I. Popular sayings we encounter
   
i. “You can't know the truth.”

   ii. “No one can know any truth about religion.”

   iii. “We can't know anything for sure.”

   iv. “I just doubt everything.”

   v. “I am certain that nothing is certain.”

   vi. “I don’t believe in God or disbelieve, I am agnostic.”

   vii. “Isn’t it possible that you are wrong? If so, why would you base your life on it?”

II. How should we understand these sayings and respond?

   i. These sayings are rooted in philosophy.

   ii. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Skepticism.

   iii. Agnosticism is the face of skepticism.

III. Scope of Skepticism

   1. Global

      i. Nobody can know anything.

      ii. Everybody knows nothing.

   2. Moderate
i. Most things are unknowable.

3. **Local**

   i. Some things are knowable (ourselves) and some things are not (existence of other minds; properties of the external world)

### IV. Levels of Skepticism

1. **Strong**

   i. Nothing is knowable.

2. **Moderate**

   i. Nothing contingent is knowable.

   ii. The only things that are knowable are necessary things.

3. **Weak**

   i. Nothing is known with certainty.

### V. Types of Skepticism & Arguments for Skepticism

1. **Skepticism**

   i. If Mary Swanson knows that Jesus rose from the grave, then Mary Swanson is absolutely certain that she is not mistaken that Jesus rose from the grave.

   ii. But then Mary Swanson has to rule out an infinite number of ways that she might possibly be mistaken.

---

1 Albert Lyngzedetson, Ph.D., Philosophy Professor at University of Miami, *Philosophy – A students guide to the basic principles or philosophy for introductory courses.*
iii. It is impossible for Mary Swanson to rule out an infinite series of possibilities in a finite amount of time.

iv. Therefore, Mary Swanson can never be absolutely certain that Mary Swanson is not mistaken.

   a. (so your saying there’s a chance?)

v. Therefore, Mary Swanson can never be said to know that Jesus rose from the grave.

2. **Pyrrhonian Skepticism**

   i. “You cannot even know that you cannot know anything.”

3. **Popular skepticism**

   i. It is logically possible that our senses are deceiving us about reality right now.

      a. This does not have to be probable. Just possible.

      b. E.g. the evil demons argument

      c. E.g., the brain in the vat argument

   ii. I cannot have knowledge of the external world (including knowledge of God), because I cannot know that I am not being deceived by a demon or evil scientist – as this is logically possible.

**VI. How did Skepticism develop as a philosophy?**

**A. Skepticism in philosophy**

   i. Dates back to the Greeks


---

iii. There have been Mitigated, Limited, Methodological, Existential Skeptics

iv. There have been a variety of types over the last 2500 years but our goal is to just give key components.

B. Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650)

1. Background

   i. Methodological skeptic.

   ii. French Philosopher who ushered in the movement known as Rationalism.

      a. Rationalism asserts that the knowledge is obtained only through the reason of the mind.

      b. Rationalism became a big movement in western European history.

2. His most influential views

   i. Descartes was a devout Catholic and wanted to defend the mind from being sucked into the mechanism of the alleged material only-world of the empiricist philosophers.
MIND

(Spirit, Thought, Emotion, Will)

______________________________

MATTER

(A mechanical deterministic machine)

ii. He was attempting to save the human soul from being understood as just body.

iii. He developed 21 rules to use to arrive at clear, distinct, and pure certainty.

a. “The Cartesian method, both in general approach and in detail, reflects Descartes’ passionate desire for certainty.”

b. “I always had an excessive desire to learn to distinguish the true from the false, in order to see clearly in my actions and to walk with confidence in this life.”

iv. He used a method of skepticism asking “What can I know with absolute 100% certainty?” “What is undeniable?”

v. He questioned everything and realized that he could doubt everything except the fact that he was doubting. But to doubt one must be thinking – since doubt is a thought. Thus we get the conclusion, Cogito Ergo Sum - “I think, therefore I am”

vi. So he proved that because he doubted everything, he existed. This was and is undeniable. This is a CERTAIN foundation.

vii. This method of rational skepticism proved that mind is different than matter. Thus, the soul is not the body and the soul is saved from the mechanism of the material

---

universe.

3. **Implication of Descartes views**

   i. Split between Mind and Matter

      a. The effects of Descartes successful method was actually detrimental to Christianity.

      b. So years later, after his death, philosophers took his work and used it to show that the mind (non-material soul) was not scientific and not something that we can have factual knowledge of.

      c. So this is the beginning of the unintentional split between mind and matter.

   ii. Rationalistic Methodological Skepticism

      a. Methodological Skepticism claims that before one can know something, one must first have a criteria for how he knows something.

      b. Without a criteria, one cannot apply it to anything to figure out if it counts as knowledge.

         1) Epistemology – the philosophical study of knowledge

         2) Epistemology answers the question: How do we know? How do we acquire knowledge?

      c. The methodological skeptic asserts that one can never improve his epistemic situation without a criteria.

   iii. Agnosticism

      a. Agnostics typically hold either of the following:

         1) I suspend judgment altogether.
2) I do not know if God exists.

3) I cannot know.

4) God cannot be proven or disproven.

b. Agnostics typically rehash methodological skepticism of some sort.

c. They claim that they really can’t be certain about God because nothing they do will prove he is real or not real.

d. They claim that any human method for having knowledge or gaining certainty is flawed.

e. If it is logically possible that I am wrong about God, I shouldn’t believe.

f. If I don’t have the right criteria, I cant be certain and therefore cant know if God exists.

VII. **What are the implications of Skepticism?**

1. **One cannot know God.**

   i. No Personal experience or direct awareness of God is accurate.

   ii. No valid evidence of God’s handiwork in nature is available.

VIII. **What are the criticisms & responses?**

A. **Skepticism initiates an ‘infinite regress’ requirement for knowledge.**

   i. ‘Infinite regresses’ are bad.

   ii. This is also known as the problem of the criterion.
a. Is there a criterion by which we can have no doubts to arrive at absolutely certain knowledge?

iii. Skepticism requires that one must know x with certainty so that he knows y with certainty so that he knows z with certainty. But x is not even the near the end of the infinite chain of a knowledge structure with no beginning. So before x, there is a whole lot more: w, v, u, t, s, r, q, etc. But we never can reach the beginning. There is no foundational knowledge.

iv. Another way to think of it, “If something is to serve as a standard for knowledge, we must be able to justify its use as a standard… We therefore need a [2nd] different, independent standard to justify the first standard. But that 2nd standard will itself require a different independent standard and so on, ad infinitum.”

v. Distinguished professor of philosophy Dr. JP Moreland: “Unfortunately, methodism [methodological skepticism] is not a good epistemic strategy because it leads to a vicious infinite regress … One would have to offer criteria for one’s criteria, and so on. It would seem then that methodism [methodological skepticism] is in trouble.”

vi. It is impossible to know anything with this infinite regress.

B. Skepticism’s false high standard of certainty is unjustified.

1. Considering our historical claims about Jesus.

i. If we all had to persuade to the level of “Beyond Reasonable Doubt” (90% to 99% certain), no one can ever know anything about history with adequate certainty.

ii. The historical evidence we have merely persuades to a level that we can say “it is more likely that this actually happened than not.”

---


a. This is the “Preponderance of the Evidence” level (50% to 75%).

b. Majority level

c. More probable than not level

iii. With the skeptics standard of certainty at 100%, than no one can have any historical knowledge because historical knowledge is typically only at the more probable than not level.

iv. All other types of knowledge in any other academic discipline is eliminated for the same reasons.

2. Philosophers think that skepticism sets the standard for knowledge too high.

i. Even atheist philosopher A.J. Ayer said that the skeptic “robs us of certainty only by so defining it as to make it certain that it cannot be obtained.”

ii. Skepticism standard is so high, it leaves no room for a certain foundation.

iii. But there are plenty of foundations to knowledge that philosophers have discussed over the centuries.

3. We don’t have to accept the skeptic’s standard because it’s too high and can never be met.

i. Other current philosophers have said “The skeptic demands something unattainable.”

C. Skepticism tears down everything – which is too much.

i. Applying skepticism to everything would destroy all knowledge.

---

7 A.J. Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (1956)
ii. But this leads to the absurdity that nothing is knowable.

D. Skepticism is self-refuting & self-contradicting

   i. JP Moreland states: “Global, unmitigated skepticism is not a rationally defensible position, and the skeptical question cannot be rationally asserted and defended without presupposing knowledge.”

   ii. Doubt requires knowledge of some things.

   iii. One philosopher recently put it this way: “The very premises used to support the conclusion for skepticism themselves become suspect and dubitable based on the very conclusion they uphold.”

   iv. Example: I know that nothing is knowable.

   v. Example: I am certain that nothing is certain.

   vi. Example: I know ‘that nothing is ever known.’

E. Pyrronian Skepticism is self-refuting

   i. “You cannot even know that you cannot know anything.”

F. Popular Skepticism is easily rebutted by shifting the burden of proof back on the skeptic.

   1. To respond well here all we need to do is provide a rebuttal.

      i. Complete refutation of skepticism is not even required here.

      ii. In terms of the rebuttal, all one needs to do to rebut the skeptic is to ask why I am not

---


10 Albert Lyngzeidetson, Ph.D., Philosophy Professor at University of Miami, Philosophy – A students guide to the basic principles or philosophy for introductory courses.

11 Mitchell, Craig Vincent, Charts of Philosophy and Philosophers, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), page 41.
justified in holding basic foundational knowledge. This is the rebuttal.

2. **Possible does not equal reasonable.**

   i. Logical possibility - that I may be mistaken - does not imply plausibility.

   ii. It may be possible that a demon or an evil scientist is deceiving me right now, but this is highly implausible.

   iii. L.A. Homicide detective J. Warner Wallace (author of *Cold Case Christianity*): “It’s possible but it’s not reasonable!”

3. **The burden of proof is on the skeptic to show that I don’t have good reasons to trust my basic foundational knowledge.**

   i. Just because it’s logically possible, it doesn’t follow that there are any epistemic grounds for doubting basic knowledge.

   ii. JP Moreland expresses it this way, “Just because it is logically possible that he is mistaken in a specific case of knowledge, that does not mean he is mistaken or that he has any good reason to think he is wrong.”

   iii. JP Moreland goes onto say, “Until the skeptic can give him good reason for thinking his instances of knowledge fail, the mere logical possibility that he is wrong will not suffice.”

   iv. If the skeptic gives epistemic grounds for doubting our basic foundational knowledge, than we examine those grounds one by one.

---

v. This objection to skepticism comes from Thomas Reid (1710-1796), a philosopher who lived during the time of Hume and wrote a famous response to skepticism:

a. “The skeptic asks me [Reid], Why do you believe the existence of the external object which you perceive? This belief, sir, is none of my manufacture; it came from the mint of Nature; it bears her image and superscription; and, if it is not right, the fault is not mine…”\(^\text{13}\)

vi. “The mistake that the skeptic makes, according to Reid, is to deny the truth of something that is demanded by our constitutions.”\(^\text{14}\)

vii. There are self-evidential properties of the external world that our constitution cannot deny.

viii. These held beliefs about the external world are irresistible.

ix. One philosopher put it this way: “But the irresistibility of a belief is a very good indicator, Reid thinks, that we hold that belief merely because of the way we are built, merely because of our constitution.”\(^\text{15}\)

x. “Thus, the skeptic gives us no reason whatsoever to reject common sense beliefs


\(^\text{14}\) Gideon Yaffe, Ph.D., Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy at Yale, “Thomas Reid,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; First published Mon Aug 28, 2000; substantive revision Fri Feb 20, 2009.

\(^\text{15}\) Gideon Yaffe, Ph.D., Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy at Yale, “Thomas Reid,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; First published Mon Aug 28, 2000; substantive revision Fri Feb 20, 2009.
about the external world.”

xi. Reid’s view became called Common Sense Realism or Common Sensism:

a. “It restores ontological primacy of objects by appeal to common sense, rendering the appeal to objects self-evident and open to the understanding of all.”

xii. Also known as Foundationalism:

a. There are a set of non-inferentially justified propositions that serve as the basis for all ancestral chains of inferentially justified propositions.

b. That is, our entire structure of knowledge is based on foundational truths that do not require further justification.

c. Knowledge is dependent on a foundation that is “properly basic.”

1) “Properly Basic” knowledge

2) This is just basically understood ideas.

d. As current Philosopher Alvin Plantiga & Philosopher William Lane Craig says, through the immediate witness of the Holy Spirit, we can have assurance of the truth of Christianity.

e. Through direct encounters, the Holy Spirit gives AWARENESS of himself which is also EVIDENCE.

f. The direct encounters with the Holy Spirit and other forms of awareness are some of the best kinds of evidence because they’re “properly basic.”

g. Philosopher Alvin Plantinga says that God exists and someone can know it with the evidence & argument or without the evidence & arguments.

16 Gideon Yaffe, Ph.D., Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy at Yale, “Thomas Reid,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; First published Mon Aug 28, 2000; substantive revision Fri Feb 20, 2009.
17 Albert Lyngzeidetson, Ph.D., Philosophy Professor at University of Miami, Philosophy – A students guide to the basic principles or philosophy for introductory courses.
h. Direct encounters provide awareness which leads to knowing God and knowledge of him.

4. **We are not abusing and will not abuse Foundationalism**

i. The skeptic ought to show how, in a particular case, I am abusing particularism [foundationalism].

ii. J.P. Moreland says that “The mere possibility that such an abuse is going on is not sufficient to prove the skeptic’s case, and the particularist does not need a criterion for telling when particularism itself is and is not being abused before he can adopt a particularist standpoint in a specific instance of knowledge.”

iii. Just because it’s possible that I abuse the Foundationalist strategy and claim to have basic knowledge of something for instance – doesn’t mean I am going to.

iv. For the skeptic, he/she can adopt foundationalism without being nervous about abusing it. – in fact he/she already has, as we will see.

5. **People know things about history and reality**

i. The skeptic would in effect by claiming that all people everywhere are wrong about what they know and all people do not know anything.

ii. This is absurd.

IX. **Do these types of Skepticism stand up to scrutiny?**

1. **No.**

---

X. What are sound Christian responses to these comments rooted in Skepticism?

A. Iterative skeptics should be ignored.
   i. For serious people that have walls up to knowledge of truth because of their skepticism, these criticisms will help.

B. Use the criticisms above in a 3rd person perspective.
   i. “The skeptic would say this …” (repeating what they said in some way that shows you understand.
   
   ii. “The Foundationalist would usually reply with this criticism…” (then give the criticism to show how it is an adequate rebuttal). By saying Foundationalist, you don’t have to use “I think” and it shows that you already researched it.

C. Explain the benefits of sceptical inquiry vs. skepticism
   i. Withholding judgment until relevant data can be sifted is a good practice for all pursuits of truth.
   
   ii. However, withholding judgment until all data can be sifted is impossible.

D. Resist the temptation from the skeptic
   i. The skeptic will ask “How do I know what I know?”
   
   ii. Put differently: What criteria am I using and what justifies this criteria I use to get knowledge?
   
   iii. I don’t need to take the bait, I don’t need to justify basic foundational knowledge.

E. Shift the burden of proof back on them
   i. Remember: They are asking, how do I know that my criteria is a good one? What
justifies me using this criteria as opposed to another?

ii. Remember: “…the skeptic is implying that before one can know, one must have criteria for knowledge.”\(^{19}\)

iii. They need to give me reasons why what I hold as basic should be doubted.

F. Possible Responses to comments

1. “You can't know the truth.”

   i. How do you know that?

2. “No one can know any truth about religion.”

   i. How do you know that?

3. “You can't know anything for sure.”

   i. Are you sure?

4. “You should doubt everything.”

   i. Should I doubt what you just said?

5. “I am certain that nothing is certain.”

   i. Really?

6. “Isn’t it possible that you are wrong? If so, why would you base your life on it?”

   i. Explain that not making a decision is still a decision & Share Pascal’s Wager

\(^{19}\) JP Moreland & William Lane Craig, Philosophical Foundations for the Christian Worldview (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), page 100.
I. Popular sayings we encounter
   i. “In the cases of the miracle stories in the Bible, all they could do is trust their senses, but senses often fail and are unreliable.”
   
   ii. “We can never know for sure if we see a miracle as we can’t always trust our senses.”

