that we may then come to know you? But how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?⁵ But scripture tells us that those who seek the Lord will praise him,⁶ for as they seek they find him,⁷ and on finding him they will praise him. Let me seek you, then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher.

2, 2. How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into

¹See Ps 47:2 (48:1); 95 (96):4; 144 (145):3.

²See Ps 146 (147):5.

³See 2 Cor 4:10.

⁴See 1 Pt 5:5.

⁵See Rom 10:14.

⁶See Ps 21:27 (22:26).

⁷See Mt 7:7–8; Lk 11:10.

Session One – Philosophy’s *Aboutness*

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/f4wewjqa3>

Biblical revelation first. From a contemplation of Colossians 2:8-10 we establish the contrasting foundations of a deceptive Philosophy versus a Philosophy *KATA CHRISTON*, founded on Christ Himself, God incarnate in the person of Jesus Messiah. Philosophy is about fraternizing with wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God. Philosophy is about capital-T Truth and the meaning of human life. Jesus is the Truth (*aletheia*) and the Life (*zoe*). He is, as the apostle reports “the Wisdom of God”.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God**. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in **Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God**, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1. Philosophy is about fraternizing with wisdom.

"I see, my dear Theaetetus, that Theodorus had a true insight into your nature when he said that you were a philosopher, for wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and **philosophy begins in wonder**" (155d, where Plato quotes Socrates).

Aristotle echoes the Theaetetus passage: "It was their wonder (*thaumazein*), astonishment, which first led men to philosophize and still leads them." (982b12 of his *Metaphysics*)

Augustine puts the friendship with wisdom this way: *Nulla est homini causa philosophandi, nisi beatus sit*. "There's no reason for a person to be philosophizing unless it's because he or she is **working toward ultimate happiness**" (*City of God*, XIX).

Jeffrey L. Kasser -- "Philosophy is the art and science of asking questions that come naturally to children, but with the critical tools that come naturally to lawyers" (The Great Courses series *Philosophy of Science*, Lecture One).

1.1. Philosophy can be done either *kata ta stoichea* or *KATA CHRISTON*.

Whence spring those "fables and endless genealogies," and "unprofitable questions," and "words which spread like a cancer?" From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names *philosophy* as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, "See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost." He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. **What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?** What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon," who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart." Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief.

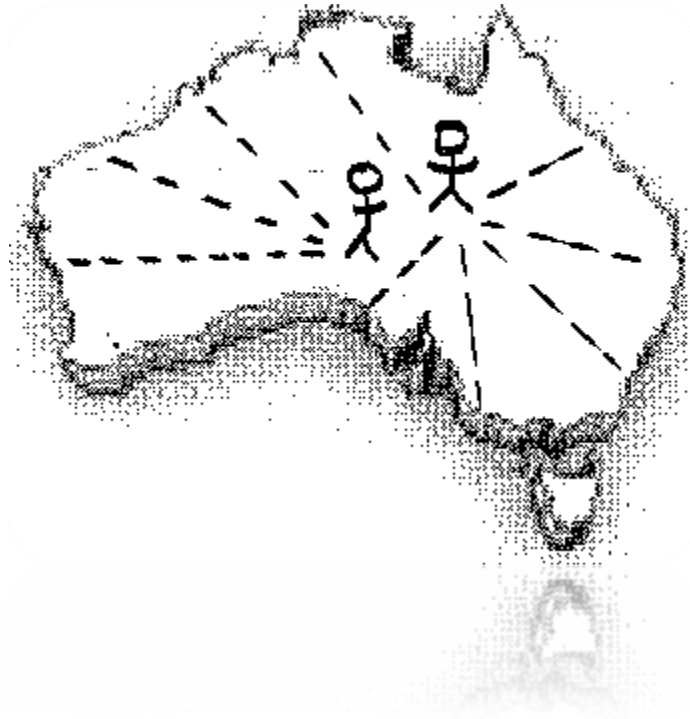
-- Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* (On the prescription of heretics), Chapter 7

Colossians 2:8-10

imper	8	Βλέπετε
appre fut ind		μή τις ὑμᾶς ἔσται
att ptc		ὁ συλαγωγῶν
4 prep phr		διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας
		καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης
		κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων,
		κατὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου
		καὶ οὐ κατὰ Χριστόν
causal	9	ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος σωματικῶς,
2nd verb ὅτι	10	καὶ ἐστὲ ἐν αὐτῷ
peri		πεπληρωμένοι,
rel cl		ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας.

Deppe, D. (2006). *The Lexham Clausal Outlines of the Greek New Testament (Col 2:8-10)*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software. My annotations, GPS.

1.2. Philosophy done *kata ta stoichea* can establish critical boundaries.



Mapping the Ocean by Walking the Island
(Or, Drawing a Limit to the Expression of Thought) –
re *Tractatus* Preface from Wittgenstein's letters

1.3 Note well: An authentically Christian philosophy or a philosophy of religion cannot be done *nisi per Verbum* or “except through the Word” on pain of becoming merely *kata ta stoichea* or “based on the ABCs of the cosmos.”

“We have heard that some after setting aside the Gospel, have, instead of a sermon, explained the ethics of Aristotle.” [***] **But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word.**”

-- Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Article IV. Justification)

So, in our “normed and normative” confessional writings we Lutherans confess that God cannot be treated with, that He cannot be apprehended, *nisi per Verbum*, except through the Word. Now, this is first a confession regarding our Lord Jesus, God Himself incarnate, since Jesus is identified as the *Logos* (Greek) or *Verbum* (Latin) of God in John 1. It also entails a commitment to the exact language of the Bible and perhaps to a certain kind of philosophy of language. It is a first principle.

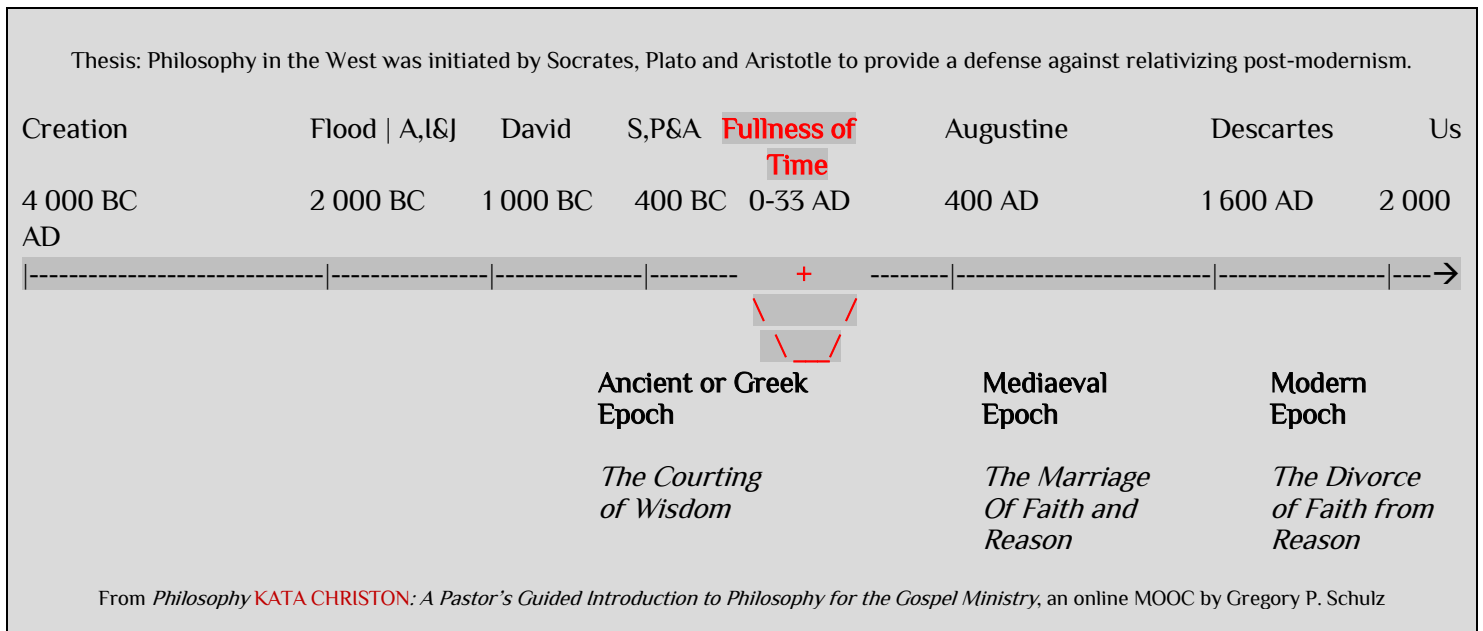
2. Philosophy can be understood to be about the perennial Problem of Evil, but *evil* is understood very differently in modernity

If there's a problem of evil engendered by Lisbon, it can occur only for the orthodox: how can God allow a natural order that causes innocent suffering? The problem of evil posed by Auschwitz looks like another entirely: how can human beings behave in ways that so thoroughly violate both

reasonable and rational norms? It is just this sense that the problems are utterly different which marks modern consciousness.

-- Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*

3. Philosophy in the West was initiated by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to provide a defense against postmodernism.



4. In other words, Western Philosophy was founded to pursue capital-T Truth.

Truth Theories – 3 + 1

- I. First, there is the **correspondence theory** of truth which claims that propositions are true iff (if and only if) they correspond with the facts of the world as it is. My example for correspondence theory is sometimes Aristotle, sometimes the early Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*.
- II. Second, there is the **coherence theory** of truth which maintains that a statement is true if it coheres with other statements or axioms within a given system. I use geometric theorems, particularly Euclidean theorems, and then Non-Euclidean geometries, as an example of coherence theory.
- III. Third, there is the **pragmatic or instrumental theory** of truth which essentially recommends that we never mind whether our beliefs cohere or correspond, but instead agree that the only question is whether our belief helps us to achieve more important outcomes such as civility and happiness. For pragmatic theory I like to talk about William James or refer to Richard Rorty.

The + 1 Truth Theory

- IV. Finally, there is the **hypostatic theory**. Though there are resources available for developing this from the ground up as a philosophical theory (see Florensky 14-38, 55-62 and Reardon), in view of Kierkegaard's argument in *Fragments* I will present this fourth theory as a straightforward biblical or Christian understanding of the Truth, plain and simple.

The hypostatic theory of truth follows from Jesus' words in John 14:6, *Ego eimi he hodós kai he aletheia kai he zoe*, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life ..." Jesus does not offer merely to provide access to the truth or simply to serve as a teacher of the truth; He declares that He *is* the Truth. He is Truth incarnate – nothing figurative about it.

In the careful Christological language of the Christian Church as preserved and promoted by Lutheran theology (for example, in Martin Chemnitz's 1578 *The Two Natures in Christ*) we are used to speaking of the *hypostatic* or personal union of the divine and human natures in the person of our Lord Jesus. Hence, the hypostatic theory maintains that Jesus is the personal embodiment of truth: Everything has been created by Him and for Him.

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation**: brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

Session Two – Philosophy's Mode

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/ejx0b88kd1>

As to its methodology, Philosophy is best practiced not as discourse or argument exclusively on the horizontal or human level; instead, it is best practiced as dialogue as first on the vertical (the Three-Personed one God to us human persons) and then the horizontal level (person to persons). Following Augustine, we can say that the proper mode of Philosophy is for us to be in dialog with God and His Word. This is Philosophy *KATA CHRISTON*. From this it follows that doing Philosophy in a preemptively speculative mode is Philosophy "according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world", an undertaking that will lead to us being taken "captive by philosophy and empty deceit".