II. How should we understand these sayings and respond?
   
   A. Rooted in Skepticism.
      i. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand Skepticism.

   B. This skepticism attacks key Christian doctrines
      1. Miracles (including the Resurrection of Jesus)
         i. Are miracles possible? (cover next week and we will also discuss other non-natural phenomena when we discuss Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism)
         
         ii. Should we believe others reports of miracles? (we will cover this question on the last week of the course)
         
         iii. Could we be mistaken in experiencing miracles?
            a. (tonight)

   C. This skepticism gets us to core questions that we all ought to ask ourselves
      1. Epistemological Questions
         i. How do we know things?
ii. How do we know anything at all?

iii. How do we acquire knowledge?

iv. Are our methods for acquiring knowledge justified and warranted.

v. What counts as knowledge?

vi. How do we separate truth from falsity?

vii. What Epistemology is the right one?

III. Types of Skepticism relevant to these sayings

1. Sensory skepticism & the Argument from Error

   i. This skepticism comes from Rationalism which states that empirical knowledge is subject to error and isn’t reliable.

   ii. There have been times when my 5 senses deceived me – where something I thought was the case turned out to be not the case.

   iii. I could be mistaken about everything I am sensing right now.

   iv. How can I claim to have knowledge, if my senses are unreliable and can’t be trusted to report accurately?

   v. “We do not know the external world because we cannot trust our senses, since they have deceived us in the past.”

---

IV. How did this Skepticism develop as a philosophy?

A. Rene Descartes (Discussed last class)

V. What are the implications of Sensory Skepticism?

i. We can’t know anything about the external world as our senses may be mistaken.

ii. We can’t know if God exists just by the magnificence of nature as our senses may be mistaken.

iii. We can’t know if we ever have a vision from God as our senses may be mistaken.

iv. We can’t trust the reports of miracles in the Bible as Bible characters’ senses may have deceived them.

v. We can’t know if we can ever experience a miracle.

VI. What are the criticisms of Sensory Skepticism?

1. Senses are typically reliable

   i. “This skepticism fails because from the fact that our senses sometimes deceive us, it does not follow that they always do.”

2. Doubting our senses requires us to know something

   i. “to know that our senses sometimes deceive us requires that they sometimes or often do not. Indeed, for us to discern that I mistakenly think that the oar is bent, that the wall is flat, that the tracks do not remain parallel, that the road is wet, or that the card is a red six of hearts requires that we have clear and accurate sensory knowledge. It presupposes that we know—accurately—that the oar is in fact

---

straight, that the wall is in fact curved, that the tracks are in fact parallel, that the road is in fact dry, and that the card is in fact a red six of spades. The argument of the sensory skeptic, then, requires as legitimate and true [knowledge from accurate sense data] what it purports to show is not legitimate and true. It self-refutes.”

3. **Senses are innocent until proven guilty**

   i. “the senses are innocent until proven guilty. It is reasonable, then, to go with what our senses tell us about the world, as long as we have no overriding reason to doubt them, and as long as we’re careful.”

   a. JP Moreland puts it this way: “One’s current sensory beliefs are prima facie justified, that is, innocent until “proven” guilty…[so] in the absence of defeaters (factors that refute or undercut one’s justification)...one has a right to be sure of one’s sensory belief.”

VII. **Does Hume’s Skepticism stand up to scrutiny?**

   i. No.

VIII. **Popular sayings we encounter**

   i. “Everything we know, we know by experience.”

   ii. “We will never know if we have a soul because we will never experience it.”

---

IX. How should we understand these sayings and respond?

i. Skepticism from the most famous skeptic of all!

X. How did this Skepticism develop as a philosophy?

A. David Hume (1711-1776)

1. Background

   i. British Philosopher who was comprehensive in what he took on in his philosophy.

   ii. Complete and consistent skeptic.

   iii. Skepticism for Descartes was to get at the foundation of knowledge. But skepticism for Hume was an end to itself. It was a way of life.

   iv. Hume was skeptical about everything.

2. Hume’s Empiricism is the root of his Skepticism

   i. Hume thought that knowledge is traceable to experience (i.e., science) or sense experience or sensation.

   ii. This movement in philosophical thought is known as Empiricism. (we will cover this in detail in another class)…

       a. Empiricism asserts that all ideas or knowledge is attained through experience or the 5 senses.
1) Tasting

2) Touching

3) Smelling

4) Seeing

5) Hearing

iii. For the typical empiricist, the mind is blank until it is filled with knowledge gained through experience in the world (or scientific experiments).

iv. We cannot know anything in the world unless we have an empirical (sense experiment) impression of it on our mind.

   **MIND**

   (Spirit, Thought, Emotion, Will)

   ---------------------------------------------

   **ACTUAL WORLD**

   (The actual world outside the mind)

   v. When you are committed to impressions from sense experience you get skepticism.

   3. **Hume’s idea of ideas**

      i. Describing Hume’s view, Jones says: “**All simple ideas are memory copies of simple impressions; complex ideas are combinations of simple ones**.”\(^6\)

      ii. All ideas are copies of impressions.

---

a. All ideas can be traced to a “precedent feeling or sentiment.”

iii. More lively experiences are impressions.

a. “All impressions, that is, all sensations, either outward or inward, are strong and vivid.”

iv. The mind is just a collection of impressions and ideas.

v. All we can know is our impressions from sensation.

4. **Hume’s mind**

i. All I can know are what my perceptions tell me.

a. One perception follows another than another.

b. “Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other…”

ii. I never experience myself directly only impressions of myself.

a. “…when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other…”

b. “Then my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep - so long am I insensible of myself, and may be truly be said not to exist.”

c. If I stop sensing myself, I don’t know if I continue to exist.

d. We are just a bundle of perceptions “which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement. There is not

7 David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1894), Section II.


simplicity at one time.”

iii. Therefore, there is no mind.

XI. What are the implications of Hume’s Skepticism?

i. The soul and God are not empirically observable, they are entities that we cannot have a repeated experience of. So we can’t have knowledge of the soul or God.

XII. What are the criticisms of Hume’s Skepticism (more criticism on Empiricism will come in the next 2 weeks)?

A. Hume’s skepticism fails to dismiss reality

1. Criticism of Hume’s skepticism regarding the self or “I”

   i. Hume does not break free from the unified “I”.

   ii. W.T. Jones puts it this way: “In a word, if the self were only a flickering succession of ‘loose and separate’ ideas, as the theory asserts, it could never know even the fragmentary world the theory describes. Such a self would be too fragmentary even to know its own fragmentariness.”

   iii. That is, in order to know the world that we are empirically experiencing, “I” must be contiguous through the experience to put the fragments of each experience together.

B. Hume’s skepticism develops despair – to which he admitted.

1. Hume developed a bit of despair

   i. W.T. Jones describes it this way: “At times he was almost bewildered by the position

---

in which he found himself and was at a loss as to how to proceed.”

ii. Hume admitted: “I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, invon’ed with the deepest darkness…”

iii. Hume referred to his reflection as “philosophical melancholy and delirium.”

iv. He said he tried distracting himself with other things and then “after three or four hours’ amusement, I wou’d return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain’d and ridiculous, that I cannot find heart to enter into them any farther…I am ready to throw all my books and papers into the fire, and resolve never more to renounce the pleasures of life for the sake of reasoning and philosophy.”

v. Any philosophical pursuits that leads the originator of it into darkness and melancholy seems very suspect.

vi. W.T. Jones concludes on Hume’s search for the principles in the external world that facilitate the Enlightenment mind: “…when Hume searched in experience for these principles, he failed to find them. So far from finding objective, rational principles, he found only the imagination – a private, subjective principle that feigns to be objective and rational but is really ‘inconstant and fallacious.”

C. Hume seemed to back off into a “mitigated skepticism”

i. Act and believe even with uncertain foundations.

ii. But this just seems like any other standard of inquiry to determine the truth as opposed to his extreme skepticism.

---

iii. Hume thought that at the very least a mitigated skepticism will help people keep away from metaphysical notions, abstract reasoning, and theology.

D. **Hume’s skepticism cannot be lived – to which he admitted.**

1. **Hume seemed to back off into a form of realism**

   i. Hume made comments like this that showed he was a realist in some ways: “Nature will always maintain her rights, and prevail in the end over any abstract reasoning whatsoever.”

2. **Realism is necessary to survive.**

XIII. **Does Hume’s Skepticism stand up to scrutiny?**

1. **No.**

XIV. **What are sound Christian responses to comments rooted in Skepticism?**

A. **Explain the benefits of skeptical inquiry vs. skepticism**

   i. Withholding judgment until relevant data can be sifted is a good practice for all pursuits of truth.

   ii. However, withholding judgment until all data can be sifted is impossible.

   iii. (This is important to bring up because it is impossible to sift through an infinite amount of data and then make a decision).

---

B. **Explain wonder & humility are helpful in discovering truth**

1. **Wonder**
   
i. Albert Einstein took it a bit further when he put it this way, “He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.”

   ii. Aristotle: “For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters.”

2. **Humility**
   
i. 1 Corinthians 13:12 “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

3. **But we do have ways to know things with certainty, some knowledge even at 100%**.

C. **Use the criticisms we cover in a 3rd person perspective.**

   i. “The skeptic would say this …” (repeating what they said in some way that shows you understand.)

   ii. “The Foundationalist would usually reply with this criticism…” (then give the criticism to show how it is an adequate rebuttal).

   iii. By saying Foundationalist, you don’t have to use “I think” and it shows that you already researched it.

D. **Explain epistemological ways of knowing that are common to all.**

   1. **Knowledge from **empirical truths**
i. Experiential Knowledge (*A Posteriori*)
   a. *A Posteriori*: after sense experience
   b. Contingent and require observation.

2. **Knowledge from innate truths**

   i. Innate Knowledge (*A Priori*)
      a. *A Priori*: logically prior to experience and independent of sense experience

   ii. “Properly Basic” knowledge

3. **Knowledge by Reasoning**

   i. Know the difference between inductive and deductive arguments.

   ii. Inductive: building a case based on indirect and direct evidence to conclude the cause from the effects or conclude the general rule from the particular data.

      a. *People can have inductive knowledge without first having a theory as to how the premise for or grounds of such knowledge transfer justification to the item they know.*

      b. I can know conclusions without knowing the philosophical proof for why/how I know what I know.

   iii. Deductive: true premises constructed to show the most logical conclusion; if the logic is valid and the premises are true then the argument is sound and one can be 100% certain.

      a. We use this mostly in philosophical arguments but can be used elsewhere.

---

4. **Knowledge doesn’t require complete certainty.**

   a. Conclusions do not have to be 100% fail proof for claims to knowledge.

   b. I can claim knowledge by induction & sense data (observation of cause-effects) even though I am not 100% certain.

     1) This is what culture tells us we cannot do with “religious” knowledge.

   c. Knowledge is justified true belief.

   d. See the Burden of Persuasion section in “How to do Apologetics”

**E. Explain Foundationalism & Realism.**

1. **Foundationalism**

   i. Foundationalism with other epistemological ways of knowing are necessary in accounting for our complete knowledge structure.

---

**SKEPTICISM**

- Skepticism emphasizes avoidance of false or unjustified beliefs by claiming that knowledge requires certainty.
- Wants us to doubt religious experience, God awareness, Jesus historicity.

**FOUNDATIONALISM**

- Emphasizes obtaining true or justified beliefs by claiming that knowledge does not require 100% certainty.
- Wants us to accept truth about religious experience, God awareness, Jesus historicity.
ii. Begins from the starting point of certain undeniable foundational principles of reality, such as the laws of logic and self-existence.

   a. Logic and my own existence cannot be denied by the believer or the non-believer.

iii. This starting point, helps us address major questions about truth, reality, meaning, morality, etc.

iv. By acknowledging and affirming the foundational principles of reality, one has less obstacles to overcome and skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism is severely weakened.

2. **Realism**

   i. Epistemological Realism: “*that sense experience reports a true and uninterrupted, if limited, account of objects; that it is possible to have faithful and direct knowledge of the actual world.*”

   ii. It is possible to know objective reality.

F. **Explain ADDITIONAL epistemological ways of knowing that Christians hold.**

1. **Knowledge by General Revelation vs. Special Revelation**

   i. General Revelation

      a. The awareness of God or knowledge of God obtained through looking around and making observations.

      b. Romans 1:19-20: “since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being

---

understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

ii. Special Revelation

a. Scripture

b. Jesus

c. The awareness of God or knowledge of God obtained through the direct experience of God.

d. Vision, dream, prophecy, miracle, etc.

e. Appearance of an Angel or Jesus.

f. Hearing God’s voice.

g. Sensing God’s presence.

G. Mini-lessons (if time)

1. **Know the burden of persuasion**

2. **Know the burden of proof**

3. **Coherence Theory of Truth**

4. **Correspondence Theory of Truth**
I. **Popular sayings we encounter**

i. “Everything that actually exists is material in nature.”

ii. “The entire universe and human existence can be explained through natural entities and natural causes.”

iii. “We are just biochemical creatures that evolved naturally. Nothing more.”

iv. “Miracles are not possible as the laws of nature are fixed.”

v. “Morality, meaning, purpose, value and free will are human projections. Nature has nothing to say about them.”

vi. Atheist Richard Dawkins: “The universe is nothing but a collection of atoms in motion, human beings are simply machines for propagating DNA, and the propagation of DNA is a self-sustaining process. It is every living object’s sole reason for living.”

vii. Francis Crick, discoverer of DNA: “You, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”

viii. “The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be.” – Carl Sagan, Cosmologist

II. **How should we understand these sayings and respond?**

1. These sayings are rooted in philosophy.

   i. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism.

---

2. These philosophical systems are the basis of the most commonly held worldviews in Western culture today.

III. How did these worldviews develop as a philosophy?

A. Greeks
   i. Democritus, Lucretius, and many more

B. Moderns
   i. Thomas Hobbes, Charles Darwin, Thomas Huxley, and many more

C. Recent

IV. What is Naturalism, Materialism, & Physicalism?

A. Naturalism:
   1. Definition:
      i. The universe requires no supernatural cause but is self-existent, self-explanatory, self-operating, and self-directing;
      ii. that the world-processes are not teleological or anthropocentric, but purposeless and

---

deterministic;

iii. every aspect of human life is an ordinary natural event attributable to nature.

2. Key components to the naturalist’s account of the world:

i. Naturalists deny that the supernatural exists, denies that miracles are possible, and denies that humans have freedom and purpose.

ii. Naturalism includes Scientific Determinism:

a. Science should explain phenomena only in terms of entities and properties that fall within the category of the natural.

b. World Renown physicist Stephen Hawking makes the following comments along these lines:

1) “Given the state of the universe at one time, a complete set of laws fully determines both the future and the past. This would exclude the possibility of miracles or an active role for God.”

2) “A scientific law is not a scientific law if it holds only when some supernatural being decides not to intervene.”

3) “In the case of people, since we cannot solve the equations that determine our behavior, we use the effective (placebo, make-believe, wishful thinking) theory that people have free will.”

4) “There are no miracles or exceptions to the laws of nature.”

iii. Naturalists hail the successes of science as providing answers to problems that have plagued humanity.

---

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
iv. Naturalists propose a “Grand Story”

   a. Big bang cosmology

   b. Evolutionary theory

   c. Atomic theory of matter

   1) We are “the product of a mindless and purposeless natural process which did not have us in mind.”

B. Materialism

1. Definition:

   i. The metaphysical doctrine that nothing exists except matter.

   ii. Reality only consists of the material universe.

C. Physicalism

1. Definition:

   i. the “soul” is the same entity from the physical/material body of a human being.

   ii. humans are strictly physical entities.

2. Key features of the Physicalist’s view

   i. Physicalists account for the alleged problem of ethics and the alleged problem of mind by:

      a. Reducing the mind to brain functions and reducing ethical judgments to social customs or emotional expressions which are natural processes that can be

---

subjected to scientific investigation (Reductionism).

b. Eliminating the correspondence between the concept and reality (Eliminativism).

ii. Physicalists avoid problems of an immaterial soul or an immaterial God relating and interacting with a material body or a material world.