Psalm 8

3When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and **the son of man** that you care for him?
5Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
6You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

Hebrews 2:5-9

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 6 It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or **the son of man**, that you care for him?

7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. 9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, 12 saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

1. Philosophy is done in language.

The Author Problem of Doing Philosophy

“To imagine a language is to imagine a way of life” (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

- (a) Philosophy is an attempt to give an account of Reality.
- (b) If one provides any measure of 'the real', one can always, in turn, pose a question about the reality of the measure. No measure offered can avoid this difficulty.
- (c) As a result of (b) one may abandon the whole enterprise of giving an account of reality and embrace a skepticism about any notion of reality.
- (d) As a result of (b) one may admit that it makes sense to seek an account of reality but be entirely skeptical as to whether one can, in fact, arrive at an adequate account.
- (e) As a result of (b) one may assume that philosophy cannot give an account of Reality as a whole, because that conception is confused. No one measure of 'the real' can be provided. 'What we need to recognize is that in human activities there are many conceptions of 'the real' and 'the unreal'. Philosophy must settle for pointing this out, clarifying the differences between them: and locating the confusion of attempting to transcend them in a more comprehensive account of Reality.
- (f) Despite recognizing the difficulties mentioned in (b), philosophy's task described in (a) is not abandoned as it is in the different reactions found in (c), (d), and (e). **All our discourse refers to Reality. Were that not so, our dialogues would simply be an absurd collection of arbitrary activities.**

| -- D.Z. Phillips, *Philosophy's Cool Place*

2. Philosophy in our generation is done after the “death of God” in Western culture.

| The Madman (excerpt)

“Whither is God?” he cried. “I shall tell you. *We have killed him* – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. **God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.** How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of the deed too great for us? Must we not become gods simply to seem worthy of it? ...

| -- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, (German, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*)

3. Notwithstanding the so-called “death of God” in Western culture, language as the public domain dialog that it is, is not “mere interpretation” but is the means of working together toward capital-T Truth.

| Excerpts from my *Three Socratic Vignettes* – 1. Mae Noh and 2. Navigating by Capital-T Truth

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation**: brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

Session Three – Philosophy and Language

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/5oa8ksa5uuuu>

Contemporary language deconstruction and postmodern hermeneutics are decidedly pessimistic about the function of language in objective communication. Can postmodernism provide help for our hermeneutics? Rather than focusing on communication theories, the business of Philosophy of Language is to attend to language as it is. We need this primer for our ministry today in a world that is determined to be *a-literate*.

God reveals himself to us in words. Remember the first principle of *nisi per Verbum*. Our experience of language as exhibited in the biblical text depends in the first place upon our reading of the integrity of the *written text* of the Bible. As the means of God's grace that the biblical text is, it demonstrates that language is not our tool that we employ as mental signifiers to affect the minds of our auditors more or less successfully (as Hobbes); on the

contrary, *language has us*. It is the atmosphere in which we develop as persons and commune dependably, Person to persons and person to person.

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [...]

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own people^[c] did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. Our generation faces a corrosive postmodern view of language exemplified by authors such as Jacques Derrida.

Concerning Derrida and the Deconstruction of Reason

But the evolution of intellect in the West, also, inclines ever more toward the destructive pathologies of reason. Was not the atom bomb already an overstepping of the frontier, where reason instead of being a constructive power, sought its potency in its capacity to destroy?

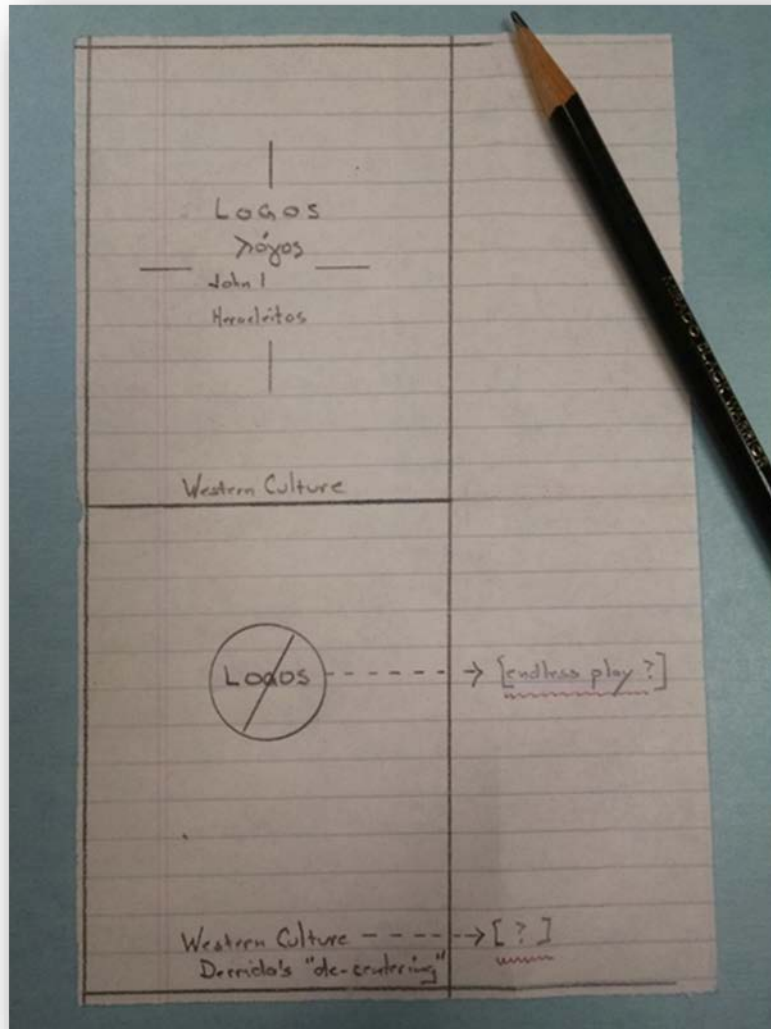
When reason, now with the investigation into the genetic code, snatches at the roots of life, ever more does it tend to see human being, not any longer as the gift of God (or of Nature), but as a product to be made. Man is "made," and what man can make, he can also destroy. In all this is the concept of reason made ever flatter. Only what is verifiable, or to be more exact, falsifiable, counts as rational; reason reduces itself to what can be confirmed by an experiment. The entire domain of the moral and the religious, belongs then to the realm of the "subjective" - it falls outside of common reason altogether. One no longer sees that as tragic for religion - each one finds his own - which means that religion is seen as a kind of subjective ornament, providing a possibly useful kind of motivation. But in the domain of the moral, one seeks to be better.

Reason fallen ill and religion abused, meet in the same result. To a reason fallen ill, all recognition of definitively valid values, all that stands on the truth capacity of reason, appears finally as fundamentalism. All that remains is reason's dissolution, its deconstruction, as, for example, Jacques Derrida has set it out for us. He has "deconstructed" hospitality, democracy, the state and finally, the concept of terrorism, only to stand in horror in the face of the events of September 11th. A form of reason that can acknowledge only itself and the empirical conscience paralyzes and dismembers itself.

A form of reason that wholly detaches itself from God, and wants simply to resettle Him in the zone of subjectivity, has lost its compass, and has opened the door to the powers of destruction. **It is the duty, in these times, of us Christians to direct our concept of God to the struggle for humanity. God himself is Logos,** the rational first cause of all reality, the creative reason out of

which the world came to be, and which is reflected in the world. God is Logos - Meaning, Reason, Word, and so it is through the way of reason that man encounters God, through the espousal of a reason that is not blind to the moral dimension of Being.

-- Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *In Search of Freedom; Against Reason Fallen and Religion Abused*



My Diagram of Derrida's Attack on *Logocentrism* (see his 1967 *Of Grammatology*)

2. There are resources within the Western philosophical tradition capable of overwhelming *Derridadaism*, so to speak, and the postmodernist version of deconstructionism, with reality – the reality of language and human being as they are.

A Blog on Socrates and Written Text

Real knowledge, Socrates said, can only be gathered via dialog: a give and take of questions and answers where ideas are interrogated until the knowledge is truly understood. But with a book, that cannot be done unless one has access to the author. In the excerpt, he says:

[Writing] will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.

What's interesting to think about is whether throughout human history, if it actually has been the case that all knowledge has been passed down via dialog — in universities and other discussion forums — with books being only an interesting aid. In other words, if a child grew up alone with a Kindle containing all of the books in the Library of Congress, could he gain the same kind of knowledge which a normal person gains via social interaction? Or more pragmatically, could you understand the true, intended and complete meaning of the words you are now reading if we didn't share the same knowledge?

From <http://apt46.net/2011/05/18/socrates-was-against-writing/>


- ❖ Whereas philosophy begins in wonder (Plato and Aristotle) and seeks to discover the truth of living the good life humanly and ethically,
- ❖ postmodernism begins in the cynical, unreasonable rejection of every-thing (as in Parmenides and the sophists, Nietzsche, Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty), while always and everywhere undermining (and *under-minding*!) truth, human life and ethics.
- ❖ Being *a mindset and not a historical phase*, postmodernism erupts again and again, a pseudo-intellectual acid attack in the face of our resolute philosophical efforts to live together as authentic, genuine human beings.

3. I recommend that our philosophy of language ought to begin with God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, which establishes language as essentially a means-of-grace communication or person-to-person communion.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

"Fusion of Horizons"

- Horizon – Expresses the width of vision that a person who is trying to understand must have
 - Range of vision from a particular view point
- Fusion Of Horizons
- Cannot be fully achieved
- Horizon of Interpretation – Changes continuously
- "Understanding is always the fusion of horizon"
(T.M p.306)



from <http://www.slideshare.net/asmajamali88/gadamers-hermeneutics>

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation:** brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

Session Four – Logic

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/e8vcv118ev>

Inasmuch as we are human beings, logic is part and parcel of our being. Thus, our academic study and normal daily use of logic is in opposition to postmodern efforts to deconstruct and dismiss what Derrida disparages as *logocentrism*. Our cosmos and the microcosm of our minds are orderly or logos- like, through and through.

John 1:14

So the word of God became a person, and took up his abode in our being, full of grace and truth; and we looked with our own eyes upon his glory, glory like the glory which an only son receives from a father (William Barclay's translation).

It might well be held that this is **the greatest single verse in the New Testament...**

-- William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series*

Greek: *Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.*

1. Once again, postmodern notions of language have a corrosive effect on our thinking, on our use of language and logic.

Deconstruction often involves a way of reading that concerns itself with decentering—with unmasking the problematic nature of all centers. According to Derrida, all western thought is based on the idea of center—an origin, a truth, an ideal Form, a Fixed Point, an Immovable

Mover, an essence, a God, a Presence—which is usually capitalized, and guarantees all meaning. Derrida has taken the deconstruction of metaphysics, particularly logocentric metaphysics, as his critical target. His early training in phenomenology led to a wariness of, and a tempered respect for, the desire for presence all pervasive in Western philosophy: a presence of meaning, being, and knowledge.

According to Derrida, the primary goal of Western philosophy as a discipline, the naming of Truth, depends on the assumption that words are capable of referring accurately to a transcendent reality existing outside of language. For instance, for 2000 years much of western culture has been centered on the idea of Christianity and Christ. And it is the same in other cultures as well. They all have their own central symbols. The problem with centers for Derrida is that they attempt to exclude. In doing so they ignore, repress or marginalize others (which becomes the other). In male-dominated societies, man is central (and the woman is marginalized Other, repressed, ignored, pushed to the margins).

If there is a culture which has Christ in the center of its icons, then Christians will be central to that culture, and Buddhist, Muslims, Jews—anybody different—will be in the margins—marginalised—pushed to the outside. So the longing for a center spawns binary opposites, with one term of the opposition central and the other marginal. Furthermore, centers want to fix, or freeze the play of binary opposites.

Thus, the opposition Man/Woman is just one binary opposite. Others are Spirit/Matter; Nature/Culture; Caucasian/Black; Christian/Pagan. According to Derrida we have no access to reality except through concepts, codes and categories, and the human mind functions by forming conceptual pairs such as these. Here one member of the pair (here left), is privileged. The right hand term then becomes marginalized. Icons with Christ or Buddha or whatever in the center try to tell us that what is in the center is the only reality. All other views are repressed. Drawing such an icon is an attempt to freeze the play of opposites between, for example, Christianity/Jews or Christianity/pagan. The Jew and the Pagan are not even represented in such art. But icons are just one of the social practices that try to freeze the play of opposites—there are many more—such as advertising, social codes, taboos, conventions, categories, rituals, etc. But reality and Language are not as simple and singular as icons with a central as icons with a central, exclusive image in the middle—they are more like ambiguous figures.

-- Derrida's *deconstruction* summarized by Jayant Prasad at <https://newderrida.wordpress.com>

2. The corrosive and anti-intellectual outcomes of postmodernism are best addressed via our reasonable and regular, confident employment of natural language.

Being logical presupposes our having a sensitivity to language and a knack for its effective use, for *logic and language are inseparable*. It also presupposes our having a healthy respect for the firm factualness of the world in which we live, for *logic is about reality*. Finally, being logical presupposes a lively awareness of how the facts that are our ideas relate to the facts that are the objects in the world, for *logic is about truth* (D.Q. McInerney, *Being Logical*).

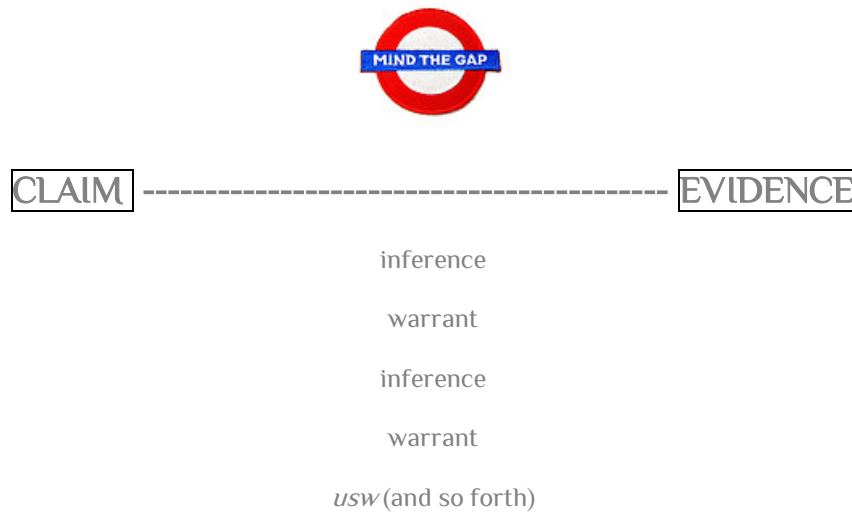
Inasmuch as we are human beings (*zoon logon echon*, according to Aristotle; “agents of truth” according to Robert Sokolowski), logic is part and parcel of our being. Thus, our study and use of logic is in opposition to postmodern efforts to deconstruct and dismiss *logocentrism*.

Consider the terms *logos*, logic, thinking, and reason, from Heraclitus to St. John (John 1:1 & 14); from the medieval trivium to 20th-century ordinary language philosophy.

The Three Acts of the Mind
adapted from Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*

NAME OF ACT	1 st - Understanding	2 nd - Judgment	3 rd - Reasoning
MENTAL PRODUCT	Term	Proposition	Argument
LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION	Word or Phrase	Declarative Sentence	Paragraph
EXAMPLE OF EACH	“Man,” “Mortal”	“Socrates is a man.”	All men are mortal. And Socrates is a man. Thus Socrates is mortal.
STRUCTURAL PARTS	None	Subject Term and Predicate Term	Premises and Conclusion
QUESTION ANSWERED	What it is	Whether it is	Why it is
ASPECT OF REALITY	Essence	Existence	Cause
GOOD WHEN	Clear or unambiguous	True	Valid
HOW ACHIEVED	Definition of terms	No one way	Rules of Logic
BAD WHEN	Unclear or ambiguous	False	Invalid
QUESTION TO HABITUALLY ASK	What do you mean? (Define your terms.)	What is your point? (State your conclusion.)	Why? (Prove it.)

In place of the syllogism for Third Act of Mind, I recommend this structure of informal argumentation, which I have adapted from David Zarefsky:



Until "our spade is turned" (Wittgenstein) and we can argue no further!

3. In keeping with the *logos* of reality as it is – and resisting every effort to “decenter” the Logos incarnate – we will want to be aware of both the standard types of reasoning and also of the presupposed type of reasoning that characterizes our age.

Let's agree that there are four types or modes of reasoning, namely,

1. Reasoning *deductively* or with certainty (e.g., tautologies, syllogisms)
2. Reasoning *inductively* or with probability (e.g., scientific method)
3. Reasoning *abductively* or generating hypotheses (see Pierce)
4. Reasoning *analogically* or arriving at similarities by way of comparison.

Let's also note that we differentiate between *formal logic*, which is typically concerned with deductive reasoning, and *informal logic*, which is typically concerned with inductive, abductive, and analogical reasoning. In other words, formal logic teaches the valid forms of deductive reasoning, whereas informal logic tutors us in how to navigate the inferential gap between a claim and the evidence offered in support of that claim. There may also be a fifth type, reasoning *technologically*.

“Technology enframes us.”

-- Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation:** brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

Evolutionary theory reduces the essence of being human to mere biological mechanisms. To communicate clearly across the chasm of that assumption we need to attend to the stuff of *ontology*. The unique question essential to fundamental human identity: “Why are there existing things, rather than absolutely nothing at all?” (Heidegger’s German: *Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts? Das ist die Frage.*) Contemplating this question reveals that there is more to us than can be accounted for by the scientific method.

The question regarding the sufficiency of the natural sciences to help us know what it means to be human – or whether scientific knowledge is only one type of knowledge among many types that we require for leading full lives – is the business of *epistemology*. Epistemology concerns our wise and true responses to three questions: “What do we know? How do we know it? Can we be sure?”

Ecclesiastes 1

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

² **Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.**

³ What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?

⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens^[4] to the place where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south
and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.

⁷ All streams run to the sea,
but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow,
there they flow again.

⁸ All things are full of weariness;
a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

1. *Ontology* speaks to the question of who we are as human beings.

Levels of Being or Ontology

[?]

Human being = $m + x + y + z$

Animal = $m + x + y$

Plant = $m + x$

Rock = m

Let m be matter, x be life, y be consciousness, and z be capacity to self-reflect.

Then, we can also say that z is *logos*, as in Aristotle's definition of the human being as *zoon logon echon* (ζῷον λόγον ἔχων;) in his *Politics*, Book 1.

Following this, we are ready to take to heart Luther's biblical understanding of the human being in his 1536 Disputation Concerning Man.

Finally, we arrive at the philosophical understanding articulated by Martin Heidegger (a reader of Luther). He says that the human being is essentially a *logos* being, that language is the "house of our being" while we are its "guardians".

-- algebraic scheme adapted from E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*

Heidegger's Ontologically Revelatory Question

"Why are there beings at all, and why not rather nothing?"

OR

"Why are there meaningful things at all rather than the no-thing?"¹

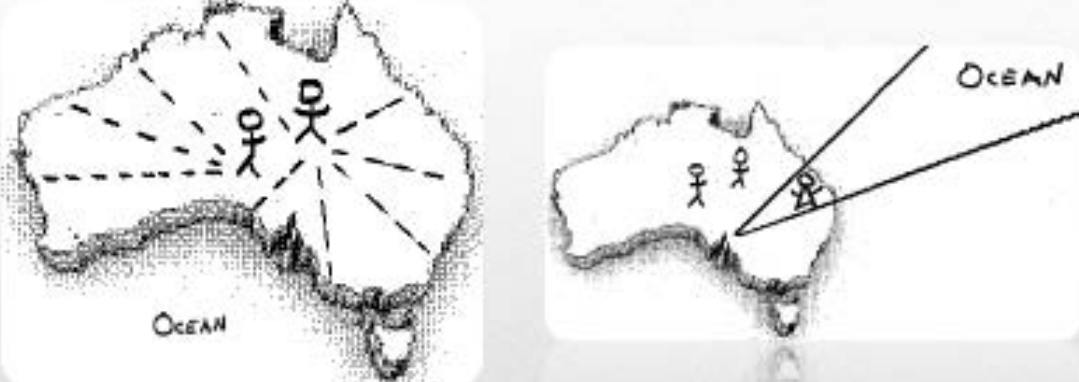
- ❖ This question is the concluding sentence of Martin Heidegger's 1929 lecture, "What Is Metaphysics?"
- ❖ It is also the opening sentence of a 1935 lecture series that's been published as *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

1. First, what does his question mean? (Hint: Note the titles of the two writings.)

¹ Translation by Michael Sheehan, accessed November 2016 at www.religiousstudies.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/1929-WHAT-IS...

2. Second, what do you *think* about this question? (Hint: Practice the 1st Act of Mind.)
3. Third, how do you *feel* about this question? (Hint: Identify your feeling as either a short-term emotion or a long-term mood.)
4. Finally, taking account of (1-3), **what kind of being does this question reveal us to be?**

2. Epistemology speaks to the questions regarding what we can know, how we know anything and whether we can be sure.



The image contains two hand-drawn maps of Australia. The left map shows two stick figures walking across the island, with dashed lines radiating from them to the coast, representing the limits of their knowledge. The right map shows two stick figures walking along the coast, with solid lines radiating from them to the ocean, representing the limits of their knowledge. Both maps are labeled 'OCEAN'.

Mapping the Ocean by Walking the Island
(Or, Drawing a Limit to the Expression of Thought) – re Thucydides Preface from Wittgenstein's letters

Mapping the Ocean by Walking the Island
(Or, Drawing a Limit to the Expression of Thought) – re Thucydides Preface from Wittgenstein's letters
(my addition re revelation)

Wittgenstein – Language and Logic

My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have *not* written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. (Wittgenstein, Letter to Ludwig Ficker of circa September October 1919)

When he nevertheless takes immense pains to delimit [i.e. mark "the limits of language"] the unimportant [the first part, i.e. logic and "what can be put into words"], it is not the coastline of that island [i.e. the first part] which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy, but [instead] the boundary of the ocean [the second part: the mystical]. (Engelmann, *Memoir*, tr. Furtmtiller, McGuinness)

from [http://www .roangelo.net/llogwitt/](http://www.roangelo.net/llogwitt/)

So, Wittgenstein in effect provides a *via negativa* philosophical argument to clear the decks for biblical revelation by demonstrating what thinking alone cannot accomplish – and what it cannot rule out.