V. What are the implications of Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism?

i. God does not exist.

ii. There is no mind or soul.

iii. Miracles are not possible.

iv. No basis for objective morality.

v. No meaning found outside of one’s subjectivity.

vi. No purpose for one’s life or human existence.

vii. No free will.

VI. What are the criticisms of Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism?

A. The main points of Naturalism & Materialism cannot be proven.\(^{11}\)

1. The main point: no supernatural entities exist whatsoever, anywhere.

2. This is what is called an universal negative proposition.

\(^{11}\) Professor Steve Tsai, private email correspondence.
3. One would have to be everywhere, at all times, and check all entities in a manner that proves there were absolutely no supernatural beings present.

4. Thus, because it is impossible to prove a universal negative, and the main point of Naturalism is that no supernatural entities exist anywhere at any time, Naturalism is impossible to prove.

B. Naturalism, Materialism, & Physicalism cannot account for the existence of these non-material entities.

1. If any of the following entities are real, Naturalism is defeated.
   
   i. Words
   
   ii. Language
   
   iii. Colors
   
   iv. Numbers
   
   v. Thoughts
   
   vi. Theories
   
   vii. Propositions
   
   viii. Meaning & Purpose to life, an action, a written phrase, etc.
   
   ix. Logical expressions and the laws of logic
   
   x. Emotions and desires
   
   xi. Beauty
xii. Outer body experiences

xiii. Minds as separate entities from brains

xiv. Will

xv. God

xvi. Human relationships (brother, friend, son, etc.)

xvii. Hope, Meaning, and Purpose

xviii. Value or worth of:

   a. moral action
   b. moral law
   c. humans
   d. animals
   e. planet

xix. Dimensional relations: here to over-there; over & under; large & small


xxi. Universals

   a. Properties of objects, ideas, etc.
   b. Relations of objects, ideas, etc.

xxii. Justice and Injustice

xxiii. Objective Truth
xxiv. Objective Morality

xxv. Undeniable features of human persons.
   a. Consciousness
   b. Libertarian Free Will
   c. Rationality
   d. A Unified Self – Identity through change
   e. Intrinsic Value

2. Some forms of Naturalists will attempt to adopt these entities and features in their worldview.

   i. They say that these entities can b explained by either of the following:
      a. reducing them to effects of material causes
      b. have to be explained as projections of our brains due to sociological or biological reasons

3. However, this strategy ultimately fails.

   i. “These reductionist attempts have failed and physicalism as a worldview cannot adequately handle the existence of these entities.”\(^\text{12}\)

4. Since Naturalism cannot adequately explain them and we cannot deny the reality of these entities, Naturalism must be rejected.

---

\(^{12}\) JP Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, (Grand Rapids: Baker 1987), page 82.
C. **Physicalism cannot successfully reduce the mind to the brain or show that the mind and the brain are identical?**

1. **Substance Dualism vs. Physicalism**

   i. Philosophers of Mind argue either for or against the view that the mind is the same thing as the brain.

   ii. On the theist (substance dualist) worldview: the mind possesses mental properties and the brain possesses physical properties.

   iii. On the Naturalist worldview (physicalism): the brain possesses mental and physical properties.

2. **If the mind exists as separate from the brain, than Naturalism, Materialism, and Physicalism are false.**

   i. The brain is not identical to mind if 1 thing is true of mind that is not true of the brain.

      a. This is referred to as Leibniz’s law of Identity of Indiscernibles.

      b. If 2 things are identicals they share the same properties and everything that is said of 1 can be said of the other.

      c. If 1 has a property that 2 doesn’t have, they are not the same thing.

      d. So, if I can find 1 thing true of mind that is not true of brain, than I succeed in showing that these are 2 non-identical entities.

   ii. Note that causation, correlation, and connection between mental states and brain states is not identality.

      a. Naturalism must show that mental states and brain states are the same even if they

---

are caused, correlated and connected.

iii. Properties that mental states have that the brain states do not.
   a. Non-physical
   b. Present themselves directly to the observer
   c. Incorrigibility
   d. Intentionality

iv. These are mental states that cannot be reduced to physical states.

v. Therefore, the mind has mental states that are not identical to brain states and the mind is not identical to the brain.

D. Most philosophers agree that there are significant problems with Naturalism, Materialism, & Physicalism.

1. Davies and Collins state that “Most philosophers agree that reductionism has not succeeded in ethics and the philosophy of mind.”\(^\text{14}\)

   i. Critics of naturalism point out the lack of success of naturalism to account for the human mind and ethics.

   ii. Although, Naturalism still dominates the science and humanities it is backpedaling from the challenges of theism and dualism.

   iii. Some contend that it will never be able to account for the human mind, ethics, and other real non-material entities.

E. **Physicalism is self-refuting**

i. “Eliminativism is still largely a minority position among naturalists, especially in the philosophy of mind, mostly because it is widely thought either to contradict what is obvious or to be self-refuting.”

ii. Denying beliefs and thoughts is contradictory to common human experience.

iii. Believing or thinking about a view that denies ‘believing and thinking’ is self-refuting because if we don’t have beliefs then the Eliminativists can’t believe in Eliminativism.

F. **If Naturalism is true, than determinism is true – which leads to an absurd conclusion.**

i. But this removes all sense of human “intention, rational deliberation, logical inference, and authentic choice.”

ii. There are no actions that can be said to be morally honorable or abhorrent as I am just matter in motion and I can’t be held accountable for my predetermined actions.

G. **Naturalism is self-refuting.**

1. Consider this question:

   i. “If the cosmos evolved by chance with no anticipation of man…is there any good reason to trust the mind’s conceptual apprehension of the cosmos?”

2. **JP Moreland’s self-refuting criticism:**

---

15 Ibid.
i. From his *Scaling the Secular City*

ii. “It is self-refuting to argue that one ought to choose physicalism because he should see that the evidence is good for physicalism. Physicalism cannot be offered as a rational theory because physicalism does away with the necessary preconditions for there to be such a thing as rationality.”

iii. If there is in fact nothing but matter in motion in the world, then Naturalism is true.

iv. This state of affairs denies the possibility of rationality (thinking) as there are no minds in the world to know naturalism is true.

v. This is so because Naturalism denies the preconditions for rationality.

   a. Self-awareness to be aware of our thoughts.

   b. Thoughts with intentionality (“of” or “about” something).

   c. Reasons, propositions, thoughts, evidence, logic, etc.

      1) Relation of premises prescribes what one ought to rationally accept, but physical states cannot logically imply, infer, or prescribe the rational “ought” in a logical flow of thought.

      2) Logical connections are not physical.

   d. Rational faculty capable of rational insight to “see” a result of the argument

   e. Enduring “I” to be present to connect a series of thoughts rationally and flow from premise to premise in a rational argument. That is, the “I” does not morph or come in and out of existence as time passes.

   f. Agent self with free will to deliberate, choose, and act according to a rational

---


decision. The freedom to believe and ability to believe something is true based on good reasons.

vi. If one claims to know that Naturalism is true, or to embrace it for good reasons, or to recommend Naturalism to others due to evidence, than this is self-refuting. (because this knowing, thinking, etc. uses a mind)

vii. It is also self-refuting because naturalism implies determinism and determinism rejects free will.

a. So one would be contradicting himself if he claims that he chooses to hold to determinism because that is choosing a view that says you cannot choose.

b. Thus, it is self-refuting to claim this rational choice to hold to Naturalism because this rationality is impossible in determinism.

viii. Thus, knowing, thinking, choosing to believe, etc. that Naturalism is true is self-defeating.

3. John Lennox’s self-refuting criticism

i. From his God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?

ii. Lennox refers to Charles Darwin very intriguing statement: “With me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy.”

iii. If Naturalism is true, we could never know it as the idea of it destroys rationality.

iv. If we developed from the material of the universe and our brains are simply material with electro-chemical neural events, than how could we actually have thoughts, reasons, or judgements.

v. Even if we did have thoughts, reasons, and judgements, there could be no way of trusting them because we know they are just the result of irrational physical processes.

vi. Even the advocate of Naturalism is just spattering off noises caused by electro-chemical brain activity. But nothing of meaning is said by the Naturalist who simply is just making noises. If something of meaning was said of the noises, there would be no way for the Naturalist to even recognize the meaning of the noises. Thus, according to this view, the Naturalist cannot think and definitely cannot have a rational discussion about coherent ideas.

vii. “The very assertions of the reductionist himself are nothing but blips in the neural network of his brain. The world of rational discourse dissolves into the absurd chatter of firing synapses. Quite frankly, that cannot be right and none of us believes it to be so.”

viii. “There is a patent self-contradiction running through all attempts, however sophisticated they may appear, to derive rationality from irrationality.”

ix. Lennox states that all attempts at reductionism towards a Naturalistic worldview “seem uncannily like futile attempts to lift one by one’s bootstraps.”

4. Alvin Plantinga’s Criticism:

i. “I argued that the conjunction of naturalism with the belief that we human beings have evolved in conformity with current evolutionary doctrine... is in a certain interesting way self-defeating or self-referentially incoherent.”

---

26 Alvin Plantinga, Warrant (1992)
ii. Plantinga’s argument is as follows:\textsuperscript{28, 29},

a. Assuming macro-evolution is true…offspring will have certain random genetic traits that they inherited will assist in survival. This occurs through blind, unguided, natural processes.

b. Given our alleged history of evolution, our brain’s cognitive faculties are not that which distinguishes true beliefs from false beliefs.

c. If Naturalism & Evolution are true, than it is highly improbable that this is true: ‘our cognitive faculties are reliable’.

1) “Thus naturalistic evolutionary theory gives us reason to doubt that our cognitive systems have the production of true beliefs…or that they do, in fact, furnish us with mostly true beliefs.”\textsuperscript{30}

2) “The probability that our faculties would be reliable, given the truth of evolutionary naturalism and the existence of the faculties we possess, is either (1) very low indeed or (2) something about which we should remain agnostic.”\textsuperscript{31}

3) “…if naturalism is correct, then it seems highly questionable that humans would have belief forming faculties that produce reliably true beliefs.”\textsuperscript{32}

d. One who accepts Naturalism & Evolution as true and also sees that premise above is true has an undefeated defeater for his/her ‘cognitive faculties are reliable.’

1) “…evolutionary naturalism is an ultimately undefeated defeater of our

\textsuperscript{29} William Lane Craig & JP Moreland, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003), page 104.
\textsuperscript{30} William Lane Craig & JP Moreland, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003), page 104.
\textsuperscript{31} William Lane Craig & JP Moreland, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003), page 105.
grounds for trusting the reliability of our noetic equipment.”

e. One who has a defeater for ‘cognitive faculties are reliable’, also has a defeater for any belief that he/she takes to be produced by his/her cognitive faculties, including the belief that Naturalism and Evolution are both true.

f. Therefore, N & E is self-defeating as it provides a defeater for itself and is self-referentially inconsistent.

1) “…evolutionary naturalism is self-defeating because it provides for itself a defeater (grounds for not trusting our noetic equipment) that is ultimately undefeated.”

iii. In a nutshell:

a. “we have no reasons for thinking that human beings have minds that tend to lead them to true beliefs. And that means that most of the beliefs we have about the world are probably wrong, even though they confer some selective advantage. So, on the basis of the premises of evolutionary theory, then, all of our beliefs are probably false. But, of course, naturalistic evolutionary theory is itself a human belief. Therefore, on its own terms, naturalistic evolutionary theory is probably false and thus self-defeating.”

iv. It is not rational to hold that Evolution and Naturalism are both true.

v. So, Naturalism with Evolution is a self-defeating conjunction of belief.

vi. So one must reject Naturalism to accept Evolution.


vii. So theistic evolution becomes the only option for those not wanting to give up evolution. This implies a belief that God is real and must have guided the evolutionary process for us to develop a rational mind.

viii. Or if Naturalistic Evolution is true, human rationality cannot be true.

5. Summary

i. Non-rational world producing the rational mind is what science doesn’t typically report – as science reports natural causes and relatable effects.

ii. “Even if these nonrational factors did succeed in producing the rational faculties of human beings, how can it be known that the product of this basically non-intelligent process can and should be trusted to deliver rational content?”

iii. “Therefore, when one discovers that the source of human reason is not itself rational, then a valid reason has been raised to doubt and distrust the outcome of that reason.”

iv. “If that which produced human reasoning was not itself rational in nature, why then have any confidence in one’s present ability to reason?”

v. Overall, Naturalism doesn’t provide a basis for rationality which is required for Naturalism.

VII. Does Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism stand up to scrutiny?

1. No.

   i. “Perhaps materialism was a liberating philosophy when the need was to escape from dogmas of religion, but today materialism itself is the dogma from which the mind needs to escape.”

   ii. “The materialist starting point is unsatisfactory because the laws of nature have a character which is not self-contained but point beyond themselves to deeper intelligibility in the universe.”

VIII. What are sound Christian responses to these comments rooted in Naturalism, Materialism, Physicalism?

1. “Everything that actually exists is material in nature.”

2. “The entire universe and human existence can be explained through natural entities and natural causes.

3. “We are just biochemical creatures that evolved naturally. Nothing more.”

4. “Miracles are not possible as the laws of nature are fixed.”

5. “Morality, meaning, purpose, value and free will are human projections. Nature has nothing to say about them.”

---

41 John Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics & Christology
I. Popular sayings we encounter

i. “Only science can give us truth.”

ii. “All we know comes from our experiences.”

II. How should we understand these sayings and respond?

i. These sayings are rooted in philosophy.

ii. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Empiricism, Positivism, & Scientism.

iii. Structure

III. Defining Empiricism, Scientism, & Positivism?

1. Empiricism:

   i. Comes from the Greek word *empeiria* meaning experience.

   ii. In the philosophy branch of Epistemology, Empiricism basically assigns a central role to ‘sense experience’ in the study of how we acquire knowledge.

   iii. Empiricism asserts that all ideas or knowledge is attained through experience or the 5 senses.

   iv. For the typical empiricist, the mind is blank until it is filled with knowledge gained through experience in the world.

   v. Dictionary of Philosophy defines Empiricism as the view that holds that “knowledge that is factual is connected with experiences in such a way that verification or direct
vi. Empiricist first examine our ideas and then recognize that these ideas can be traced to *a posteriori* experience.

vii. *A Posteriori* vs. *A Priori*

a. *A Posteriori*: after sense experience

b. *A Priori*: logically prior to experience and independent of sense experience

viii. All ideas originate from sense data or experience.

ix. Apart from these experiences we know nothing.

---

2. **Positivism:**

a. Empiricism morphed into Positivism.

---

b. French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) is the founder and earliest proponent of positivism.

c. Comte held that there were stages of knowledge. The 1\textsuperscript{st} stage theological knowledge is the lowest, the 2\textsuperscript{nd} stage is metaphysical, and the 3\textsuperscript{rd} & highest stage of knowledge is positive or scientific knowledge.

d. This final stage was the best level of knowing, whereas theology and metaphysics are areas of knowledge that we just will never have certain answers in.

e. Positivism became known as the “\textit{Empiricist philosophy that restricts genuine knowledge to the so called positive sciences that are thought to be based on the evidence of the senses. Positivists tend to be skeptical of what cannot be directly observed.”}^{2}

f. It holds that “all knowledge regarding matters of fact is based on the “positive” data of experience.”^{3}

g. Essentially this view holds that the positive statements of science are really the only knowable ones.

h. Next session will be on logical positivism and the further development of this view.

3. \textbf{Scientism:}

   a. Positivism morphed into Scientism.

   b. “\textit{What science cannot tell us, mankind cannot know}.” – Famous atheist

---


\textsuperscript{3} Herbert Feigl, “Positivism”, Encyclopedia Britannica.
philosopher Bertrand Russell

c. Scientism: What constitutes knowledge is **only** that which science can describe, test, or yield. What is rational and true is that which science can verify.

d. Weak Scientism: Fields of knowledge outside of the hard sciences are not completely worthless but offer no intellectual results concerning reality.

e. Strong Scientism: Science is the only source of knowledge – knowledge of any kind.