As the apostle Paul puts it,

But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

| *Three Socratic Vignettes* – 3. A Non-Alcoholic Symposium

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation:** brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

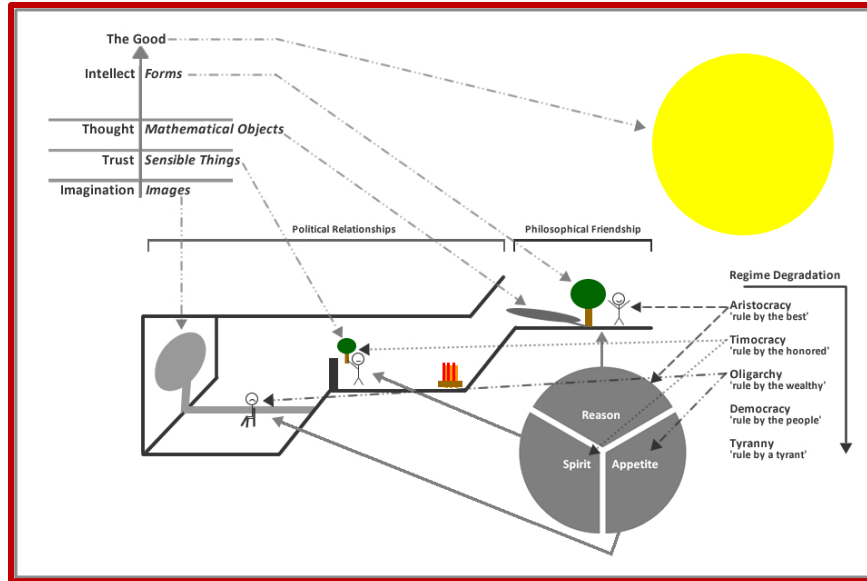
Session Six – Moral Philosophy (Ethics)

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/10w0gqke9g>

“How then shall we live together as human beings?” In the 16th Century Luther wrote in his address to the Christian nobility urging university reform for “improving the state of Christendom” that Aristotle was a “blind heathen teacher” and that Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* was “the worst of all books. It flatly opposes divine grace and all Christian virtues ...” And so, he argued an ethic of repentance, an ethic *KATA CHRISTON*.

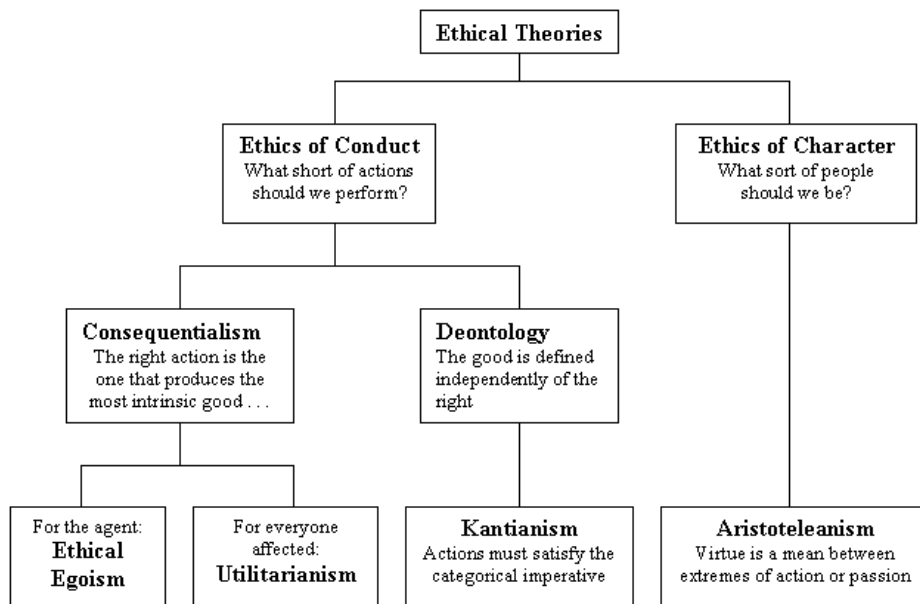
In light of the 18th-century Enlightenment and Kant’s *categorical imperative* we can see in the 21st Century the crushing failure of doing ethics as if God did not exist. Our *post-secular society* (Habermas) *exhibits the fundamental irrationality of its thinking in mainstream bioethics. For compassionate and faithful pastoral ministry today we need both Philosophy and ethics KATA CHRISTON.*

1. In the Western tradition ethics has been concerned with our knowledge of The Good, a search for the criterion or moral norm to show us how we ought to live as human beings.



http://www.narrowgate-rmartin.com/foundations_classnotes/images/plato_allegories.jpg

Plato's Cave, from *Republic 7*



<http://stphilosophy.wikispaces.com/file/view/ethicsOverview.gif/363293936/ethicsOverview.gif>

2. Consider the so-called *deontological* approach to ethics.

Kant's Categorical Imperative

Version #1 – "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

Schulz's paraphrase: *Instead of sitting back and letting your pastor tell you what to do and not do, imagine yourself in God's position. Be sure to act always in line with a moral law that you know to be objective, universal, and intelligible.*

Version #2 – "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means."

Schulz's paraphrase: *As a rational human being yourself, never degrade other human beings or yourself by treating any human being as merely a means to an end.*

Version #3 – "A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates it in universal laws while also being himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign, when as legislator he is himself subject to the will of no other."

Schulz's paraphrase: *We exhibit our ethics in our actual moral practices. Are you taking your autonomous being seriously? That is to say, are you both a dutiful law-maker and a dutiful law-follower?*

-- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

3. The Enlightenment deontology, however, is derived from a biblical, 3rd petition understanding of ethics.

About *Deontology* or a "Duty-driven" Ethos

"[Taking to heart Genesis 22 and Abraham's test.] A Temptation; but what does that mean? That which ordinarily tempts a human, to be sure, is whatever would keep him from doing his duty, but here the temptation is the ethical itself, which would keep him from doing God's will. **But what then is the duty? Well, the duty is precisely the expression for God's will.** Here the necessity of a new category for understanding Abraham becomes apparent.

-- Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*

Ecclesiastes 3:11

God has made everything beautifully fitting in its temporality. Also, He has hardwired humans in our very being with [a passion for] eternity. However, He has also made us in such a way that we cannot discern what is after all *His* working domain, namely, the hidden past origin and hidden future conclusion (my translation). → Meaning: See Chapter 12, **"Words of the one Shepherd ... fear God ... the whole duty of man"**!

11 אֶת־הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יְיָהּ בְּעֵתוֹ גַּם אֶת־הָעֵלֶם נָתַן בְּלִבָּם מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְצָא הָאָדָם אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים מִרְאֵשׁ
וְעַד־סוֹף:

5. Such a deontological Christian ethics is reasonable, but it is not a gnostic undertaking; on the contrary, it is an anxious, existential resurrecting to a new life *kata Christon*, in Christ Himself.

Doing God's Will versus Ethical Self-Knowledge

"The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge" (21).

1. All knowledge now is based upon self-knowledge (29).
 - 1.1 The experience of shame indicates an original loss (24-27).
 - 1.2 Our original comprehension of God and other human beings has become empty.
 - 1.3 Our original union has been displaced by disunion: disunion from God, from human beings, from self (see the datum of conscience).
 - 1.4 "Know yourself" (*gnothi seauton*) is unachievable.
2. Freedom in Christ, not knowledge, is the center of Christian ethics (30ff).
 - 2.1 We cannot know or approach God except through the Word (*nisi per Verbum*).
 - 2.2 Jesus' freedom is the freedom of the absolute simplicity of His action. There is never a plurality of possibilities, conflicts or alternatives; there is only doing the will of His Father.
3. Doing God's will, not merely contemplating the good, is the *summum bonum* of Christian ethics.
 - 3.1 Genuine knowledge depends on God's revelation in the Person of Christ (37).
 - 3.2 The knowledge of the Pharisees was barren, disruptive, negating.
 - 3.3 The knowledge of Jesus and His disciples is fruitful, redemptive, active.
4. Paradoxically, then, if we gain merely an epistemology from Christ – if hearing the Word does not make us doers – knowing becomes a forgetting (48).
 - 4.1 Hearing and doing are interdependent.
 - 4.2 "To know" in the biblical languages means "to love;" we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).
 - 4.3 Loving God is simply the other aspect of being loved by God.

-- adapted from Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* (Part One, I)

→ **Mutual conversation and consolation:** brotherly fraternizing with *Sophos*.

Psalm 22 English Standard Version (ESV)

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

22 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

³Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

⁷All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

⁸“He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

⁹Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.

¹⁰On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.

¹²Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

¹³they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

¹⁴I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;

it is melted within my breast;
¹⁵my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;

they have pierced my hands and feet—

¹⁷I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;

¹⁸they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

¹⁹But you, O LORD, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!

²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!

²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion!
You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

²²I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

²³You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

²⁴For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

²⁶The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.

²⁸For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,

even the one who could not keep himself alive.

³⁰Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;

³¹they shall come and proclaim his righteousness
to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.

Three Socratic Vignettes Regarding Knowledge



<http://i.ebayimg.com/images/g/tTQAAOSwMmBVwmNE/s-1300.jpg>

Three Socratic Vignettes Regarding Knowledge

Gregory P. Schulz

How often do you have sex?

Several years ago I began a chapel sermon with that question. On the way to my discussion of what it means for us that God created us male and female, I “made up” the following snippet of Socratic dialogue.

Jayne: Professor Socrates, I think you professors like talking about sex because you enjoy telling the rest of us what to do!

Socrates: And what exactly do you mean by "enjoy," Jayne?

Jayne: Well, you know, you just, like, like telling people what to do!

Socrates: And what if I could show you that enjoyment is not an end in itself, but is merely an indication of pursuing the good. I enjoy pursuing the good and helping you to do the same.

Jayne: Alright, Professor Socrates, what I really think is that you like talking about sex because you're jealous. You're too old to be having sex yourself, so all you can do is talk about it!

Socrates (*chuckling wisely*): My dear young student, I have sex all the time. The God made me a man. That is my sex. I am a man all the time. Therefore, I have sex all the time.

The next semester I discovered an entire book of this sort of thing by Peter Kreeft of Boston College, including a paragraph similar to my sexy Socrates snippet. Truth be told, I must have read that book earlier (likely at Half Price Books or a philosophy conference reading table). In his *Socrates Meets Jesus* Kreeft resurrects Socrates in the twentieth century, places him at a generic east coast religious school, and then lets him have at all sorts of nonsense that passes for religious education. This literary device is what I call “a Kreeft Resurrection.”

In order to talk about knowledge among our extended higher education community the chair of our accreditation subcommittee reporting on criterion 4 regarding knowledge, ~~caught me trying to get out of the interminable surveying everyone else on our subcommittee was doing and assigned me~~ graciously gave me the opportunity to produce something to help us define the subject we have already reported on. I have conjured a Kreeft Resurrection of my own in order to put Socrates to work to help us discover what we at our college know about knowledge. So, we're about to work through three Socratic vignettes on a topic of central concern to us all: *knowledge*. (If you want to hear more about sex, you'll just have to come to chapel, or give some thought to the Hebrew concept of knowledge in light of Genesis 4:1, or stay wide awake and see if I work the topic of sex into one of today's dialogues.)

+++

“Knowledge and Learning” and NCA Criterion 4

Our accreditation sub-committee is concerned with Criterion 4 of the new NCA criteria. The criterion addresses “Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of *Knowledge*.” Our definition of knowledge is meant to be (1) essential, rather than nominalistic, and (2) amenable to Christian Truth, specifically to a confessional Lutheran epistemology.

(1) First, our definition is meant to be essential rather than nominalistic inasmuch as a nominal definition would tend to “define” knowledge in such a manner as to make “knowledge” worthless as a criterion. We offer this essential definition:

Knowledge is personal acquaintance with the Truth. Being acquainted with the Truth as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures and as it is confessed in the Lutheran Confessions, the faculty and staff of our college labor to learn and to teach our students

- (1) the revealed Truth of God *pro nobis*, for us, from Scripture, and
- (2) the concomitant practice of daily repentance; as well as
- (3) the workings of His creation through the study of the sciences, arts and humanities, and
- (4) the habits of thought and action which enable us to live virtuously while making rational and godly decisions to serve to God and our neighbors.

(2) Second, our definition is meant to be amenable to Lutheran Christian truth. In keeping with a genuinely biblical and Lutheran anthropology, we note that knowledge of God and godly service is not innate for us human learners, but requires the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit via the means of grace, that is, through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. We further note that **the content of the Gospel, the true knowledge of God, is known only in terms of what Lutheran theology calls *theologia crucis*, the theology of the cross. Thus, knowledge of God depends upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate, for “God is not apprehended except through the Word” (Apology to the Augsburg Confession 4.67).**

+++

There are at least two hurdles for us to overcome in this project, even before the first line of dialogue. First, it is difficult in such a Kreeft Resurrection as we are undertaking to resurrect *Socrates*. On the one hand, it is all too easy to resurrect a degraded version of Socrates merely to serve as a shallow-minded mouthpiece for our clichéd notions. That's why I've “resurrected” a select number of other individuals with strong views on knowledge for Socrates to interact with.

These “resurrected” speakers include: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor martyred by the Nazis in 1945. Though best known for his teaching and writing concerning our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Bonhoeffer is (in my view) of significant philosophical help regarding twentieth-century ethics and knowledge theory. Augustine of Hippo, Luther's patron saint for many philosophical and theological issues, is another participant. Also in the group is Richard Rorty, a fairly well-known spokesperson for the postmodern agenda, who emphasizes irony and solidarity in his writings on knowledge. Pavel Florensky, a Russian polymath who wrote *Pillar and Ground of Truth*, who argues for Christ Himself as the basis of all truth, comes into the dialogues. So does Emily Dickenson the poet, whom I sometimes present to my students as an American poet-philosopher. One reviewer of these little dialogs suggested that I explain the significance of Mae Noh, but I'm going to leave that up to you to puzzle through. I've also tucked in a reference to Gödel. In the 1930's he was responsible for demonstrating that mathematics cannot be a contained system, but requires “something from the outside” to establish its fundamental axioms. I have the same thing in mind for any allegedly self-contained system of knowledge. Now back to our problems with *Socrates*.

On the other hand, it is a temptation to jump to the other extreme and to misrepresent Socrates as an intellectual savior – Erasmus once said, “Save us, Saint Socrates!” As if Socrates could save our souls through his incisive questions and relentless logic. First, as you'll see, I don't believe that Socrates had what we call in logic the “necessary condition” for the knowledge of the Truth. That is to say, Socrates was ignorant of Christ and therefore ignorant of “the god.” I disagree with Kreeft's assertions (in his popular textbook *Socratic Logic*, for example) that Socrates may have been saved even without the Word of Christ. In other words, as I see it Socrates worked *toward* a knowledge of the truth but he never came *to* the knowledge of the truth. This is unspeakably sad to me.

Secondly, in my experience most folks have never had a decent opportunity to engage the Socrates of Plato's plays. They've never experienced for themselves the benefits that follow from the incisive questions and relentless logic of Socrates, but what they *have* heard about Socrates (likely from crabby and curmudgeonly philosophy professors) makes them skittish. This presents a problem of a different sort. We may already have tuned Socrates out without knowing what we are missing.

This means, of course, that we may have tuned out my little Kreeft Resurrection of Socrates even before we get started. I don't know exactly how to address this problem but I do thank you for your patience and goodwill. Now, democratic institutions need gadflies such as Socrates, but by the same token democratic institutions would rather dispense with gadflies such as Socrates. Bees in the bonnet, burrs under the saddle, critical reasoning about things we don't want criticized – gadflies are not something we care to have in our lives. A college or university is no exception. I suppose it's up to you, dear reader, either to tune in or tune out.

By the way, I do not see this discussion as something that elevates the professors over the rest of us. It sounds pretty highfalutin to hear your child's professor say, "In this course we use the Socratic method." But how do we know? Further (asks this curmudgeonly gadfly), does *the professor* know if he or she is practicing Socratic methodology? Odds are, the professor is ignorant of the Socratic Socrates. Norman Melchert, the author of a text that gets rave reviews every semester from my Introduction to Philosophy students, tells the story of a faculty get-together at which he referred to the inspiring example of one particular teacher who cared so deeply about pursuing the truth and teaching others to do the same that he was tried and condemned to death – and then chose to be executed rather than to stop teaching. His fellow professors (Ph.Ds., all) were sure that Melchert had made up the whole story.

Let's see if we can navigate between these extremes of ignorance and annoyance as we begin to think and talk about knowledge and truth ourselves, with guidance from Socrates and friends. Today could be the beginning of a great conversation on campus on the topic of *knowledge*. But first, we need to get our postmodern feet on the *terra firma* of our Western tradition and begin discussing for ourselves what we know about knowledge.

Please note that these Socratic vignettes are proprietary intellectual productions and ought to be properly credited if you make use of them: "Gregory P. Schulz, all intellectual rights reserved."

Mae Noh

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/2azsb141h0>

What is knowledge, when you stop to think about it? We might suppose that knowledge is whatever people here or there tell us that it is, but does this unexamined definition hold up under scrutiny?

In his dialog Meno Plato asks if virtue can be taught. This introduces us to the Socratic question "What is virtue?" The working assumption in the dialog is that virtue can be taught. This, Socrates feels, must mean that virtue is a type of knowledge. That is, virtue-as-knowledge is something that "stays put," so to speak, rather than being in perpetual and unmanageable flux. Knowledge, the sort of thing that stays put, can be recognized, re-cognized and therefore can be taught.

The alternative is to regard virtue as a matter of mere opinion. Socrates' contention that virtue is a type of knowledge undercuts Meno's superficial contention that popular opinion automatically makes people into virtuous citizens of their culture. One discovery that we may make here is that we know less than we think.



Mae: That pretty well wraps up our campus tour. On your way into the Campus Center just ahead you may want to take a moment to look at the statue on your left. It's sort of a symbol for us at the college.

Socrates: Statue? I might have looked like a statue from a distance – in fact I used to get kidded about my seizures all the time – but I've just been standing at attention in order to give all my attention to thinking.

Mae: No, I didn't mean you. Hey! Are the art people starting some kind of performance thing here in the quad? Who are you supposed to be? Wait, don't tell me! Bald head, curly beard, bug eyes, snub nose, dirty toga, bare feet. You're supposed to be Socrates, aren't you? But isn't Socrates supposed to look a little, you know, smarter? You're supposed to look like the wisest person on earth, right?

Socrates: Actually, no.

Mae: You're not supposed to be Socrates?

Socrates: No, Socrates isn't supposed to look like the wisest man on earth.

Mae: Hey, how would you know?

Socrates: Ah, that's almost a Socratic question. The oracle at Delphi never said that Socrates was the wisest man on earth; only that there was no one wiser. As to whether Socrates is

supposed to look like Socrates, we have all had the experience of seeing someone from a distance and mistaking him for someone else. But, as you said, how do we *know*?

Mae: This guy is pretty good, I guess, but if you want art, you should have seen the sculptures we had out here last year.

Socrates: One minute, Ms Noh (if I am reading your nametag correctly), would you like to talk through your question as to how one can know something?

Mae: I don't know; I think you're about to give me a headache. If I wanted philosophy I'd take a philosophy course. Personally, I'm here to get a degree and get a good job. The way I look at it is that knowledge or whatever is either something you have or you don't. If you have it, you shouldn't need to pay twenty thousand a year to get it. If you don't have it, no matter what you do you can't get it. But, like I said, with or without it, as long as I get my degree I'll be alright.

Socrates: But how do you know? That line of thought is what has been called "The Lazy Man's Paradox" for over two millennia. It's circular thinking, actually, that gets you nowhere. You're saying either that you know you know or that you know that you don't know, but what is it you know?

Mae: Don't yell at me, please. This is getting to sound kinda like Abbott and Costello.

Socrates: I'm not yelling, Ms Noh, though I get that all the time. Would it make you feel better to hear that in a 2300-year-old play called *Theaetetus* a number of us ended up in the same Abbott and Costello circle of argument that you just suggested? First, Theaetetus said that he did not know what knowledge was – confessing one's ignorance is such a promising way to begin a serious discussion, don't you think? – but when I pressed him, he offered the definition of knowledge as "perception." I simply pointed out that things aren't always what we perceive them to be. For example, you mistook me for a statue. From a distance, I could be mistaken for Theaetetus. Then it was suggested that knowledge is "true belief." Care to hear more?

Mae: Whatever.

Socrates: The second definition sounded pretty good, but if you think about it that's no way to be sure or to help each other to know for sure what's right and what's wrong, true or false. As Plato puts it in *Republic*, a blind man may be walking on the same road as the sighted man, but how can he stay walking on the path? This led us to consider that knowledge is "true belief secured by a *logos*". You might say that *logos* is a deep explanation of the reality of things. What do you think of that?

Mae: Sounds okay to me. No, wait. How do you know that your explanation of things, deep or shallow or what have you, is right? You have to know what is and isn't the case first, don't you?

Socrates: So it would seem. That's why we ended that particular dialog right then and there. But maybe finding out what knowledge *is not* helps us. One thing I do know for sure is that there is a huge difference between opinion and knowledge. It's just that we couldn't get it down pat. But that seems alright to me; the struggle has helped me to sculpt my immortal

soul. Look at it this way: Knowledge (whatever else it is) must be something that stays put. Take this statue (with which the people of your city-state appear to be memorializing a slave). If it weren't bolted down, or if reality were perpetual flux, as Heraclitus maintained, where would that leave us?

Mae: Knowledge has to "stay put"?

Socrates: Right, otherwise knowledge would be mere opinion. We'd have no fixed reference from which to realize that the world was or wasn't in perpetual flux. More precisely (since I see that you're opening your mouth to ask me "But how do you know?"), if things didn't stay put for us then existence itself would be unintelligible. Then we might as well all just keep quiet. In my day fraternity houses from all the Mediterranean schools were forever making off with those amazing statues of Daedalus you may have heard about. The common opinion was that they were the finest statues ever made. But how could we *know* anything for sure if the statues never stayed put so that we could view them and compare? I'll go so far as to agree that whatever one cannot speak about clearly he must pass over in silence, but we can hardly take a silent pass on the matter of knowledge and other moral issues.

Mae: Neither do any of my professors, or they'd be out of a job!

Socrates: Yes, well. At the end of the day, I maintain that there are things that we know and that this knowledge is part and parcel of our heritage as rational human beings. My philosophical grandson, Aristotle, as you may know, launched Western civilization into the scientific pursuit of knowledge so that your professors could pass an incredible amount of knowledge on to you. I'll refrain from saying that I don't think they ought to get paid for doing this.

Mae: Alright, then. Shall we move on to lunch in the Campus Center?

Dietrich: One minute more, Ms Noh. Mae, do you and all the rest of you in the tour group think that knowledge is something that we have, as if it were a possession? What is it that is supposed to "stay put" and, more importantly, how can it? I'd say that we ought to think more about the time factor.

Mae: Me too. It's definitely time to eat.

Dietrich: Let me explain a bit. Socrates, you're urging us to think of knowledge as something that "stays put," *nicht war*?