**IV. How did Empiricism/Scientism/Positivism develop as philosophies?**

**A. Philosophical Developments from British Empiricism**

i. Empiricism began as a movement in philosophy, mainly England, during the Early Modern period of the Enlightenment era.

ii. The main British Philosophers who advocated various forms of Empiricism were:

   a. Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

   b. John Locke (1635-1703)

   c. George Berkeley (1685-1753)

   d. David Hume (1711-1776)

iii. Bacon was the British philosopher who helped lay the groundwork of Empiricism.

iv. Francis Bacon advocated a clean fresh unfiltered non-presuppositional approach.

v. So, Francis Bacon wanted to liberate the mind of opinions to base knowledge on face
to face view of the world.4

a. Experience objective reality through baby eyes of wonder.

vi. One philosopher describes his motive this way: “Because the preconceptions of
medieval science were so flagrantly wrong, it was easy to assume that if men could
only rid themselves of them, everything will be smooth sailing.”5

vii. In Francis Bacon’s *The Great Instauration* [1620], he tries to provide “...a total
reconstruction of sciences, arts, and all human knowledge, raised upon the proper
foundations.”6

a. “...what the sciences stand in need of is a form of induction which shall analyze
experience and take it to pieces, and by a due process of exclusion and rejection
lead to an inevitable conclusion.”7

viii. So he wants his new instrument (he referred to as an “organon” from Aristotle) of
induction to correct any errors from sense experience so he can get to the truth about
reality.

a. “…but I contrive that the office of the sense shall be only to judge the experiment,
and that the experiment itself shall judge of the thing.”8

b. “Those however who aspire not to guess…but to discover and know; who propose
to devise mimic and fabulous worlds of their own, but to examine and dissect
the nature of this very world itself; must go to facts themselves for everything.”9

ix. So, here Francis Bacon wants our senses and scientific experiments to be the basis for

---

5 W.T. Jones, From Hobbes to Hume, page 77.
6 Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration and New Organon* [1620], selections in *The English Philosophers from
7 Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration and New Organon* [1620], selections in *The English Philosophers from
8 Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration and New Organon* [1620], op. cit., p. 17.
factual knowledge about reality.

x. Here he is developing the formulation of the inductive method for scientists to use when doing scientific experiments.

xi. He establishes what we later call “The Scientific Method” of science where there can be a rational induction based in empirical observations of scientific experiments.

V. **What are the implications of these views?**

1. **God cannot be empirically experienced, so we are unable to know him.**

2. **Western Culture**
   
i. So, as it always happens, the academic thought eventually trickled into the culture and into the everyday man’s understanding of things, including the Bible.

ii. Although philosophers of science rejected empiricism, the effects of the academics already hit the streets with full force where science was given an authority that other disciplines did not enjoy.

iii. As such, for the ‘Enlightened’ person on the street, real knowledge was only provided by science.

iv. So Naturalism and Scientism etc. became the dominant worldview of the West.

3. **Christianity**

   i. Empiricism had a tremendous influence on post-Enlightenment Evangelical Christianity.

---

ii. During that time much of the Christian premier intellectual heritage was given up, abandoned, and forgotten.

iii. Unfortunately, most evangelicals are stuck in an intellectual swamp because we have annihilated our pre-Enlightenment scholarship.

iv. What we see is the influence of Scientism on the decline of the Evangelical mind.

v. Those intellectual results are still pervasive today in our culture and we need to understand it in order to break free from it.

vi. Upper story religion & Lower story science

vii. Religion was lumped in with other humanities as just preferential matters.

viii. Religion became just an extracurricular activity instead of a worldview.

ix. Pearcy: “Christians began talking about a schism between the head and the heart.”

x. Pearcy: “Christians themselves were partly responsible for the privatizing of religion, by privatizing accepting the Baconian Empiricism definition of science as religiously neutral.”

xi. The churches:

a. withdrew from intellectual encounters with the secular world,

b. gave up the idea that religion is a part of the whole life of intellectual experience

c. abandoned the field of rational studies on the assumption that they were the natural province of science alone.

VI. **What are the criticisms of these views?**

A. **Criticisms of Empiricism**

1. **Francis Bacon himself could not free himself from all of his own presuppositions.**
   
i. He naively thought that he had rid himself of all presuppositions.

   ii. He retained the view that the universe is composed of individual ‘substances’,
       universals, and essences which the Scholastic era philosophers already worked out for
       him.

   iii. He puts the cart before the horse, in that, he puts the observations before the
        presuppositional framework.

   a. Philosopher W.T. Jones states: “A mind empty of all presuppositions &
      preconceptions would be as incapable at getting at the facts of the natural world as
      a baby’s, for it would be helpless to organize and interpret the experiences before
      it.”

   b. We cannot collect facts that will be of much use unless we have some sort of
      hypothesis already formed.

   c. “It is clear that Bacon entirely neglected to consider the role of hypothesis in
      directing the search for facts and in determining what experiments are tried.”

   d. Thus, we need a sense for reality, truth, logic, etc. These are *a priori* entities that
      are not associated with the science at all, but are necessary before the science is
      conducted.

   iv. Francis Bacon wanted a new epistemology (Empiricism) but didn’t want to give up

---

the presupposition of metaphysics of substance (*a priori* entities). This could not be done.

v. Thus, Empiricism is flawed.

2. **Philosophers rejected Empiricism.**

i. Eventually, Empiricism was rejected as a philosophy of science and Empiricism is still rejected today.

3. **Empiricism is self-refuting.**

i. Empiricism claims that ‘all knowledge comes from empirical observations and all ideas are a result of empirical observations.’

ii. But this very statement was not an empirical observation.

iii. So the statement cannot be considered knowledge and ought to be discarded.

iv. Thus, Empiricism is a self-refuting philosophy.

v. So Empiricism is necessarily false and cannot be true in any possible world since it is self-contradicting.

**B. Criticism of Positivism**

1. **Positivism died in philosophy.**

i. Philosopher Michel Bourdeau, an expert on Comte, admits about positivism that “It sank into an almost complete oblivion during the twentieth, when it was eclipsed by neopositivism (logical positivism).”

---

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comte/
C. 8 Criticisms of Scientism

1. Science cannot be the sole source of knowledge as we are not even sure what science is.

   i. Scientists or philosophers of science cannot agree on a standard definition of science.

   ii. There is no standard definitions that a majority agree on.

   iii. Some definitions fall short of describing certain experiments.

   iv. Other definitions explain other non-scientific fields as scientific fields.

   v. This is a good definition but again it is just 1 definition amongst many:

      a. "A natural science is a theoretical explanatory discipline that (attempts to) objectively addresses natural phenomena within the general constraints that (1) its theories must be rationally connectable to generally specifiable empirical phenomena and that (2) it normally does not leave the natural realm for the concepts employed in its explanations." 16

   vi. Philosopher Del Ratzsch from Calvin College says that "Even if (a standard definition) were to emerge, the adequacy of the definition of science would not itself be a scientific issue but a philosophical one, and thus such a definition would itself illustrate the limits of science." 17

   vii. The definition of science is not agreed on - which speaks to the limitation of science to explain everything.

   viii. If we don’t know what science is, how do we know where the boundaries of

---

knowledge are?

ix. It seems ridiculous to think that science is the sole source of knowledge if we don’t know what science is.

2. It’s obvious that science is not the supreme giver of knowledge or the ultimate authority.

i. Other fields of study also provide valuable, important, and actual knowledge – that is not worthless or less valuable or authentic than knowledge gained through science.

   a. Languages
   b. Anthropology
   c. History
   d. Archeology
   e. Psychology
   f. Sociology
   g. Economics
   h. Philosophy

ii. Knowledge from science is not more authoritative than knowledge from other disciplines.

iii. No, scientism is not the supreme giver of knowledge and does not have ultimate authority.

iv. Thus, scientism fails because it is simply false.

3. The “Scientific Method” does not necessitate Scientism as a worldview.

   i. The allegedly sacred ritual of the scientific method: ¹⁸

---

¹⁸ Leslie Wickman, Ph.D., CRIS 2011-2012 Science, Faith and Culture Series.
a. Formulate hypothesis: tentative explanation

b. Make predictions about future events

c. Verify/Test

d. Analysis/Interpretation/Evaluation of test results

e. Publish

f. Reproduce

ii. There are sometimes variations of these items but this is the gist of it. This is from a college biology textbook\(^{19}\)

![Diagram of scientific method]

iii. Notice that this is a method to generate a conclusion or a theory.

iv. Scientism is not implied or necessitated by this method.

a. Note that even if macro-evolution is true, it doesn’t imply or require Scientism as a worldview.

b. Scientism needs to be evaluated on its own merits, separate from the scientific method and evolution.

4. There are limitations to knowledge in Science due to the nature of Science.

   i. Science relies on the scientific method.

   ii. 1st limit: lack of certainty in science.

      a. Scientific method relies on induction.

         1) Inductive reasoning: Start with many observations of nature and move toward a few robust explanations of how things work.

         2) Inductive reasoning is invoked in other disciplines.

      b. But the scientific method is not nearly a complete method for obtaining knowledge even in scientific fields.

      c. With induction we cannot know things with certainty like we can with mathematical analytical syllogisms.

   iii. 2nd limit: lack of applicability of the scientific method in certains branches of science.

      a. Certain fields of science (e.g., geology, archeology, paleontology) are not holistically directly accessible to experimentation, so the scientific method that includes experimentation is not directly applicable for this field.

      b. Other unknowns of science (e.g., in quantum physics the existence of quarks or neutrinos) are not directly accessible but these entities are merely postulated as the best explanation of the data. So again, the method is not applicable.

   iv. There are limitations to knowledge in Science due to the nature of Science.
5. Science cannot validate science as a field of knowledge.\(^{20}\)

i. Every field has certain **assumptions** to start the investigation and a **logical flow of thought** to continue the investigation.

ii. 1\(^{st}\), the **assumptions** of science are not a result of science, they are the result of philosophy. Science assumes the following philosophical presuppositions:\(^{21}\)

   a. An external universe is knowable.

   b. Nature is uniform so that one can use logical induction to infer that:

      1) past events are good indicators of future events.

      2) examined data is a good indicator of the properties and behavior of unexamined data.

   c. The correspondence theory of truth is to be used.

      1) certain propositions are true because they correspond with an objective reality.

   d. Unbiased perceptions and appropriate intellectual skepticism are desired when approaching phenomena.

   e. Moral integrity is required in performing scientific observations and reporting results.

   f. So overall, we can see that Science depends on certain philosophical presuppositions: Epistemological Realism, Metaphysical Realism, Cognitivism, Uniformitarianism, a theory of Epistemology, and an Ethical position.

   g. These are all philosophical position that one must hold in order to do science.

---


h. These philosophical positions must be validated by rigorous philosophical analysis.

iii. 2\textsuperscript{nd}, \textbf{logical flow of thought} is used to continue the investigation:

a. The logical flow of thought in science is based in philosophy.

b. Logic falls under philosophy.

c. Logic is required for rational communication and thought processes in any academic field.

iv. So, we see that certain philosophical presuppositions are \textbf{assumptions} of science and logic validates the flow of thought in science.

v. \textbf{Logic} and \textbf{assumptions} are necessary for the field of science to start and continue. They ground science as a rational discipline.

vi. But, neither are from science nor can they be verified by science.

vii. Thus, science cannot validate science as a field of knowledge.

6. \textbf{Scientism is self-refuting}.

i. Scientism claims that knowledge is only obtained through science and if it didn’t come from science it isn’t knowledge or worth knowing.

ii. But does it make sense to say that science was used to produce scientism?

iii. No it doesn’t. Science wasn’t used to produce Scientism.

iv. Science doesn’t even have the capability to produce scientism.

v. Thus, since science doesn’t and can’t produce scientism, scientism doesn’t count as knowledge.
vi. So, we discard scientism since it isn’t worth knowing.

vii. Thus, scientism is self-refuting.

viii. This means that scientism is necessarily false because it is self-refuting.

a. Self-refuting statements:

1) “…if taken to be sound, it shows itself to be unsound.”

2) “…if you take the principle to be true it undermines itself by its own logic.”

ix. We could say that Scientism is a philosophical statement about science, it is not a result of science (it was not from empirical observations or testing).

x. But again it is a philosophical statement that is self-refuting and necessarily false.

7. **Alternative views of Science are more realistic and favorable than those views seen in Scientism**

i. If science required these worldviews to be true, we would be in deep trouble.

ii. The **history** and **practice** of science shows that science has progressed successfully without Scientism being true.

iii. History: It is best to know the history of science to know science.

a. Quantum Physicist John Polkinghorne: “**Actual history of science is the best way**

---


b. Throughout history, we have seen the failures and the breakthroughs in science.

c. Historically speaking, science (as well as theology) has been shown to progress with theory and experiment, lulls and confusion, mistakes and redirections based on political, religious, socio-cultural influences.

d. “If the experience of science teaches anything, it's that the world is very strange and surprising. The many revolutions in science have certainly shown that,” says Polkinghorne.

iv. Practice: Actual practice of science is collaborative.

a. Both evidence and theory are equally important.

b. Science requires a combination of theory & experiment, interpretation & observing again.

c. Polkinghorne says that actual practice of science involves “creative interaction of a profoundly truth-seeking kind between stubborn experimental findings and imaginative theoretical exploration.”

d. All quests for truth are in the hermeneutical interpretative circle of investigation and judgment.

1) Science takes judgment to gain reliable knowledge. It is not all just cold hard facts slapping us in the face.

2) One must understand his own presuppositions but have flexible presuppositions when interpreting empirical observations.

---

24 John Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics and Christology
25 John Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics and Christology
26 John Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics and Christology
3) One must use common sense principles when interpreting empirical observations.

4) For Polkinghorne, interpretation in science (and theology) is to be performed with critical realism rather than speculation.

e. Polkinghorne: “Science progresses neither by sole reliance on an earthly empiricism, nor by indulgence in theoretical leaps in the dark, but through the discipline imposed by a continual interaction between assessed experience and proffered interpretation.”

f. Basically meaning that in actuality, science progresses with experiment and interpretation.

g. At the end of the day you need both experiment (or experiential data) & theory.

v. Overall, history and practice show best way to view science whereas the worldviews of Naturalism, Empiricism and Scientism are not necessary.

vi. Thus, alternative views of Science are more realistic and favorable than those seen in Scientism.

8. “Good” models for Secular and Christian scientists can be maintained without Scientism.


ii. The eminent secular cosmologist Stephen Hawking proposes that a scientific model is a “good” model if it:

---

27 John Polkinghorne, Quantum Physics and Christology
a. Is elegant

b. Contains few arbitrary or adjustable elements

   1) i.e., doesn’t have a lot of fudge factors or adjustment factors…which would turn the model into more of a record of behavior.

c. Agrees with and explains all existing observations

d. Makes detailed predictions about future observations that can falsify the model if the predictions do not match future observations

   1) i.e., the model can be falsified and be disproved

iii. Note that Naturalism and Scientism are nowhere to be found here.

iv. Note Hawking’s approach to theories of science uses what he calls “Model-Dependent Realism” which seems to be a strange blend of science and postmodernism.

   a. This is the idea that scientific theories are models and “a set of rules that connect the elements of the model to observations.”29 That is, models and observations interact on each other: Models influence observations; Observations influence models; so the Model is Dependent

v. Microbiologist Stephen Meyer proposes using Charles Darwin’s and Charles Lyell’s (19th century geologist) approach

   a. Posit a cause which is known from our present experience to explain the data of the past.

      1) This idea is known as uniformitarianism: the present is consistent with the past (and future).

---

b. 1st generate possible causes based on our present knowledge of cause and effect of such similar events.

c. 2nd infer the most likely cause of the several possible causes.

d. Darwin used “inference to the best explanation” in defending his theory.

1) He established the question: how can I best explain the observations?

2) He used inference to the best explanation for his theory of natural selection based on random mutations.

e. So, according to Meyer, “inference” by scientists helped answer this philosophical question of how develop a theory.

f. Interestingly, Intelligent Design uses the same “inference to the best explanation” as Darwin did.