Socrates: Yes. To be knowledge (and not mere opinion), knowledge cannot be in perpetual flux. The statue cannot be unsecured, or it will disappear, leaving us with nothing.

Dietrich: And knowledge is something one has, a possession.

Socrates: Yes.

Dietrich: And you contend that this possession is certified by a *logos*. A "deep explanation of reality" I think you called it?

Socrates: That's right.

Dietrich: But reality, though it is not in perpetual flux, is in unceasing movement nonetheless.

Socrates: What do you mean?

Dietrich: Time, my wise pagan friend. *Tempus fugit*. Whatever we know, that which stays put for us, is what *was* the case. But you claim that our knowledge is something that we possess in the present. Your Socratic question is usually in the form "What *is* X?"

Socrates: That is so.

Dietrich: But, Socrates, though you may claim to possess knowledge of what something *was*, how can you know that something *is* what it once was, especially in view of the fact that you never once posed a Socratic question about physical things, such as tables and chairs and eclipses, but were always concerned with knowledge of piety, justice, the good and other moral virtues of perennial concern to us all? I suspect that your passion for knowledge requires an eternal standard, Something Real (one has to use the capitals) but outside the flux of time. Gödel demonstrated that we need something from outside the system of mathematics to secure mathematical axioms. You need to consider that there must be Something outside any system of knowledge to secure it as knowledge.

Socrates: Dietrich, is it? I gather, Dietrich, that you are a Platonist, then, and are about to favor us with stories of caves and lines and eternal Ideas that exist beyond time and space, like Euclid's geometry? But I must point out that knowledge of these transcendent forms or ideas, once it stays in place by demonstration, will then become our possession. The knowledge of these eternal truths will of course stay put and become, in short, something we know and have.

Dietrich: No, Socrates. This is what I would call *ironic knowledge*. It is philosophy fiction. After Plato worked at this very project with might and main Aristotle exposed the bottomlessness of such alleged knowledge. In order to know that something is good Plato postulated the existence of an eternal Idea of goodness by which we assess the goodness of other things. But to know that the eternal Idea of goodness is correct, we require a higher standard by which to know it, and so *ad infinitum*. You cannot know something that you're unacquainted with and you can't become acquainted with something you don't know.

Socrates: You are simply repeating the Lazy Man's Paradox, aren't you?

Dietrich: I don't think so. I am not suggesting that it is impossible to acquire knowledge, exactly. What I am saying is that it is impossible to collect complete knowledge of a constantly changing cosmos. We want to be collectors of knowledge, all of it. *We want to have once-and-for-all knowledge; nevertheless, it is impossible for us to have complete knowledge*. We are, after all, as one of my contemporaries put it, "finite beings." A philosopher who predates even you and the Presocratics put the conundrum this way: "God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end."

Socrates: So, being does not stay put and therefore our knowledge of beings cannot stay put? Or (to avoid the natural sciences, which I found to be most disappointing when it comes to caring for my soul) I cannot know that I have prepared my soul for the afterlife unless and

until I have seen the story all the way through? You're suggesting that somehow I need to have acquired experience of that which I cannot by my nature have yet experienced. Otherwise, I cannot know my final end. And, if I cannot know my final end, the completed story, as it were, then I cannot claim to know what I think I know concerning moral matters in this life, inasmuch as I keep defining moral matters with a view toward the final end as being our ultimate good. I suppose this means that I must understand my life backwards. Yet I can only live my life forward. Therefore I cannot have knowledge regarding ethics and what's good for my own soul. Let me think about that.

Mae: Uh-oh. Back to statue mode. Any questions before we end the tour? Anyone?

What is Knowledge? A Socratic discussion regarding our definition of knowledge.

Q. Please write down and share with your group your best personal definition of knowledge. Please note: Socrates will not allow us to get by with the assertion that knowledge is anything at all, or whatever. By posing the question "What is knowledge?" Socrates assumes that there is a definite, abiding definition for us to discover (not a plurality of definitions for each of us to invent according to our different disciplines or places in life, or what have you).

Now read the following excerpt from Bonhoeffer about the impossibility of *having* knowledge. Do you agree (professionally and personally) that knowledge is not something that we can possess, however complete our system or database or professional expertise? In what respect(s) do you agree or disagree with Bonhoeffer?

Bonhoeffer on Knowledge (from *Act and Being*, 90-91)

Knowing and Having: [Here Bonhoeffer challenges both the nominalist view of God as absolute, arbitrary willing and the philosophical systems that would, mimetically, make human beings willing-sovereigns of (their own) creation.] Through the act of knowing, the known is put at the disposition of the I; it can be classified within the system of knowledge. As something known, it "is" only in this system. The aim of cognition is to close this system. If this happens, the I has become lord of the world. For that reason, revelation stands against the system, for God is lord of the world, and the true system is but an eschatological possibility.² From that it seems to follow necessarily that God can be known only in the act, that is, existentially. Otherwise, God would be delivered into the system. For to know is to have. Thus, a chasm opens up between systematic and existential knowledge. True, the latter

¹⁹ R. Bultmann, "What Does It Mean to Speak of God?" 61.

²⁰ Bultmann, "What Does it Mean to Speak of God?" 63.

²¹ Cf. Luther, *LW* 37:58 (*WA* 23:135).

necessarily enters into the former but, in becoming something known, it gives up its existentiality. It seems that God's claim to sole lordship can be protected only in this manner.

The world of my systematic knowledge remains in force even when I know about God and my neighbor. Bultmann concluded from this that talk of God is possible "only a talk of ourselves,"¹⁹ since "to apprehend our existence" would mean "to apprehend God."²⁰ One finds oneself, at least through such a formulation, ominously close to ignoring the fact that faith can be directed solely and exclusively to God. It is talking of God that first enables us to talk of ourselves. In a reflective theological form of thinking I have no more intimate reference to my existence than to God. On the contrary, one might say paradoxically that God is closer to me than is my existence,²¹ inasmuch as it is God who first discloses my existence to me. One cannot come to a "knowledge" of God from here either. It would be possible to talk to God, or to know about God, and to have theology as a scholarly discipline only if revelation were not understood as pure act, if there was somehow a being of revelation outside my existential knowledge of it, outside my faith, on which my faith, my thought, my knowledge could "rest." Like transcendental thought, the theology originating in the transcendental approach is integral to the reference of existence to transcendence. Its knowledge is part of the question of existence. But a discipline, the essence of which is not to ask but to know, must be passionately interested in concepts of being. The mode of being in which we are to be conceived remains open for the time being.

Navigating by Capital-T Truth

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/jcbqy3qnz0>

But is it credible, here in the twenty-first century, to talk about knowledge as something definite that “stays put”? It may seem that the view of knowledge as “acquaintance with the Truth” is elitist and inappropriate in a pluralistic or multicultural world. Worse, any sustained and serious discussion of a one-size-fits-all definition of knowledge strikes many folks as intolerant.

In the philosophical heart of his Republic Plato's Socrates warns that bad education corrupts good natured students. He speaks about students of philosophy, students gifted with “courage, high-mindedness, ease of learning, and a good memory.” (Note: Professors intent on their own departmental concerns will want to note that historically all of our academic disciplines branch off from the tree of philosophy, the overarching “befriending of wisdom.” All of us will want to note that Plato has in mind an education, not for careers in a global society, but for active citizenship in a local community.) Now, all education forms persons. Bad education deforms fine and good students. What is it that distinguishes a well-educated student, a friend of wisdom from a deformed one, a menace to society? “First of all, he or she has got to be guided by the truth and always pursue it in every way, or else had really be a boaster, with no share at all in true philosophy.”



Socrates: Alright, then. Let me respond to Dietrich this way: I do not say that there is an essence to knowledge, but that the pursuit of knowledge is of the essence. Plato may be read as saying that there is an eternal Idea or Form of the Good, a yardstick beyond time and space and change by which we know good things to be good – I myself refused to write my thinking down for this very reason: readers can make whatever they want of your books; only dialectic conversation such as our back and forth discussion, is alive and active – but this is a simplistic and convenient interpretation. What we know is what really *is*. Parmenides said that thinking and being are intimately related. This is what I have in mind by saying that knowledge “stays put.” Knowledge is bolted down to the way things are. Do you, Mae, or anyone else in your tour group, care to respond?

Mae: Now I really do have a headache. I need some food and some Excedrin. It's all this – what did you call it, “dialectic”? Yada-yada-yada. The bottom line is that there is no bottom line. We all have our own ideas of knowledge and you're acting as if there's one slam-dunk definition. Well, there isn't. It all depends on your culture.

Richard: Wonderful irony, Socrates! I see what you're trying to get us all to see. And it has to do with Mae's reaction, I think. We in the Western tradition have fallen into thinking that there is one truth (I call it capital-T Truth in my books) for all people of all time and that our task is to discover it. The fact of the matter is that there are only small-t truths, things that folks in particular cultures (say, in the cultures of Athens or Sparta or Persia or the Mideast or Africa or Europe) hold onto and won't budge from. Regional or group solidarity is what we

have. It's all we've ever had. One ought to acknowledge that one's notions of truth and beauty and so forth come from one's own tribe, and then take a stance of understanding and tolerance for the truths of other tribes and cultures, don't you agree?

Socrates: Is your home in Thrace, Richard?

Richard: Berkeley, actually.

Socrates: It's been twenty-four centuries since I spoke with him, but you sound like Protagoras. I see, though, that you are taking his mantra "Man is the measure of all things" to the level of the community, isn't that so? Man is the measure of all things and a culture is man writ large, therefore a culture is the measure of all things. I wonder, though, how you teach tolerance for, as you say, "the truths of other tribes and cultures" is a virtue.

Richard: Toleration is perhaps the most human of all virtues. We've come to see this in the aftermath of the twentieth century.

Socrates: But virtue, as we learned before the break, cannot be mere public opinion if it is something that we can teach. Virtue must be a type of knowledge, and knowledge stays put for all people of all cultures.

Richard: How can that be? Anthropology and sociology show us that different cultures have different truths to which they hold.

Socrates: Indeed. And what, precisely, entitles anthropologists and sociologists to teach that there are only small-t truths? Isn't this claim (that there are only small-t truths) a capital-T Truth claim in itself? You commended my irony; allow me to commend yours.

Mae: "Ten thousand spoons, when all you need is a knife."

Socrates: Before our discussion collapses into a rusty pile of irony, would someone please explain to me the formal cause of this statue. What is it for?

Mae: Oh, it's all about being servant-leaders.

Socrates: More irony? How can one urge students to become slaves? I'm accustomed to monuments as an inspiration; we had many such statues in Athens. But why encourage slavery here in your city state if, as I gather, this is a city state devoted to teaching and learning? Learning is for properly qualified citizens, slaves clearly do not have the time to devote to thinking and learning. Do your leaders enslave their students?

Mae: Whoa, you're making it too easy, Socrates, but a few of my professors may be listening. No, I guess you couldn't be expected to know it, but that's Jesus who is really God. He washed His students' feet like a slave and told us to do the same.

Socrates: You said "who is really God"? Sometime I'd like to hear more. No, don't roll your eyes; I truly would! I've much more to learn about the God. You have perhaps heard something of my argument for the Absolute which must subsist above the pantheon of our Greek gods. You probably know that I am responsible for that altar in Athens dedicated to the Unknown God. In view of popular goals and methods of education I have said (as Plato

quotes me in *Republic VI*) that you should realize that if anyone is saved and becomes what he ought to be under our present conventions, he has been saved – you might rightly say – by a divine dispensation. But back to the subject at hand, which is the relatedness of knowledge to truth. How shall we develop this relationship logically?