VII. Do these views stand up to scrutiny? No.

VIII. Tips for responding to those who hold these views30

A. When someone says: “All we know comes from our experiences.”

1. You can respond with “Which of the 5 senses excluded that logical proposition you just uttered?”

2. Explain that their view comes from Empiricism

3. Show the self-refuting criticism of Empiricism.

B. **When someone says: “Only science can give us truth.”**

1. You can respond by saying: "What science experiment taught you that?" or "What is your scientific evidence that only science can give us truth?"

2. Explain that their statement comes from a view called Scientism.

3. **Explain Scientism is a philosophy about Science and how it is different than Science.**

   i. There is a huge difference between philosophy of science and science.

   ii. Philosophers of science include David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, etc. These are the more famous ones in the history of philosophy.

   iii. Philosophers of Science provided entire philosophical systems for thinking about science while addressing such questions as:

   a. Does the universe actually exist? Is this all real?

   b. How to understand it?

   c. How to test it?

   d. How to test our test?

   e. What is a theory?

   f. Could this theory be falsifiable?

   g. Are presuppositions guiding the hypothesis?

   h. Can someone be a neutral observer?

   i. Are observations “theory-laden”?

   j. Are these results relative to me, or us, or planet earth?

   k. How much does science tell us about reality?

   l. What counts as facts?

   m. What is a law of nature?

   n. Can a law of nature be suspended?

   o. Can a law of nature be stopped?

   p. What are the boundaries of
scientific knowledge?

iv. These questions are about science and cannot be answered by science.

v. Philosophers are trained, educated, and experienced in generating these systems of ideas about science and answering questions regarding the limits and influence of science.

4. Then show the 8 criticisms of Scientism as a view including that this is a self-defeating statement as described above.
I. **Popular sayings we encounter**

i. “There is no way to evidentially prove that God exists because by definition he is spirit!”

ii. “Religious people can’t know that God exists because God is not something we can detect.”

iii. “Religious language is meaningless because it can’t report facts of the universe like science can.”

iv. “Talk about God is like meaningless talk about leprechauns, fairies, mermaids, and unicorns. All are fantasies without evidence.”

v. “God is not meaningfully defined. The word God does not refer to anything.”

II. **How should we understand these sayings and respond?**

i. These sayings are rooted in philosophy.

ii. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Logical Positivism & Verificationism.

iii. During the time of Logical Positivism movement, assessments like these were being said of its impact:

a. Professor J.J.C. Smart of Adelaide University: “The main danger to theism comes from the people who want to say that ‘God exists’ and ‘God does not exist’ are equally absurd. The concept of God they would say is a nonsensical one.”

b. Professor John Mcquarrie: “…it is one of the most radical challenges ever offered

---

to theology, since it concerns not simply the truth but the very meaning of religious statements.”

iv. Today, Logical Positivism has led to the #1 charge against God used by popular atheists:

a. “God is not meaningfully defined. The word God does not refer to anything.” Is the charge that 1,000 atheists on YouTube voted as the #1 charge against God.3

b. I know some atheists that can’t even begin to discuss God until someone provides a theory of meaning that they can all adopt.

v. Structure of class tonight.

III. Logical Positivism, Verificationism & the Falsification Principle4

A. Logical Positivism & Verificationism

1. Basics

i. Logical Positivism: denies the legitimacy of philosophical problems and claims that empirical science provides the only meaningful knowledge.

a. Logical: relationship of ideas

---


3 Someone posted this on Reasonable Faith’s website to ask Dr. William Lane Craig about how to respond: “I recently posted a YouTube video respectfully asking atheists to comment with what their strongest argument in favor of atheism was. Then, atheists could vote on the comment they felt was their strongest argument. After 1,000 views the current #1 argument is: 'god' is not meaningfully defined, ergo, by simple tautology, it is 100% certain that "god" does not refer to anything that exists (or that does not).” http://www.reasonablefaith.org/defining-god#ixzz2o3QOn321

b. Positivism: matters of fact (science and math) are empirical

c. This view emphasizes a logical analysis of language.

d. Logical Positivists thought that “Philosophy is the activity of clarifying language by logical analysis and by destroying meaningless propositions.”

e. Logical Positivist’s wanted to show that metaphysics was/is meaningless.

f. A goal of this attack on metaphysical systems, was to show that religious language is meaningless.

2. Development of Logical Positivism

i. Philosophical roots in Empiricism, Scientism, Naturalism, and Skepticism.

ii. Influence of the new Analytic Philosophical movement of the early 20th century.

---

iii. Analytic Philosophy birthed many movements, Logical Positivism was one of them.

a. Roots of this view can also be seen in Hume’s fork from the 18th century.

iv. Logical Positivism resulted from a form of positivism in what was called the Vienna Circle after the 1st World War (1920’s).

b. Turns out that there was much interaction between Oxford and Vienna – especially from Wittgenstein.

c. This allowed the spread of Logical Positivism helping thrust the Analytic Tradition of philosophy forward throughout Britain and America.

3. Verification Principle

i. The Vienna circle formulated what became known as the “Verification Principle” which was later called as “Verificationism.”

ii. The Verification Principle of Logical Positivism was an empirical test to determine whether statements have meaning.

iii. Verification Principle: a statement is meaningful only if it is ‘in principle’ capable of being shown to be true by empirical data.

iv. ‘Empirically Verifiable’ is the criteria of the statements to keep.

v. All traditional philosophy (like metaphysics) is meaningless with no knowledge and no truth – thus it should be destroyed.

   a. Metaphysical statements are not empirically verifiable so we discard those.

vi. All of theology, ethics, etc. are meaningless.

   a. Atheist A.J. Ayer: “To say that ‘God exists’ is to make a metaphysical utterance
which cannot be either true or false.”

vii. Atheist researcher James Thrower: “Religious (as well as ethical and aesthetic) propositions were, it was claimed, unable to meet this requirement and were therefore dismissed as nonsensical.”

B. Falsification Principle

1. Basics

i. Verification Principle: a statement is meaningful only if it is ‘in principle’ capable of being shown to be true by empirical data.

ii. Falsification Principle: a statement is meaningful only if it is ‘in principle’ capable of being shown to be false by empirical data.

iii. A statement is meaningful if it is ‘in principle’ empirically falsifiable.

2. Background of the Falsification Principle

i. Antony Flew was a premier philosopher and staunch atheist for much of his life.

a. In his later years, he finally came to believe in a transcendent deity through the work of some Christian Apologists.

b. He wrote a groundbreaking essay Theology and Falsification in 1955 where he transformed the verification principle into the falsification principle.

c. When the falsification principle is applied to theology: One could ask “Could religious belief be disproved? If not what does this imply?”

d. Do statements such as “God exists” and “God loves us” have any meaning at all if

---

7 Thrower, James, Western Atheism – A Short History, (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), page 132-133.
8 http://infidels.org/library/modern/antony_flew/theologyandfalsification.html
they cannot be evaluated by empirical data?

3. Flew argues that the religious expression ‘God Exists’ is not meaningful.

i. He used the parable of the invisible gardener - previously told by John Wisdom.

ii. Like the invisible gardener, since we cannot detect and verify God by empirical data, a believer has to keep qualifying his statements about God’s existence.

a. Flew contended that the assertion ‘God exists’ slowly, inch by inch, dies “by a thousand qualifications.”

   1) ‘God exists’
   2) But invisible,
   3) But intangible,
   4) But odorless,
   5) But inaudible,
   6) But tasteless,
   7) But unwilling to prevent evil and suffering,
   8) But completely undetectable

iii. It seems this overly qualified God doesn’t differ from an imaginary God.

a. This God ‘who is invisible, intangible, & eternally elusive,’ might as well be imaginary or nonexistent.

b. Flew: “When the Skeptic in the parable asked the Believer, ‘just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an

---

imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?’ he was suggesting that the Believer’s earlier statement (that God exists) had been so eroded by qualification that it was no longer an assertion at all.”

iv. There is no way to falsify the claim ‘God exists’ because God is undetectable.

v. So, since a believer is unable to falsify the claim ‘God exists’, this claim is babble talk like unicorns or mermaids.

vi. Therefore, all expressions about God are non-sense noises being uttered.

4. Flew concludes

i. Flew asks this piercing question: “What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?”

ii. Flew concludes since nothing could count against “God exists” and “God loves us” these claims have no meaning at all (since they cannot be falsified by empirical data).

IV. What are the implications of Logical Positivism, Verificationism, and Falsification Principle?

1. ‘God exists’ and ‘God does not exist’ are meaningless statements.

2. The concept of God is a nonsensical one.

3. The concept of God is religious language that can’t be properly communicated or understood across subcultures.

4. Compartmentalized religion into private reality - as religion cannot give us

---

meaningful statements about objective reality.

i. According to atheist researcher James Thrower, religion became more of “a perspective, an attitude, a way of looking at the world, rather than a descriptive account of how reality actually is.”

ii. Thus, there is a further privatization of religion to the internal individualized religious belief that can’t be given credibility in the public square.

iii. With this view, Postmodernism and Naturalism have gained more ground in culture.

V. What are the criticisms of Logical Positivism, Verificationism, the Falsification Principle?

A. Empirical data is not the only way to detect meaning.

i. Meaning can be detected in other ways when 2 parties agree on the referent object (abstract or concrete) of an expression (written, verbal, action, etc.).

B. God is verifiable.

i. Every time a miracle occurs, a spiritual experience happens, and when design in the universe is detected - we have empirical data to verify ‘God exists.’

C. ‘Jesus as God’ can be falsified.

i. Jesus claimed to be equal with YHWH.

---

ii. If Jesus was not raised from the grave, our Christian faith is in vain.

iii. The understanding of ‘Jesus as incarnate God’ and thus the whole Christian worldview relies on the historicity of the resurrection which was empirically falsifiable.

iv. If Jesus’ actual dead corpse was actually produced and shown to the world, after the disciples proclaimed the resurrection, the Christian faith falls as there is empirical evidence that counts against and falsifies the claim that ‘Jesus rose from the grave’.

v. This would also imply that Jesus was not God as he was not speaking the truth when he prophesied the resurrection.

vi. ‘Jesus as God’ can be falsified so even by the statements own standards, Christianity still succeeds.

D. The Falsification Principle’s notion of meaning is mistaken.

1. Major presuppositions to Flew’s argument

   i. Empirical data that can falsify is the only way to detect meaning – already addressed.

   ii. God cannot be verified by empirical data – already addressed.

   iii. God cannot be falsified – already addressed.

2. From Flew’s famous essay on the invisible gardener and the falsification principle, we can see a few weaknesses.

   i. Flew was right about how if the gardener is explained with qualification after qualification, what we are left with is no gardener at all. So, the gardener does die the death of 1000 qualifications.
ii. However, Flew developed a notion of meaning that is simply mistaken.

iii. In the gardener story, the 2 explorer’s knew the meaning of an undetectable gardener when they were disagreeing about it.

iv. Also, those in the audience who heard Flew present his paper, would have known the meaning of the undetectable gardener and that this gardener was an analogy of God.

v. So meaning is clearly inherit in the discussion of what a gardener is by the explorers and what the gardener implies by the audience.

vi. So meaning is not lost due to the referent being undetectable or unfalsifiable.

vii. Rather meaning is required for this communication to even occur.

E. Hume’s fork is self-refuting. – (special credit in heaven if you research this on your own)

i. The view - “If any proposition is true or believable, it should be either analytically or synthetically true” - does not satisfy its own criteria.

ii. Where did Hume get this idea? According to him all knowledge must come through this fork, he only has these 2 ways.

iii. But this view could not come through this his fork (as it is not true by definition and it is not true by tracing it to a sensation) so it makes itself false.

a. This view is not true by definition or trivially true (analytically).

b. This view is not true by tracing it to a sensation (synthetically).

iv. It is self-refuting.

a. This is the worst kind of false because it is false in every possible world.
b. “Hume’s fork falsifies itself because it does not stand up to the criteria of Hume’s fork (analytically or synthetically).”

F. The Verification Principle and Falsification Principle throws too much out which leads to absurdity.

1. These principles requires much of what we know to be rejected as meaningless. This would result in absurdity.

2. Ethical statements about right and wrong would be meaningless. But this is absurd.
   i. For ethics, “this is good” just means I like this or just means this “moral emotion” feels good – according to the Logical Positivists.
   ii. It is simply mistaken that I am expressing emotions when expressing ethical judgments.
   iii. Also, this charge of allegedly meaningless ethical expressions leads to absurdity as one can’t function in life and a society can’t function without meaningful ethics.

3. Statements about beauty would be meaningless as they cannot be verified or falsified. But this is absurd.
   i. This is simply false as we are not discussing feelings when we ascribe beauty to something.

4. Even many scientific statements especially statements from contemporary physics would be meaningless as they cannot be verified or falsified. But

---

13 Steve Tsai, Apologetics.com Radio Show 11-17-2012
this is absurd.

i. Scientific statements was what they aimed to preserve. However, with this principle certain statements would be considered meaningless.

ii. They would have to say that certain statements about undetectable entities like quarks, string theory, and the multiverse are expressions of one’s emotions. But this is clearly absurd.

5. Overall, the Verification Principle and Falsification Principle are too restrictive.

G. The Verification Principle and the Falsification Principle are self-refuting.

i. T.Z. Lavine concludes: “The verifiability principle fails its own test, since it is not itself an empirically verifiable statement; it is therefore embarrassingly meaningless.”

ii. In other words, the verification principle and the falsification principle are self-refuting because they themselves are not capable of being verified or falsified.

iii. In fact, they are themselves meaningless babble since they are self-refuting and necessarily false. That which is self-refuting is non-sense as it cannot be true in any possible world.

iv. They are arbitrary definitions that we cannot accept since they die by their own sword.

---

VI. Do these views stand up to scrutiny?

1. No.

   i. Philosophy Prof: T.Z. Lavine concludes of Logical Positivism:\textsuperscript{15}

      a. “Short-lived”

      b. “Logical Positivism is now dead.”

      c. “Many of the logical positivists had already come to question some of their previous assumptions…”

   ii. Philosophy Prof: Graham Macdonald argues that A.J. Ayer’s attempt at an empiricist criterion of meaning fails.\textsuperscript{16}

      a. Additional criticism was leveled against his verifiability principle formulations.

   iii. Philosopher William Lane Craig upon hearing that the youtube post had the #1 reason why atheists don’t believe in God is “‘god’ is not meaningfully defined, ergo, by simple tautology, it is 100% certain_ that "god" does not refer to anything that exists (or that does not).” He said: “I just shake my head in disbelief when I see how pervasive this old-line positivistic philosophy still is in popular culture despite its demise among philosophers 50 years ago…the foundations of their conviction have, unbeknownst to them, already collapsed long ago.”\textsuperscript{17}

   iv. Regarding Flew’s falsification principle, Craig says it is “scarcely a blip on the philosophical radar screen.”\textsuperscript{18}

   v. The failure of Logical Positivism contributed to the rise of Postmodernism in the 2\textsuperscript{nd}

---
\textsuperscript{17} William Lane Craig: http://www.reasonablefaith.org/defining-god#ixzz2o3hizSBc
\textsuperscript{18} William Lane Craig & JP Moreland, Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2003), page 155.
half of the 20th century - which has not been good for Christian thought.

vi. However, interestingly the failure of Logical Positivism led to the resurgence of metaphysics and the development of Philosophy of Religion.

VII. What are sound Christian responses to comments we hear on the street?

1. “There is no way to evidentially prove that God exists because by definition he is spirit!”

2. “Religious people can’t know that God exists because God is not something we can detect.”

3. “Religious language is meaningless because it can’t report facts of the universe like science can.”

4. “Talk about God is like meaningless talk about leprechauns, fairies, mermaids, and unicorns. All are fantasies without evidence.”

5. “God is not meaningfully defined. The word God does not refer to anything.”
CHRISTIAN VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE

GOD'S EXISTENCE
+ FOUNDATIONALISM
+ REALISM
= KNOWLEDGE

FOUNDATIONALISM

i. There is a foundation to our knowledge structure that does not require further justification.


b. “Self-Evident” = Killing babies for the fun of it is morally wrong.


d. “Simple-Seeing” = I am me and I am not you.

e. “Common-Sensical” = I see the rock in front of me and I know it’s not a turtle.

ii. Knowledge is Justified True Belief.

iii. Knowledge doesn’t require certainty or inexhaustible knowledge.

REALISM

iv. Epistemological Realism: Objective reality is knowable.

v. Metaphysical Realism: Objective reality is really there.
I. **Worldviews of Concern**

- **1600's**
  - Francis Bacon's Inductive Method
  - Scientific Method & Scientism & Empiricism

- **1700's**
  - Descartes' & Hume's Skepticism
  - Rationalism & Empiricism

- **1800's**
  - Darwin & Huxley
  - Naturalism
  - Nietzsche
  - Nihilism

- **1900's**
  - Logical Positivism
  - Pragmatism
  - Existentialism
  - Postmodernism
  - Relativism & Pluralism

II. **Worldviews to Cover**

- Logical Positivism
- Language Games & Structuralism & Pragmatism
- Postmodernism
- Relativism & Pluralism
- Nihilism
- Existentialism
- Postmodernism
- Relativism & Pluralism
III. Basic Ideas Held by many Western non-Christians

i. “There is no ultimate purpose.”

ii. “There is no ultimate meaning.”

iii. “There is no objective morality.”

IV. How should we understand these ideas?

1. Background

2. Everyone needs meaning.

3. The worldviews we encounter today come from a worldview of meaninglessness called Nihilism.

4. Existentialism is the response to Nihilism.

V. What is Nihilism?

A. Definition

1. Root of word

   i. “Nihil” = latin for “nothing”

   ii. Nihil-ism = Nothing-ism

2. Main Definition

   i. James Sire’s definition: “Nihilism is a denial of any philosophy or worldview – a denial f the possibility of knowledge, a denial that anything is valuable….Nihilism is the negation of everything – knowledge, ethics, beauty, reality. In Nihilism, no
statement has validity; nothing has meaning.”

ii. Nothing (of a category) exists; that is, there are no such entities in a certain category considered.

   a. In the category of the universe, no values or meaning exist.

   b. Nihilism denies the possibility of clarifying, differentiating, and distinguishing moral values.

   c. Morality and Value are both foundationless.

3. The 2 forms of Nihilism we are concerned with

i. Ethical Nihilism

   a. Morality is meaningless.

   b. Dictionary of Philosophy defines Ethical Nihilism as “denial of the validity of all distinctions of moral value. As this position involves in effect the denial of possibility of all ethical philosophy.”

   c. “Ethical nihilism or moral nihilism rejects the possibility of absolute moral or ethical values. Instead, good and evil are nebulous, and values addressing such are the product of nothing more than social and emotive pressures.”

   d. James Sire points out to clarify that for Ethical Nihilism “there is nothing outside the box; there is no moral plumb line, no ultimate, non-changing standard of value.”

ii. Existential Nihilism

---

3 Alan Pratt, “Nihilism” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism/#H4
a. Life is meaningless.

b. “Existential nihilism is the notion that life has no intrinsic meaning or value, and it is, no doubt, the most commonly used and understood sense of the word today…Existential nihilism begins with the notion that the world is without meaning or purpose. Given this circumstance, existence itself—all action, suffering, and feeling—is ultimately senseless and empty.”

VI. How did Nihilism develop?

1. Ancient Era

   i. Was around in Greek times: Empedocles’ Skepticism

   ii. Ancient Italian philosopher Gorgias (483-378 BCE) is famous for having said:
   "Nothing exists. If anything did exist it could not be known. If it was known, the knowledge of it would be incommunicable."

2. Modern Era

   i. Shakespere’s Macbeth

3. Recent

   i. Naturalism begins and concludes with the view that God is unnecessary to explain it all.

   ii. Recall the definition of Naturalism:

   a. the universe requires no supernatural cause for explanation but can be explained with the understanding that it is self-existent, self-operating, and self-directing;

   b. the world-processes are not teleological or anthropocentric, but purposeless and

---

5 Alan Pratt, “Nihilism” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism/#H4
deterministic;

c. every aspect of human life is an ordinary natural event attributable to nature.

1) We are determined and have no free will as we are just part of a bigger mechanism.

iii. The implication of Naturalism is actually that we are all here unnecessarily.

a. It could have been otherwise.

b. In fact when we examine the rest of the universe, it seems that we are the only ones here. The improbabilities of our existence are astronomically high.

c. We are in this sense a cosmic accident.

iv. If Nature is our maker, we still want to be able to turn to it and ask “What is the purpose of man?” – but Nature is silent.

a. Because we all live and die and the entire human race goes out of extinction and the entire earth will be die a heat death, it doesn’t matter what we do in the here and now as there is no ultimate purpose.

v. “The first reason Naturalism turns into Nihilism is that Naturalism does not supply a
vi. The second reason is because for Naturalism, God is not necessary if we can explain the entire order of the universe without God.

vii. The last reason is that you cannot get an “ought” from an “is”.

a. That is, you cannot get a morality (the “ought”) from the Naturalistic way the world is (the “is”).

b. So if naturalism is the way the world is and cannot produce any form of morality, than what we think of morality is meaningless.

viii. James Sire confirms: “Thus does Naturalism lead to Nihilism. If we take seriously the implications of the death of God, the disappearance of the transcendent, the closedness of the universe, we end right there.”

4. Max Weber, Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche

i. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

ii. One of his “aims it to open our eyes to a world without fixed parameters of meaning and truth, and in its place, a raw flux of energy and power.”

iii. His most famous writing is “The Parable of The Madman” from _The Gay Science_,

---

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!"---As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?---Thus they yelled and laughed

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him---you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? 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 continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest 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?

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet."...

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his requiem. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied
nothing but: "What after all, are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

iv. Nietzsche is famous for his style, prose, and incredible existential synopsis of how his present European Enlightened culture would inevitably reflect a society that “killed” God.

v. Nietzsche has often been misunderstood in light of his famous quote, “God’s too decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.”

vi. Nietzsche stressed the importance of realizing what a lack of God means.

   a. Nietzsche insisted that without God, purpose, meaning, and morality cannot have a foundation.

   b. Nietzsche writes, “Every belief, every considering something-true is necessarily false because there is simply no true world.”

   c. Nietzsche writes, “…there are no moral facts whatever. Moral Judgment has this in common with religious judgment that it believes realities which do not exist. Morality is only an interpretation of certain phenomena, more precisely a misinterpretation. Moral judgment belongs, as does religious judgment, to a level of ignorance at which even the concept of the real, the distinction between the real and the imaginary, is lacking; so that at such a level "truth" denotes nothing but things which we today call "imaginings." To this extend, moral judgment is never to be taken literally: as such it never contains anything but nonsense.”

vii. It’s too late…we cannot change and go back to objective morality from a God that exists.

---

9 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Gay Science*
10 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Will to Power*
11 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Improvers of Mankind*
a. “What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of Nihilism. . . . For some time now our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end. . . .”

b. For Nietzsche, Nihilism is the necessary implication of Europe’s Naturalism and the influence of German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

viii. The metaphysical foundation of European morality was undermined and the moral structure on top of it collapsed.

VII. Implications of Nihilism

1. Despair

12 Friedrich Nietzsche The Will to Power
2. Inequality

3. Hedonism

4. Existentialism

VIII. Criticisms of Nihilism

A. ‘Anything goes’ causes problems

1. ‘Anything goes’ type actions still create meaning

   i. The very process of choosing to act shows there is meaning in the moment - even if it is simply choosing to satisfy an urge or interest - as one can say, “I do this because I have an interest to do that.”

   ii. Thus meaningful actions are created. But according to Nihilism, there is no meaning in the universe.

   iii. So the implication of Nihilism, that anything goes, causes contradictions with the core of Nihilism that says there is no meaning in anything including actions.

2. ‘Anything goes’ results in opposite moral behavior being equivalent.

   i. Francis Schaeffer uses an example like this: you help a special needs person cross the street and then go down a block and with the special needs person you beat them over the head and steal their stuff.13

   ii. In both actions, no moral good or evil was done. Both actions were non-moral and had no morality.

3. ‘Anything goes’ results in justifying horrific behaviors – which is absurd.

13 Francis Schaeffer, The God Who is There,
i. Ravi Zacharias said “if you are an accident, I can wipe you out with an incident”\textsuperscript{14}

ii. If there is no God, then anything is permissible because nothing matters in the long run as we are all small insignificant specs of dust on a planet in a meaningless & mindless galaxy in some strange part of the universe doomed to die in this relatively short period of time that humans have existed for.

iii. Taking Existential-Subjectivist views to their conclusion, recent thinkers such as Peter Singer, Steven Pinker, accept and express the result wherever it takes them.

B. Nihilism is unlivable.

1. What would a life be without meaning?
   
i. We all must find our meaning in life. We all need to know our reason for being. Without it depression results.

   ii. Life is unable to be lived with this level of depression.

2. Naturalists do not take their naturalism seriously.\textsuperscript{15}
   
i. Naturalists affirm values so they are inconsistent.

   ii. The Naturalist doesn’t seem to care to ask how they know their values and whether or not their values are good.

   iii. Ultimately, the Naturalist has no basis for objective moralist and they would realize this if they dare to ask.

C. Nihilism practically leads to insanity

1. If people consistently act out meaninglessness, than there are reasons to

\textsuperscript{14} Ravi Zacharias, Address at Weber State University, Utah

consider a mental health resolution.

2. Nietzsche spent the latter years of his life suffering from mental illness and Hemmingway wound up committing suicide.

D. Nihilism denies what our psyche needs

1. Nihilism calls for us to deny what we need and desire to accept: that there is meaning and significance in the world.

2. So Nihilism presents psychological challenges as it is inconsistent with our very nature that longs to live with meaning.

3. Even the Naturalist recognize that we have a natural desire for significance.

E. Nihilism Self-Refutes in 2 ways

1. Assumes it to deny it

   i. If someone really does deny meaning in the universe, he is going against something. He must assume there is meaning in order to deny it.

   ii. James Sire points out: “In order to be a practicing Nihilist, there must be something against which to do battle. A practicing Nihilist is a parasite on meaning.” So meaning is present or they could not deny it.

   iii. They contend that ‘there is no meaning in the universe.’ But they intend that this statement is meaningful and wish to convey this statement to us in a way that we will understand it: essays, art, etc. So all of their communication of their view to people assumes several things:

      a. that they can convey meaning

---

b. that we will understand their meaning

c. that their view has meaning otherwise they wouldn’t attempt to communicate as
they would know we wouldn’t understand the gibberish they utter. These 3 points
show they assume meaning when communicating all is meaningless.

iv. Even art that denies meaning is still conveying the meaning that it is “denying
meaning.” Even wacky modern art still has meaning in the structure and intent of the
artist.

2. Self-contradicting

i. But beyond that, the content alone of the view self-refutes - they have only 1 point:
“there is no meaning.”

ii. They want to have it both ways “there is no meaning”…except for this statement
which is meaningful.

iii. But if it is true that “there is no meaning” than this statement also has no meaning. So
we must reject it as meaningless. Therefore it self-refutes.

IX. Possible Responses

A. Use their Naturalistic worldview to help them soak in the
impersonal external and meaningless situation they face.

i. Francis Schaeffer: Show the presuppositions he has with his Naturalistic Worldview.

ii. Francis Schaeffer: “We confront men with reality; we remove their protection and
their escapes; we allow the avalanches to fall…”\(^\text{17}\)

iii. Francis Schaeffer: “Push him towards the logic of his position in the area of his own

iv. When one can see that Naturalism leads to Nihilism and Nihilism leads to absurdity, they can be open to the other options such as Christianity.

B. **Use the criticisms of Nihilism offered above to show their Worldview leads to absurd conclusions.**

C. **If immortality is true, there is no need to dread that all is meaninglessness.**

i. C.S. Lewis characters in Out of the Silent Planet espouse that the nature and manifestation of man’s anthropological fear is concerning our annihilation.

ii. Among the many books by the brilliant thinker and author C.S. Lewis, the space trilogy is a must read. The fictional account of Dr. Ransom’s journey to other planets is ridiculously fascinating. Most are very familiar with Lewis’ The Chronicles of Narnia series but miss out on being intrigued for life at the gripping detail and energizing richness in his portraits of Mars and Venus. But more importantly Lewis miraculously conveys truths deeper than anything analogized in The Chronicles of Narnia. Truths that punch the reader in the face with style, brilliance, and honesty. These deeper notions of reality are not limited to Perelandra (Venus) and Malcandra (Mars) but are our own. In that, Lewis adjusts the reader to life on another planet while still championing universals and objective reality.

iii. On the other hand, the powers that be there are unlike the forces of earth, in that the planets are ruled by the Oyarsa of the planet. The Oyarsa are spiritual beings in which “light is instead of blood for them.” (page 118) Although they are made of light, Oyarsa and Eldil are more real and visible to the un-“bent” eye than humans. Let us, listen in on the unprecedented but delayed meeting between Dr. Ransom and the

---

19 Maledil (the being analogous to Jesus, who is the governor of the universe) has ordered that each planet has a governing lord of which it is also the character or god of that planet (think also greek gods).
Oyarsa Malecandra on Mars.

“What are you so afraid of, Ransom of Thulcandra?” it said.

“Of you, Oyarsa, because you are unlike me and I cannot see you.”

“Those are not great reasons,” said the voice. “You are also unlike me, and though I see you, I see you very faintly. But do not think we are utterly unlike. We are both copies of Maledil.”...

“Many thousands of thousands of years before this, when nothing yet lived on your world, the cold death was coming on my (planet). Then I was in deep trouble, not chiefly for the death of my (people) – Malelidil (God) does not make them long-livers – but for the things which the lord of your world, who was not yet bound, put into their minds. He would have made them as your people are now – wise enough to see the death of their kind approaching but not wise enough to endure it...but one thing we left behind on the planet: fear. And with fear, murder and rebellion.

The weakest of my people do not fear death. It is the Bent One, the lord of your world, who wastes your lives and befouls them with flying from what you know will overtake you in the end.

If you were subjects of Maledil (God) you would have peace.”

iv. This brilliant exchange describes perfectly our fear not just in light of Ransom’s being in the presence of greatness, but the part of the core nature of Ransom and that of all of unregenerate humanity: fear. The Oyarsa points it out with accuracy and precision. Isn’t it incredible that Lewis would depict our condition this way – incredible because it is true. Poignantly, human fear is pervasive; peace and security are lacking. And the deepest type of fear is that of oblivion. That our entire human race, from the first human to the last, is obliterated from the history of the cosmos. The Annihilation, death with no afterlife, Lewis advocates, is our fear. At the end of the duration of human existence, nothing results. This end of our race, or end of our existence, is the inevitable conclusion we fight against.