Hippo: We can't develop it logically, Socrates. You insist on getting at knowledge and truth from the ground up by sheer reason and reasoned discussion, what some of us here would call "by natural knowledge." But look, what was the first definition of knowledge mentioned by Theaetetus?

Socrates: Theaetetus suggested that knowledge is perception.

Hippo: How would it be if we returned to that understanding of knowledge? Now, I do not know Greek well at all, but let us take "perception" in the broadest possible sense of "what we make of things." Let's agree that we may sometimes be mistaken about things. In fact, as I've written in one of my books that the possibility of being mistaken is one element in a Trinitarian proof that I exist. But back to my point. On the broad construal of perception, why would we want to say that we know whatever we know by pure reason alone?

Socrates: Because it is reasonable.

Hippo: Ah. But we human beings are more than calculators. Consider as a hypothesis that, in order to know anything at all, we must be believers as well as reasoners.

Socrates: But, first and foremost, a well-educated person must pursue the truth. This entails that he or she will not stop at the level of popular opinion or religious dogma but will – I cannot emphasize this enough – be guided by the truth. Those individuals who, despite the opposition of the masses, steer by the North Star of truth are the only ones fit to pilot the ship of state.

Hippo: No disagreement. Actually, I don't know much about the scientific knowledge of Aristotle that you mentioned earlier since I've read a few standard chapters from his logic and rhetoric, but I do know my Plato. And I know that you just abbreviated your own quotation from *Republic VI*.

Socrates: Oh?

Hippo: Your entire statement, according to Plato at any rate, is "a fine and good person must be guided by the truth and always pursue it *in every way*." I agree that we ought not stop at the level of popular opinion or religious dogma, but my question is "Where do we begin?" A favorite Bible passage of mine reads "Unless you believe, you will never understand." Before you can be a reasonable man, Socrates, you must first logically be a believer.

Socrates: Calling me a "believer" doesn't bother me as much as you may think, Mr. Horse, but you need to explain yourself a bit further.

Hippo: Gladly. Before you can pursue the truth *in every way* you have to believe that the truth is out there somewhere. A pile of data does not produce a hypothesis by spontaneous generation. The scientist first believes that X is the case and then sets out to prove or disprove X. You are not intimately acquainted with the capital-T Truth of the matter,

nevertheless you believe that the truth exists somewhere. Your reasoned discussion does not generate itself spontaneously. Faith first, reasoning after, then faith again, as long as it is not undermined.

Socrates: As I said, this does not bother me in the least. I am a pious man, as you know. It doesn't bother me to be told that I'm no scientist. The physical scientists of my day, as you know from my last conversation in *Phaedo*, left me cold. The knowledge I pursue is not aesthetic pleasure or technical know-how, but knowledge to safeguard the soul. Call it second-class knowledge if you must in contrast to the sciences, but it is the knowledge of the most human kind, I'd say. And, given the critical importance of such knowledge for the care of the soul, it goes without saying that I'm not going to put up with untested assumptions of any kind.

Hippo: I would expect no less from you, Socrates, but there is an aspect of knowledge and truth that neither you nor Plato nor Aristotle ever once considered, though there are hints that imply something more concerning the *mode* by which we come to knowledge. This "divine dispensation" of which you speak now and then – how does it come about?

Socrates: It is an inspiration, I would say. It's something like coming out of a dark cave into the bright light of day, an illumination. It's a *daemon* or spirit that seizes me. The best I can do is to think of it as ultimate human performance, something like an Olympic athlete who somehow manages to perform at the games above and beyond his training and abilities. Such a superhuman performance is, as we Greeks say, *divine*. In the arena of wisdom I have been illumined, so to speak, and my task has been the unfolding and applying of this illumination in rational discourse. In response to your contention that unless you believe you will never understand, I would counter that faith without rigorous examination is not worth holding. But you have a more pressing point, don't you?

Hippo: Yes. The second aspect of knowledge is what some would call a *necessary condition* for our acquaintance with the truth. In fact, your language doesn't even have a word for this critical concept.

Socrates: What would that be, my African friend?

Hippo: Truth is not a logical construct or conviction, Socrates, indeed to be truth such as we have been describing it, truth cannot be merely this in the least. Truth is *personal*.

Socrates: You're right, Hippo, we Greeks have no such concept as *person*. Tell me more.

Emily: As I once wrote, Tell all the Truth, but tell it slant. Success in Circuit lies.

Hippo: Yes, well, we're running out of time for an in-depth cross examination in any sort of circuit court – though you're right, Emily. The truth of the matter, Socrates, is that Truth is a person. We're back to the statue.

Socrates: The master in the statue symbolizes divine truth?

Hippo: No, Socrates, there's something here that never could have emerged from a human mind, Greek or barbarian, no matter how far it may perform above and beyond the norm. The slave in the statue is the Truth Himself incarnate. The *logos* necessary for distinguishing

knowledge from mere opinion – the *logos* that differentiates true opinion from false opinion, for that matter – is a person. Four hundred years after you downed the hemlock God became a human being. Truth is not a concept; Truth is a genuine Person who came and walked among us. We have seen Him.

Socrates: [...]

What is the connection between knowledge and truth? Socratic questions regarding our understanding of *truth*.

Q. My Socrates equates Protagoras' notion that each human being is *the* measure of all things with the contemporary assumption of postmodernism that truth is relative. Please jot down an example of the assumption that all we can ever have is “small-t truths” (perhaps from some reading you've been doing lately, from a talk show you've seen or from a conversation you've had recently). **How do you get beyond the assertion of (cognitive) relativism when talking to or teaching persons who insist that each person measure truth for him- or herself?**

Have a gander at “Divine Illumination” from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (Yes, his analogy with grace limps.) If you teach, please describe briefly what reaction you would garner the next time you present a paper at a conference or make a class presentation if you concluded by claiming “I know that this (theory, argument, interpretation, work) I've presented is worthwhile because Christ, my Inner Teacher, has certified it to me as true.” If you are a non-teaching member of our higher ed family, perhaps you could mention your reaction to the understanding that our knowledge about anything depends in the last analysis *on Jesus' work* in our hearts and minds and not on our own (formal or informal) educational experiences.

Divine Illumination (excerpt) by Robert Pasnau

The theory of divine illumination is generally conceived of as distinctively Christian, distinctively medieval, and distinctively Augustinian. There is some justification for this, of course, inasmuch as Christian medieval philosophers gave the theory serious and sustained discussion, and inasmuch as Augustine gave illumination a very prominent role in his theory of knowledge. Still, it is better to think of the theory in a wider context. Divine illumination played a prominent part in ancient Greek philosophy, in the later Greek commentary tradition, in neo-Platonism, and in medieval Islamic philosophy. Moreover, it was Christian medieval philosophers, near the end of the thirteenth century, who were ultimately responsible for decisively refuting the theory. I will suggest that we view this last development as the first great turning point in the history of cognitive theory.

I understand a theory of divine illumination to be a theory on which the human mind regularly relies on some kind of special supernatural assistance in order to complete (some part of) its ordinary cognitive activity. The assistance must be *supernatural*, of course, or it will not count as *divine* illumination. It must be *special*, in the sense that it must be something

more than the divine creation and ongoing conservation of the human mind. (If the latter were to count as illumination, then all theists would be committed to the theory of divine illumination.) The mind must *regularly* rely on this assistance, in order to complete its *ordinary* cognitive activity: otherwise, an occasional mystical experience might suffice to confirm a theory of divine illumination. But a defender of the theory need hold only that we require this assistance for *some part of* our ordinary cognitive activities: hardly anyone has supposed that every form of human cognition requires divine illumination.

It is useful to think of divine illumination as analogous to grace. Just as a proponent of grace postulates a special divine role on the volitional side, so a proponent of divine illumination postulates a special divine role on the cognitive side. Grace is intended as an explanation not of all human desires and motivations, nor even of all virtuous desires and motivations. Rather, the proponent of grace holds that there is a certain class of volitional states, crucial to human well-being, that we can achieve only with special divine assistance. Likewise, **the theory of divine illumination is intended as an explanation not of all belief, nor even of all knowledge. Rather, the theory holds that there are certain kinds of knowledge, crucial to cognitive development, that we can achieve only with special divine assistance.** It is an odd fact that, despite the close analogy, grace is regarded not as a philosophical question, but as a theological one. It is an equally odd fact that, whereas divine illumination hasn't generally been regarded as plausible since the thirteenth century, grace continues to be taken seriously by many theologians. Perhaps both of these facts can be accounted for by motivational psychology's relative obscurity in comparison to cognitive psychology.

For most people today it is hard to take divine illumination seriously, hard to view it as anything other than a quaint relic. A first step toward developing a proper perspective on the theory is to see it in its broader context, not as peculiarly Christian or medieval, but as an assumption shared by most premodern philosophers. A second step in the same direction is to identify and to take seriously the philosophical problem that drives illumination theory. **In large part, the theory has been invoked to explain rational insight -- that is, a priori knowledge.** Recent philosophers, preoccupied with empirical knowledge, have not had much interest in this topic. (Recent notable exceptions are Bealer 2000 and Bonjour 1998.) But to see how something like divine illumination could have ever seemed at all plausible, one has to see how deeply puzzling the phenomenon of rational insight actually is. One way of seeing this, and of seeing how little we understand rational insight, is to look at cases where something goes wrong. A recent biography of the Nobel-prize winning mathematician John Nash describes his long period of mental illness, during which time he held various odd beliefs such as that extraterrestrials were recruiting him to save the world. How could he believe this, a friend asked during a hospital visit, given his devotion to reason and logic?

"Because," Nash said slowly in his soft, reasonable southern drawl, as if talking to himself, "the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me the same way that my mathematical ideas did. So I took them seriously" (Nasar 1998, p.11).

In a case such as this we don't know what to do, because we are accustomed to give unhesitating trust to the deliverances of pure reason. But why should we trust reason in this way? Why should we have confidence that others can come to share our insights? Where does it come from? The theory of divine illumination attempts to answer such questions.

A Non-Alcoholic Symposium

<https://cuw.wistia.com/medias/phn0e8v73g>

All the truth hasn't yet come to pass. This means that we as finite beings cannot know the truth in the sense of possessing the truth, as if knowledge were a collection of antiques or a finite amount of data. Therefore, unless we are to abandon the possibility of knowledge completely, knowledge must be something else, say acquaintance with the truth. Now, does this acquaintance come about by rational means? On the basis of what philosophers refer to as special revelation, that is, the Word of God, we learn that our acquaintance with the truth depends upon personal Truth. By this I do not mean that we personally take the truth to heart. I mean that Jesus is Truth incarnate (see John 14:6). The Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, is what logicians call a necessary condition for knowledge. All things in heaven and earth hold together in Him. No Jesus, no knowledge.

In the course of Symposium Plato has Socrates give a speech on love as the route to the knowledge of the truth. The word for love which he uses throughout is eros or "desire." From our everyday human experience of desire for progressively more abstract instantiations of beauty Socrates constructs a logical Ladder of Love that extends rationally to the highest ideal or Idea of Beauty itself. But does it really work that way?



Socrates: Let me see if I am following what you are saying, Hippo. You feel (or should I say that you *believe*) that knowledge is acquaintance with the truth. I am willing to agree. But you also maintain that acquaintance with the truth comes (as you claim) by a different means than purely rational discussion. And this has to do with truth being a person. As to what "person" means – this is a barbarian notion that you shall have to explain at a later time. But first tell me, please, how else can the truth be known except by reason?