D. Show that the Christian hope is better.

i. The hope I am advocating is that which results in attacks on offense in spite of life’s
failures and fears.

ii. We don’t have to be afraid of the abyss of meaninglessness and hopelessness because for the Christian there is meaning and hope there too!

iii. We can look at it all we want and stare it right in the face and not have any fear. It’s time to face our fears and face ourselves.

iv. We need hope to face hopelessness in the world. We need hope to face the darkness out there. We need hope to face ourselves. A lot of Christians myself included our just as in need as anyone else.

v. Brennan Manning said “He is not a refuge from reality, but a way into its depths.”

vi. The striking, blinding, and deafening hope of a Christian is that Jesus is the hero of existentialism. He accounted for the anxiety, fear, and despair of the abyss.

vii. Paul said if Jesus has not been raised, our faith is futile. All of Christianity, all of our hopes rest on the resurrection of Jesus.

viii. But Jesus did rise while dead. SO “Where O death where is your victory?” Where O death where is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55 & Hosea 13:14) “Death has been swallowed up in Victory?” (1 Cor 15:54)

ix. Jesus did as it was prophesied, “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.” (Isaiah 25:8)

x. Deep in the heart of man’s lostness and loneliness, Jesus appears.

xi. Because Jesus is victorious over hopelessness, no existential despair of nothingness is our future. Jesus is the reality in which all of reality is rooted in.

xii. Jesus death & resurrection allows us to stare into the abyss of hopelessness with no fear, anxiety, or despair.
xiii. He has overcome hopelessness and meaningless by attacking it head on. Jesus won and our future is meaningful because he lives.

xiv. Because he lives, we don’t have to remain hopeless.

xv. Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ himself is our hope. We don’t have hope in Christianity as a religion. Our hope is Jesus himself. (1 Timothy 1:1: God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,)

xvi. He himself is the hope we need to face the demands of our hopeless situation is

xvii. This hope is not the highs that come from an intense worship song or a spiritual retreat.

xviii. This hope is found in embracing present risenness of Jesus. Embracing the resurrection power of Jesus. Hope that is grounded in His presence and His rock solid systematic theological belief system of truths continually built upon each other - plateau over plateau by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit.

xix. So Hope can be found by embracing Jesus Christ himself in the middle of the darkness and loneliness and hopelessness. Jesus appears.

xx. Lloyd Ogilvie said “Life in Christ is endless hope, without Him life is a hopeless end.”

xxi. Anglican clergyman Dean W. R. Inge said “Christianity promises to make us free; it never promises to make us independent.”

xxii. St. Augustine of Hippo said “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

xxiii. Francis Schaeffer said “It is at this point that the individual is understood to be the complete contrary of a zero.”

xxiv. Our hearts need hope himself.
I. **Worldviews of Concern**

1600's
- Francis Bacon's Inductive Method
  - Scientific Method & Scientism & Empiricism

1700's
- Descartes' & Hume's Skepticism
  - Rationalism & Empiricism

1800's
- Darwin & Huxley
  - Naturalism
- Nietzsche
  - Nihilism

1900's
- Logical Positivism
- Pragmatism
- **Existentialism**
- Postmodernism
- Relativism & Pluralism

II. **20th Century Worldview Transformations**

Logical Positivism
- Language Games & Structuralism & Pragmatism
- Postmodernism
- Relativism & Pluralism

Nihilism
- Existentialism
- Postmodernism
- Relativism & Pluralism
i. Have you ever asked yourself these questions? How would a non-Christian respond to these?

ii. Non-Christians ask these existential questions just like we do; but what are their answers in a world without God?

### III. Popular sayings we encounter when discussing existential questions.

i. “Our destiny is within ourselves. We don’t need God.”

ii. “We are not predefined souls made in the image of God. We have no essence and we are not predetermined.”
iii. “We must decide who we want to be since we have no prescribed nature.”

iv. “There is no meaning in the universe. We have to create our own meaning.”

v. “Choose your own future in spite of the bleakness of the universe.”

IV. **How should we understand these sayings and respond?**

i. These sayings are rooted in philosophy.

ii. In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Existentialism.

iii. Structure of class tonight.

V. **Existentialism**

A. **Background**

i. Existentialism is kind of an anti-philosophy or cultural mood or individual attitude.

ii. Existentialism is a response to Nihilism and accepts the results of the inevitable death of the universe and annihilation of ourselves - but it says that there is still can be meaning.

B. **Definition**

i. Existentialism is a humanistic view that describes our human condition and our purpose for being in this world when we face our dread, anxiety, & absurdity. When we do face it, we can then choose to reinvent, redefine, recreate himself, humanity, value, and meaning.

   a. Based on a Naturalist framework, we experience nature operating like a **machine** - manufacturing more nature on to infinite - without regard for human life.
b. But with Existentialism, we need to accept this “non-being” to pass through despair.

c. We must face the absurd death of ourselves and this meaninglessness.

d. Out of nothingness and our solitude in the universe, humans still can do choose something, go somewhere, create something, and build something.

e. Incredibly, we are all free creatures (in-spite of the deterministic Naturalism around). So we can stand up to the mechanistic laws of nature and take action to be free creatures and exercise our freedom.

f. Humanity is in control of their own fate. Humanity creates meaning for their being.

g. We are free and we can choose to create hope, meaning, and being in-spite of non-being.

Nihilism ➔ Existentialism

C. Key Themes & Features of Existentialism

i. Humanity and his ultimate purpose for being.

ii. Meaning is birthed in meaninglessness and hope arises hopelessness.
iii. Existence precedes Essence.

iv. The human predicament can be overcome by facing itself and embracing one’s freedom to overcome the absurdity of the universe.

v. I create meaning for myself and you create meaning for yourself. We all have an individual responsibility to choose everything. This choosing is radical freedom we all must do to be.

**EXISTENTIALISM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rejects</th>
<th>Embraces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Determinism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of cosmic dread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ultimate 'Being’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choose based on God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Essence of Humanity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• False self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety from Social &amp; Religious Norms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purpose to life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaning to everything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Despair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objective Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objective Truth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objective Morals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hope follows from meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free Will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fate only from death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Absurdity of cosmic dread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual 'being'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choose based on self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual Existence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Authenticity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety from personal responsibility to choose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purposeless life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaningless everything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Despair is beginning to life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create Truth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create Morals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hope follows no meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. How did Existentialism develop as a philosophy?

A. Existential thinkers.

i. Existentialism came as a response to Nihilism and the deterministic mechanistic machine and economy that humans had found themselves in.

ii. Worldview Professor James Sire: “Indeed, Existentialism’s major interest is in our humanity and how we can be significant in an otherwise insignificant world.”

iii. Philosophy Professor Alan Pratt, “The common thread in the literature of the existentialists is coping with the emotional anguish arising from our confrontation with nothingness, and they expended great energy responding to the question of whether surviving it was possible.”

iv. So how does man cope with the human condition and being “thrown” into reality?

v. So for man to avoid hopelessness - but not include God in the picture - he must have something else to cling to. What is that? Well it turns out to be man himself (despite Sartre’s denial of this)!

vi. Existentialism is a response to Nihilism.

   a. Nihilism concluded that without God, this universe and all the affairs of humanity are completely meaningless.

   b. Albert Camus wrote that he has sought “to transcend Nihilism.”

   c. In this sense, Existentialism is the answer to Nihilism.

   d. The Existentialist is looking to answer the Nihilist and say “Hey, there is actually

2 Dr. Alan Pratt, “Nihilism” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism/#H4
3 Albert Camus, L’Ete
a way to get meaning without God and morality without God.”

vii. Blaise Pascal, Soren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jose Ortega, Karl Jaspers, Albert Camus, & Jean-Paul Sartre.

a. They attempted to spell out the human condition without restraint and with brutal honesty.

b. After WWII, the existentialist movement of Western philosophy was flourishing.

c. They courageously led the dreadful charge into the realms of death, nothingness, and absurdity.

viii. Alan Pratt: “Mid-century, for example, the existentialists helped popularize tenets of nihilism in their attempts to blunt its destructive potential. By the end of the century, existential despair as a response to nihilism gave way to an attitude of indifference, often associated with antifoundationalism.”

B. Soren Kierkegaard

i. The Dutch philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), often called the Father of Modern Existentialism, said out right that “Truth is subjectivity.”

ii. Fear and Trembling was Kierkegaard famous writing that showed the situation of choice that Abraham anguished in.

iii. He saw anxiety coming straight from a Biblical scenario: the Garden of Eden.

   Freedom is a gift from God that allows us to pursue our desires and define ourselves.

iv. We see the three typically existential themes of anxiety, freedom, and responsibility clearly in Kierkegaard.

4 Dr. Alan Pratt, “Nihilism” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/nihilism/#H4
a. In Kierkegaard, we see the responsibility of freedom, the value of the choice, the anxiety at making the wrong choice, and all in the face of ambiguity.

C. Fyodor Dostoyevsky

i. The themes and tones of the famous Russian fiction writer Fyodor Dostoevsky’s were echoed through the next century of existentialist writers.

ii. He wrote to combat the Enlightenment project and Rationalism that had stricken Europe and Russia.

iii. He emphasized individuality against the traditional Greek, Christian, and 18th century secular dogmas of original sin, scientism, and rationalism.

D. Friedrich Nietzsche

1. Background

i. Nietzsche influence upon the existential movement - as well as various other cultural thought patterns and social movements - cannot be understated. But rather than be considered an existentialist, he is more of a pre-thinker or father to the movement.

2. Individualism

i. Individualism is the goal of Nietzsche.

ii. To rise against the institutions, governments, society, and religion.

iii. But people fear this independence – according to Nietzsche – so they stick to convention and tradition.

iv. He wants you to learn the meaning of your own life.

v. So rather than encounter a great philosophy and receive meaning that can change the
individual - and thus his society - people remain subdued by their fear of independence and individualism.

vi. Nietzsche characterizes society as people who ride along the convention for fear of their peers, fear of being oneself, and fear of standing up to the industrial machine.

3. Uberman Hero

i. Nietzsche’s remedy was a call to heroism, where the “uber”-man can “live dangerously” in his great individualism.\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche Ecce Homo}

ii. Man must act in courage to be the uberman.
   a. If man does exercise this, it is actually meaningless.
   b. It is meaningless and runs against reason because it is all futile and meaningless.
   c. But man ought to do it anyway. Because the only thing you have left is individuality.
   d. Man must act against fate – against the blind impersonal meaningless forces of nature - and live by his own will and create his own meaning.

E. Albert Camus

i. The Stranger is a book written by the existentialist atheist, novelist, and playwright, Albert Camus. The protagonist, Meursault, is at the dawn of his execution for murder. He is battling ideas with a jail chaplain who comes to discuss salvation with him.

ii. Our decisions don’t change the certain future; so nothing matters.

iii. So, life is not meaningful rather it is meaningless, thus there is no reason for my
existence.

iv. This gives more freedom than anything else - including Christianity - because life is better & more attractive to live in light of that existential thought.

v. There is more freedom to live without ‘false hope’ or ‘illusory meaning.’

F. Jean Paul Sartre

i. Existence precedes Essence.

ii. See Supplement.

VII. What are the implications of Existentialism?

1. Despair & Absurdity continues if one doesn’t act against it.

2. Life is meaningful only if one invents` meaning.

3. Extreme Secular Humanism arises from this view.

4. Western Individualism (I-centered universe) arises from this view.

5. Moral Subjectivism is supported on this view.

6. Preservation of humanity becomes primary goal.
I. **Worldviews of Concern**

1600's
Francis Bacon's Inductive Method
==> Scientific Method & Scientism & Empiricism

1700's
Descartes' & Hume's Skepticism
==> Rationalism & Empiricism

1800's
Darwin & Huxley
==> Naturalism

1900's
Logical Positivism
Pragmatism
Existentialism
**Postmodernism**
Relativism & Pluralism

II. **20th Century Worldview Transformations**

Logical Positivism
Language Games & Structuralism & Pragmatism
Postmodernism
Relativism & Pluralism

Nihilism
Existentialism
Postmodernism
Relativism & Pluralism
III. Popular sayings we encounter

i. “It’s all relative.”

ii. “Nobody really has the truth.”

iii. “There are no absolute truths.”

iv. “What true for you is true for you and what is true for me is true for me.”

v. “People should believe whatever they want as long as it doesn’t interfere with my freedom.”

vi. “People need to be tolerant of other ideas.”
IV. **How should we understand these sayings and respond?**

1. **These statements are hinting at something…what are they hinting at?**

   i. These sayings easily allow us to bring up the question in the conversation “What is the ______ of ______?”

   ii. So, yes, these sayings are cultural, but they also bring up deeper Metaphysical and Epistemological issues.

2. **In order to appropriately respond to these sayings, we must understand a philosophy known as Postmodernism.**

   i. Postmodernism has to do with the nature of truth.

   ii. Where do we encounter this question in the Bible?

   iii. Metaphysically speaking: does truth depend on human interests or is truth an independent reality separate from human interests? Is truth subjective or objective?

   iv. Epistemologically speaking: is truth such a thing that we can know? Is it accessible? Can we grasp the truth? Is truth something we create or do we bump into it?

3. **But culturally we are facing something that we as Christians have never faced…a rejection of such an ultimate Truth.**

   i. Postmoderns reject the hint of the idea of 1 ultimate truth (whether religion or politics) to rule them all.

      a. They can’t stand the thought of someone claiming that there is only 1 truth and only 1 way to understand reality. They hate that.

   ii. We can all probably agree that there is a sense of awkwardness when talking with certain Postmodern types…”
iii. The Postmodernists react very strongly to Christians because allegedly…

a. Christians over-emphasize universal truth and dogma.

b. Christians restrict asking questions or challenging the establishment.

c. Christians claim certainty of truth.

d. The Bible depicts God as rigid and controlling.

iv. So Postmoderns are very strong critics of any knowledge system that is exclusive and claims to have an independent objective truth that actually correctly describes reality.

4. Structure of class.

5. Overall Goal

i. Overall we will see that Postmodernism ought to be rejected because it is an unsound system of thought that dismisses objective truth and our ability to know objective truth.

V. **Postmodernism**

A. **Definition**

i. Postmodernism is a diverse philosophical and cultural movement that responds to and revises themes of Modernism; it rejects objective truth and rejects the idea that we can know objective truth concerning specific categories of reality.

a. Metaphysically – no objective truth exists.

b. Epistemologically – we can’t know objective truth even if it existed.

ii. So what is the thing we call truth according to Postmodernism?
a. Existentialism ➔ Subjective Meaning is created because there is no objective meaning.

b. Postmodernism ➔ Subjective Truth is created because there is no objective truth and objective truth is unknowable.

B. What are the key features of Postmodernism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postmodernism Rejects</th>
<th>Postmodernism Embraces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Realism</td>
<td>• Anti-Realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Foundationism</td>
<td>• Anti-Foundationism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Correspondence Theory of Truth</td>
<td>• Coherence Theory of Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Objective universal Truths</td>
<td>• Socially constructed subjective truths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language is no big deal</td>
<td>• Stuck inside of Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Metanarratives</td>
<td>• Local narratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A God’s eye view of things</td>
<td>• No God’s eye view of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Universal transcultural standards</td>
<td>• Only local cultural standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Authorial meaning in texts</td>
<td>• Reader meaning in texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Anti-Realism**

   i. Postmodernism rejects Metaphysical Realism: Objective reality is really there.

      a. Postmodernism rejects the existence of an independent reality.

      b. Postmodernism rejects a theory-independent or language-independent reality.

   ii. Postmodernism rejects Epistemological Realism: Objective truth about reality is knowable.

      a. Postmodernism claims that objective truth about reality is unknowable.

      b. We have no way of getting at it, so objective truth is a useless notion and can be forgotten about.¹

2. **Anti-Foundationalism**

   i. Postmodernism rejects that there is a foundation to our knowledge structure that does not require further justification.

3. **The Coherence Theory of Truth**

   i. A belief is true if it coheres with the other beliefs in the system.

   ii. truth is only what is consistent with our current truth system or truth web ("knowledge structure" is a modern notion).

   iii. truth depends on one’s culture pre-existing web of coherence

   iv. Whatever idea that passes the coherence test becomes another strand on the web of coherence.

v. So, what is in the truth web depends on or is relative to one’s culture’s current web of coherence.

4. Socially constructed subjective truths

i. truth is created by humans – as it is socially constructed.

ii. We make our own social world by the use of language.

iii. Our language about reality, our talking about reality defines the contours of reality for our subculture - as we talk about it.

iv. We “make” our worlds by how we talk.

a. Then language informs us of reality.

1) In order to understand a community, we must learn the language of a particular community.

v. truth is then dependent on the language of our subculture.

a. “We do not come to know the world by perceiving it (direct acquaintance), but we come to know the world as we learn to use our language.”

5. We are stuck inside of language

i. We cannot see the world as it is because we only see through our own language.

ii. We cannot escape from the influences of language to know an objective reality.

---

a. Language and the world are “internally related” in a circular way.

b. Language is the grid or filter that stands between us and objective reality.

c. There is no essence or nature to language. There are just many languages.

d. We cannot use language to get outside of language.

e. A word does not have a unique essential meaning that can be derived from logical analysis.

iii. Being inside language does not mean that language is a wall between us and the world.

iv. It means that the effects of language are so deep, that we cannot experience anything or think about anything without its alterations.

v. We cannot escape from language and its pervasive influences to

6. Local narratives

i. The way we see the world is defined by our subculture’s story (narrative).

ii. We are raised with this particular story of ourselves and see the world through this story.

iii. There are as many realities as there are communities.

iv. No one story is right.

7. No God’s eye view of things
i. There is no transcultural intellectual vantage point.

ii. Nobody or no culture has the only true and right perspective.

iii. One language is just one perspective on the world.

iv. The Postmodernist contends that have to get rid of the need for extending the linguistically formed world we live in to the rest of creation.