Hippo: Before addressing your question we ought to ask if the truth is ever known by reason. I wonder if things ever "stay put" by reason alone. What I mean is this: You are a passionate man, Socrates. No, I do not mean that you are governed by your instincts or by popular fads. No one would accuse you of that! I mean that your pursuit of knowledge and truth is hardly disinterested. You are not a dispassionate thinker, my friend, you strive mightily to discover a knowledge that stays put. The manner of your life and the manner of your death forever cure us of speaking of logic as cold, hard, or dispassionate.

Socrates: Nor am I distracted by flattery, you know.

Hippo: This too is beyond dispute.

Socrates: What is it, then, that you deduce from my passion for the truth?

Hippo: It's *induction*, Socrates, not deduction. Or, perhaps it's abduction, working from *within* the beam of sunshine, as C.S. Lewis puts it. I think this is just about as far as you and I are able to walk together, though I will do my best to express myself deductively in a minute. I induce from your passion for the truth that it is *love*, not reason that maintains your acquaintance with the truth.

Socrates: Oh, I see. You're thinking of my famous speech in *Symposium*. We have all experienced love for someone else's beautiful body. As we think about it carefully, this is really our love for beautiful bodies in general. Our love for beautiful bodies or beautiful art or beautiful constitutions invites further reflection. At last we come to the realization that our love has been, all along, a love for the eternal Idea of Beauty which we just recognize in these other particular instances.

Hippo: That's not love; that's animal desire. I know a lot about desire from my own life experience and that's not what I intend here. Rightly ordered love is not rightly ordered animal desire.

Socrates: Love is desire.

Hippo: No, it isn't.

Socrates: Yes, it is.

John: Allow me. Socrates, you're speaking of love as *eros*, or instinctual desire. About such "love" we would say, "Make provision for the flesh, but not to fulfill its desires." Hippo, you're thinking of love as *caritas*, or charity and care. You misled Socrates (and several of us back here in the crowd) by referring to him just now as "passionate," which made us all think of urges that come upon all animals willy-nilly. But you mean "passionate" in the sense of a studied determination to pursue what one knows to be right, come what may. What we need here is a more robust and nuanced conceptual vocabulary. How about this: "Love" may express one's acquaintance with another, along a graduated spectrum ranging from erotic desire at one extreme to self-sacrificing devotion at the other end. You may at another time wish to consider still another conceptual vocabulary in this connection, namely the Hebrew understanding of love and knowledge. The word Moses uses for "knowledge" overlaps our discussion of "love" in this way: The prophet wrote "Adam *knew* his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to a son." You knew your wife Xanthippe, Socrates, as part and parcel of loving her.

Pavel: *Da*, that sounds very helpful for our discussion of knowledge and truth. I will quote for you the wisdom of Saint Gregory: "Truth is not known unless it is loved." I will say that, though one can glimpse the merest shadow of this reality in the quiet contemplation of erotic love, it is in the upper range of love, the realm of self-sacrificing devotional love that we see the saint's philosophical insight.

Hippo: You have in mind John 3:16?

Pavel: Yes, *agape* love.

Socrates: What?

Pavel: Though I would also refer you to the pillar and ground of truth in John 14:6.

Hippo: Ah, yes. Personal truth, truth in His Person. The eternal reality that I tried to exemplify in the case of mathematical truths.

Socrates: Pardon me?

Pavel: Yes, but I would say that this personal truth is, in the language of our Christology, *hypostatic* truth. This yields a theory of truth superior to correspondence theory in that it's Trinitarian and personal. John 14:6 is the key to the whole matter.

Hippo: Excellent! "Take and read," indeed!

Socrates: Please, I don't follow. You are speaking barbarism upon barbarism. Can you speak Greek?

Hippo: Um, Socrates, this puts me in a very uncomfortable situation. The difficulty is that we need to "speak Christian" (as they say in Chile) in order to make any progress. You have gathered that I've nothing but the greatest admiration for your philosophical integrity ...

Socrates: Proceed.

Hippo: I think that you have also begun to induce something about the Truth from our discussion.

Socrates: Perhaps I have.

Hippo: Let me set it out for us all to consider: For knowledge, that is, for knowledge that "stays put" so that one can live and die by what one knows, knowledge must be in relation to all the truth, the entire story. So, knowledge is knowledge only in relation to the truth. Further, the truth is not known unless it is loved. Recall that we have defined this love not as mere animalistic desiring, but as self-sacrificing. Now, do you think that a man would die for something that he loves?

Socrates: Clearly, my friend, I am a case in point.

Hippo: And how does a martyr such as you know that what he loves is worthy of his self-sacrifice?

Socrates: That which he loves must be a worthy object.

Hippo: Would an object worthy of your self-sacrificing love be greater than the people and things of your daily experience, or lesser?

Socrates: Greater, or such love would harm my soul rather than improve it.

Hippo: So, to be worthy of your love the object of your love must be, shall we say it, divine?

Socrates: To deny that would be impious. Of course the object of my love must be divine.

Dietrich: And suppose, Socrates (I speak now as one martyr to another), that despite your confidence as you willingly drank the hemlock *knowing* that you had prepared your soul to leave your body and to be happy in any life that there might be after death – suppose that the God is not a philosophical cipher after all. Instead, “the God” (as you call Him) is God Almighty who has shown us what was good, who condemns us not for ignorance but for transgression of His standards and, most significant of all, died on a cross Himself in order to remit the price of all such transgressions. In short, suppose that God has been personally involved in your life and thus holds you personally accountable to Him.

Socrates: Wait. This is foolishness, not wisdom. Look, masters do not aspire to slavery; the God, were He to walk among us, would not suffer humiliation and execution. This is foolishness. As Greeks, as educated men I might say, we look for wisdom. Let us begin again.

Pavel: But, Socrates, it is wisdom that we have been pursuing all along. Our first premise is “Truth is not known unless it is loved.” The suppressed premise of the syllogism is “We love the Truth because the Truth first loved us.” This leads to the conclusion, “Therefore we are acquainted with the Truth.” Do you not know this? I know that you are not a skeptic.

Socrates: I am neither a skeptic nor a sophist. I am a lover of wisdom. And suddenly, I am very, very thirsty. Mae, where might I go to find something to drink? A few drops of water on the tongue would be nice.

What is the place of knowledge in our understanding of *all the Truth*? Questions for discussion regarding the place of love of learning.

Q. What makes you sure that what you know is true? Please make a brief list of five items of everyday significance that you know for sure. Take turns with two or three other persons in showing one another why he or she cannot *know* for sure that two or three (or all five) of these things on each one's own list are true. Is your conviction of the things you know to be true altered by the criticisms of others? Why is this?

Finally, read the highlighted passages from “Truth is not Known Unless It's Loved.” **Suppose that we recast the knowledge question (“Does the institution encourage growth in knowledge?”) as a *love question*.** Does we each encourage or teach love in our respective roles at the college? How does its administrative structure, its financial priorities, its curriculum, its programming, etc. cultivate the learning of love? Where, specifically, must the college upgrade its work in this respect? How ought it to proceed?

"Truth Is Not Known Unless It Is Loved" (excerpt) by Patrick Reardon

Experience and language

... [M]odern Westerners on the whole seem not aware that, for the great philosophers at the core of the ancient cultures, metaphysical "knowledge" (*jnana, gnosis*) was experiential. It was not simply the factual or logical content of a person's head, as Carnap, Wittgenstein, Feigl, and the other linguistic analysts gratuitously supposed. For the ancients, metaphysical intuition implied an ecstatic union with Reality: *con-scientia, com-prehendere*. "Truth is not known," wrote Saint Gregory the Great, "unless it is loved" (*Veritas non cognoscitur, nisi amatur*), and Plato spoke of an ardent yearning (*eros*), as well as disciplined dialectics, along the path to remembrance. Thinkers as different as Lao-Tzu, Ben Sirach, Plotinus, Shankara, Al-Ghazali, and Maximus the Confessor shared the presumption that noetic discourse involves noetic intercourse—that "knowledge" implies union, communion, with the Real.

So different is our modern situation in the West. Earlier this year, when upwards of a hundred philosophers, jurists, literary artists, journalists, and scholars joined together at Belmont Abbey College in North Carolina to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences*, several of the lecturers remarked that his prophetic voice, for all its eloquence, still pretty much cries out in a Western wilderness.

... [I]n corroding the authority of language by its denial of the real content of abstract words, nominalism was a first step in the overthrow of life-bearing tradition.

A certain defining view of reality is supposed to be transmitted from one generation to the next by the direct imposition of a linguistic authority. The ancients believed that minds were shaped by words and were thereby shaped for an intuitive perception of the real. Michael Polanyi is one of the few recent thinkers to emphasize that each generation is supposed to learn the composition of reality by an attitude of acquiescence, a kind of "obedience of faith," the implicit acceptance of an inherited tongue.

In the ancient cultures, the words for universal concepts are assumed to express an intuition of the universal forms, as exemplified in Adam's naming of the animals. Especially with respect to those words that serve as universal terms, the authority of tradition is the starting point for the investigation of the First Principles, the catholic standards of truth—and, because standards, permanent and outside the vicissitudes of the material world.

Universal conceptual language thus has about it something of the oracular, what Hinduism calls *Brahmanaspati*. For the ancients, the stability of conceptual language was what guaranteed the possibility of the transmission of insight, *theoria*, from one generation to the next, and served to place the quest of metaphysics into a social, traditional, hierarchical context.

Nominalism, however, by reducing conceptual terms to mere "names," constructions of the human mind itself, deprived such language of its sovereignty over the origins and structure of reflective thought. Whereas, for the ancients, words shaped minds, we now have a cultural understanding in which minds shape words, so the words express nothing more than, at the

very most, a "state of mind." Consequently, here in the modern West it is taken as obvious that words are purely a matter of contemporary convention and exist simply that people may participate in one another's personal persuasions. This is what Weaver called "presentism." Words have become mere tools for the communication of opinions and persuasions. Alas, hardly anyone seems to notice that this is exactly the theory of language taught by Protagoras and Gorgias, and soundly refuted by Socrates.

Here in the West, then, we have lost the sense that metaphysics joins our minds not only with eternal truth, but with all other minds, in all other times and places, that gaze upon the truth or seek it in love. That is to say, **the West has forgotten that truth is known in communion with other knowers.**

My 10 MASTER METAPHORS FOR PHILOSOPHY series is at www.whatdoesthismean.org, featuring primary text excerpts and links, with philosophical commentary, analysis and podcast interviews with Pastor Bryan Wolfmuller. Click on the *Columns* tab.

Creek and Medieval Metaphors

Plato's Allegory of the Cave (*Republic*, Book 7)

Aristotle's Cross Examination of Natures (*Physics*, Book 2, section 3)

Augustine's Story of the Pears (*Confessions*, Book 2)

Aquinas's Phoenix (*On Being and Essence*, Chapter 4)

Modern and Contemporary Metaphors

Descartes' Evil Demon (*Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 3)

Berkeley's Table (*Principles of Human Knowledge*, 1, 3).

Kant's Ultimate Principle for Relationships (*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 222)

Nietzsche's Madman (*The Joyful Science*)

Wittgenstein's Rule for When to Speak and When to Be Silent (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 7)

Searle's Chinese Room (Minds, Brains and Programs in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 1980, Vol 3, 417–57)

For my blogs and additional resources, please see www.lutheranphilosopher.com