8. Only local cultural standards; the laws of logic are Western language games
   a. For the postmodern, logic is a Western construction and are in no way taken to be universally valid laws of reality itself.
   
   ii. Logic is just a game used in the west that is part of our culture and informs cohesive behavior.

9. Reader meaning in texts
   i. The meaning of a written text is derived not from the author’s intent and context but from the reader’s intent and context.

   ii. So the actual meaning of the writing is what you or I make of it.

   iii. Varying verbal meanings….

   iv. Locally contextual linguistic definitions….

   v. The impossibility of accurate definitions….
VI. How did Postmodernism develop as a philosophy?

A. Historically and Sociologically, Postmodernism is a period of thought following modernism and responding to modernism.

1. “Modern” Era

   i. Renaissance (14th – 17th centuries) & Enlightenment (17th-19th centuries):

2. Cultural influences of Modernism

   i. the desire to control and conquer

   ii. quest for certainty and totalizing knowledge

   iii. emphasis on the individual

3. Tony Jones’s Comparison of Modernism and Postmodernism³

   i. Modernism vs. Postmodernism

      a. Rational vs. Experiential

      b. Scientific vs. Spiritual

      c. Unanimity vs. Pluralistic

      d. Exclusive vs. Relative

      e. Egocentric vs. Altruistic

      f. Individualistic vs. Communal

---

³ Tony Jones, Postmodern Youth Ministry (Zondervan 2001)
g. Functional vs. Creative

h. Industrial vs. Environmental

i. Local vs. Global

j. Compartmentalized vs. Holistic

k. Relevant vs. Authentic

4. Scott Smith’s Comparison of Modernism and Postmodernism⁴

---

5. **Post-Modernism as an era of late-Modernism**

   i. Rather than describing it as a period after modernism, some philosophers of postmodernism describe it as an movement of thought within modernism itself.

   ii. Certain thoughts of Descartes, Hume, and Kant are better positioned in the postmodern era than the modern era.

      a. Descartes’ Rationalism and skepticism.

      b. Hume’s Empiricism and skepticism.

      c. Kant’s Noumenal / Phenomenological realm.

   iii. So we can see the seeds of Postmodernism were present in the modern era.

**B. Philosophically…**

   i. The “linguistic turn” of the 20th century…

   ii. Before this turn, based on the philosophy of Kant and many others, we were stuck behind our thoughts or impressions and cannot know reality.

   iii. Derrida, Kuhn, Foucault, Lyotard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Russell, and others advocated that we are stuck inside of language and cannot know reality.

**C. Michel Foucault (1926-1984)**

**D. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)**

**E. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998)**
I. **What are the implications of Postmodernism?**

1. Anti-Foundationalism

2. Anti-Realism

3. Rejection of the Correspondence Theory of Truth

4. Relativism

5. Pluralism

6. Intolerance

7. Regarding God\(^1\)

   i. Christians make (construct) God.

   ii. Christians cannot know God – as we are on the inside of language.

   iii. Christianity is based on the report that Jesus is God and he died and rose from the grave. But, the intention of the eyewitnesses in their writings doesn’t matter as the authors meaning cannot be known. Our interpretation of their writing is all that we have. It can mean anything we want it to.

   iv. Or if postmodernism is an actually adopted, the Christian lifestyle would be impossible to live as each culture has powerful influence to shape our reality regardless of how we try to be counterculture.

---

II. **What are the criticisms of Postmodernism?**

A. **Postmoderns misinterpret and do not describe Modernism accurately.**

   i. Some of the views that they say modernism brought about have been around for centuries before.

   ii. Some of the views that they say modernism brought about do not have the severely damaging implications on our society that they describe.

   iii. Some of the views that they say modernism brought about actually were very postmodern in nature and laid the seeds for future postmodern views.

B. **Postmoderns reject the modernist tools they need to use to reject modernist ideas.**

   i. They want to deny scientism and reductionism as bad modernist notions.

   ii. However, in order to reject them, they and we must use tools like laws of logic, certain realist features of reality, certain basic argumentative principles, etc.

   iii. But the Postmodernists reject these tools.

   iv. The only other way is to use power to cut off modernist ideas such as scientism and reductionism. But they despise the use of power to override people’s mindsets.

   v. If Postmodernism uses substantial modernist tools of philosophy, it than is standing on the branch it begins to cut off.

   vi. So they’re misled here and it leads to self-refuting.

---

vii. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas is a distinguished critic of philosophical postmodernism. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, he confronts “claims that Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault commit a performative contradiction in their critiques of modernism by employing concepts and methods that only modern reason can provide.”

C. The Postmodern rejection of Foundationalism is a bad idea.

1. Foundationalism is not dead.

   i. Philosophers today do not think that we need to have absolute “bombproof certainty” as Descartes thought he needed.

   ii. Many if not most philosophers today are moderate Foundationalists.

   iii. This implies that there are other forms of foundationalism that are more appealing than Cartesian foundationalism.

2. Foundationalism is not about attaining Cartesian certainty.

   i. Attaining certainty was a modernist project and goal. They wanted certainty in knowledge rationally and empirically.

   ii. Descartes thought that the base foundation for which all beliefs can be developed must consist of indubitable beliefs. This is called Cartesian Foundationalism.

   iii. But, I am entitled to know things even without knowing them 100%.

   iv. J.P. Moreland & W.L. Craig: “Foundationalism just seems to be the way that people

---

actually and appropriately go about justifying their beliefs.”

3. Foundationalism need not be rejected when rejecting Modernism.
   i. Rejecting Foundationalism as the Postmoderns do actually means accepting all of skepticism…
   ii. Skepticism is a bad worldview that self-refutes.

D. There are transcultural universal standards that cannot be denied.

1. Transcultural Objective Moral Standards
   i. Meaning that moral laws are discovered and exist regardless of whether or not anyone believes in them. They are furniture of the universe that we bump into.
   ii. Objective truths are self-evident.

2. These laws are universally valid and applicable in all times, all places, all cultures.
   i. Laws of logic cannot be denied. Those that try to deny them assume them to deny them. This would be self-refuting.
   ii. “Logic is built on four undeniable laws. There is no ‘getting behind’ these laws to explain them. They are self-evident and self-explanatory.”
      a. Law of identity (A is A)

b. Law of non-contradiction (A is not non-A)

c. Law of excluded middle (either A or non-A)

iii. Interestingly, God is the best explanation of the Foundation of these standards.

iv. Christians understand God as the source of logic.

v. He is perfect rationality. His thinking is flawless and beautiful.

3. **In a postmodern culture anyone’s truth is tolerated…except…**

   i. …those worldviews that do not accept another’s truth

   ii. …those worldviews that claim to have the absolute objective truth.

   iii. This sounds like an absolute standard of intolerance that they apply across cultures.

   iv. But this would imply that in postmodernism thinking, postmodernism would reject itself because it rejects those views that aren’t all inclusive.

   v. Postmodernism makes superiority claims about language, literary texts, a dichotomy of modernism & postmodernism, morality, values.

   vi. All of these claims are self-refuting because they claim that there is no objective vantage point and all claims on reality are equally valid.

4. **Arguments against Postmodern Moral Relativism succeed.**

   i. Individual-Moral Relativism

      a. This is self-refuting, impractical, etc.

   ii. Cultural-Moral Relativism
a. An anthropological notion that argues differences in moral behavior and norms in various cultures reveal that no objective moral transcultural standards exist.

b. Cultural Relativism fails as it is a descriptive thesis about different morality found in cultures and it is not evidence for the absence of transcultural moral standards across cultures.

c. Absence of evidence is not always the evidence of absence.

d. Interestingly, we do have evidence of transcultural moral standards across cultures.

1) Many of the same objective moral truths are discovered and written into the laws of ancient cultures as chronicled by C.S. Lewis in the appendix of *The Abolition of Man*.

e. An “is” does not make an “ought.”

E. There are problems with the Postmodernism view that holds that I cannot get outside of my social-construction-language-lens.

1. It really is inconsequential if I have a lens and cannot take it off.

   i. The lens is actually irrelevant if my worldview corresponds with reality.

   ii. Even if I cannot take it off and get past my lens, I can still be right.

   iii. It may be possible to know that I am understanding reality correctly even with my biased lens and my skewed interpretation of reality.

   iv. Just because I am interpreting multiple individual parts of reality a certain way doesn’t mean I am understanding the whole of reality incorrectly.
v. I can still have knowledge even with a lens – as knowledge is Justified True Belief.

vi. If the Postmoderns rejects this, they are guilty of committing the Genetic Fallacy here.

   a. Genetic Fallacy: discrediting the arguer’s argument based on how his/her belief originated.

   b. Debaters must stick to the merits of the argument not the source of the belief.

2. The alleged lenses that we have can be removed.

   i. Many people in the history of the world have been non-conformist. This is especially evident when worldviews shift in a culture.

   ii. In fact, the shift from modernism to postmodernism shows that postmodern thinkers became reprogrammed to get outside of their modernist language oriented lenses and see the world through their postmodern lens.

   iii. So, since they removed their alleged lenses, their view is contradicted.

3. We cannot socially construct & create real truth.

   i. One’s culture’s social constructions & attempts at creating objective reality do not actually create or even alter objective universal truths.

   ii. Reality simply is what it is.

   iii. The problem is reality actually doesn’t disappear but we remove ourselves from it!

4. Language depends on Reality; Reality doesn’t depend on language.

   i. There is a fundamental dependency of our knowledge based on the first-person
perspective, and not that of the social group.\(^7\)

ii. In order for language to develop, one must have direct awareness of objective reality.

a. Social agreements, according to the postmodern, is how language is used. But how do those agreements form in the first place?

b. This pre-linguistic state would be a state where they know things apart from language. “This conclusion, therefore, undermines their core assertion that we are inside language and cannot escape to know objective reality.”\(^8\)

iii. This brings us back to an original common sense based first-person perspective as the best solution for understanding meaning.

F. **The Coherence Theory of Truth is inadequate and the Correspondence Theory of Truth is undeniable.**

1. The Coherence Theory of Truth fails for a variety of reasons.

   i. because it allows for a belief that could be known to be false to count as true.

   ii. because it allows for a belief to be true according to one’s web while the same belief is false according to another’s web.

   iii. because in real life we bring individual ideas to reality to test them and judge their truth.

      a. It would be mistaken to say that the coherent belief system that emerges from the individual belief system is now the judge of truth overriding the individual reality tests.

---


b. Also note that we don’t bring entire belief systems to reality to test them and judge its truth.

c. So belief systems are not even what is tested on the whole - so using the whole to become the standard for testing other ideas (as in The Coherence Theory) would be misguided.

iv. For these reasons The Coherence Theory of Truth fails.

2. **Correspondence Theory of Truth is necessary to avoid falsity.**

   a. A belief is true if it corresponds to reality.

   b. A belief is false if it does not correspond to reality.

3. **Correspondence Theory of Truth is undeniable.**

G. **Postmodernism is self-refuting because the rejection of Realism is undermined by Postmodernist’s descriptions of Objective Reality.**

1. Postmodern reports on objective truth of reality contradict their own view that says we cannot know objective truth of reality.

   i. According to Postmodernism, they provide several reports on objective reality:

      a. That their views of modernism are accurate depictions of modernism.

      b. What we call “reality” is merely a social construction not an independent reality itself.

      c. Language is and does as they describe them.
d. That people ought to correctly understand their authorial intent in their own writing as their own writing is there for us to understand objectively.

ii. But these are reports to know what reality actually is like.

iii. So these reports on objective truth of reality contradict their own view that says we cannot know objective truth of reality.

2. Postmoderns counter back: When we say that there is no objective truth, we mean that there is no truth out there where there are no sentences expressed in a language.

i. They say that truth is created when human language is expressed.

ii. This response is inadequate for several reasons:

a. Truth is contained and revealed in propositions not language.

b. Math is not a language (in the sense that Postmoderns are using) but is still out there in an independent abstract objective reality.

c. As we saw before, there are certain objective truths that exist independent of an utterance or thought proposition about them.

d. They really mean subjective truth as no one can create an objective truth.

e. So this still doesn’t respond to the self-refuting charge of reporting objective truth while denying objective truth.

iii. Also, this counter is self-refuting because it reports the objective truth that there is no objective truth out there unless someone expresses language.

a. They are making a claim about how the world actually is – that it doesn’t contain
objective truth till someone says something.

b. But this claim is meant to be understood as a description of actual reality without anyone saying anything.

c. They contend that they know what reality is like independent of any language, while contending that no one can know what reality is like unless there is a language.

d. So this counter is self-refuting.

iv. So this counter fails to respond to the criticism that Postmodernism is self-refuting.

3. Postmoderns counter back: we are just discussing how our community has made or constructed our reality we are not discussing objective reality out there.

i. This response is inadequate because no one outside their community subculture would care about their own little community subculture, unless they are claiming to know something about how the world actually is outside their community subculture.

ii. Another reason why this response is inadequate is because it seems that they are claiming to access objective reality when we read their writings and hear them speak.

a. So, if they are claiming to know something about objective reality, than they are really claiming they got outside their language barrier of their community subculture to get privileged access.

b. But this would be a contradiction to their own view which advocates that no one has the capability to see objective reality with a God’s eye view.

iii. Additionally, with this counter, the postmodern is denying that his view is actually objectively true.
4. Overall, Postmodernism is self-refuting and very misguided in light of the fact that we can have direct awareness of reality and can know it in its entirety.

5. Common sense realism seems to be far more easy to accept in light of the fact that I can see the object for what it is.

6. If we do actually have access to the real world and can know things as they are, than Postmodernism is refuted.
   a. We do have direct awareness that the postmodernists reject.
   b. Knowledge of external reality is possible.
   c. Therefore, Postmodernism is refuted.

H. The incredulity towards Metanarratives by Postmodernists is undermined by the Postmodernist Metanarrative.
   i. Postmodernists argue that because there are a plethora of local narratives, there is no way to know which one is correct. So each local narrative is acceptable. As such, we ought to remain skeptical about metanarratives.
   
   ii. But, Postmodernism is a metanarrative. So it undermines its own case that all metanarratives should be distrusted.

   iii. Christianity is a metanarrative that can be shown to true with reasons, evidence, and experience - in spite of all other metanarratives and local narratives.
iv. The other metanarratives and local narratives can be shown to be false with reasons, evidence, and experience.

I. The Postmodern claim that it’s impossible to be rationally objective because of our bias is simply mistaken.

1. Psychologically Objective

   i. People at times are Psychologically Objective on issues they are not interested in or haven’t thought enough about.

2. Emotionally Biased

   i. Most people are not Psychologically Objective on issues they are interested in and have thought about.

3. Rational Objectivity

   i. When one listens and discerns the good reasons and the bad reasons for believing something. Then based on the good reasons, judges accordingly, modifies his view, and/or changes intellectual position.

4. Are Emotionally Biased but Rationally Objective judgments possible?

   i. Bias doesn’t make it impossible to assess reasons for something or impossible to choose to hold to a view because of good reasons.

   ii. One’s bias does not eliminate the person’s ability to assess reasons.

   iii. The lack of Psychological Objectivity and the presence of Emotional Bias does not
imply a lack of Rational Objectivity.

iv. People can still be Rationally Objective.

v. So yes, Rational Objectivity is possible in considering and assessing the reasons in arguments for other worldviews, religions, and political parties, etc. despite a conservative evangelical Christian bias. We can conclude based on rational grounds alone that these other worldviews, religions, and political parties have problems based on their own intellectual merits.

vi. Likewise, a non-Christian can consider and assess the reasons for the validity of Christianity with having a bias against Christianity.

III. Does Postmodernism stand up to scrutiny?

i. No.

ii. Postmodernism and Postmodern Christianity ought to be rejected because they are unsound systems of thought that disregard knowing objective truth that corresponds with reality.

iii. While it may rightly warn us against the abuses of power and the need to reject scientism and other modern era worldviews, it primarily advocates doctrines that are completely anti-Christian.

iv. We can embrace the good aspects of Postmodernism without embracing Postmodernism at all.

v. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate to simply remain neutral to postmodernism because postmodernism’s detrimental notions far outweigh its few positive ones.
IV. Recommendations on living in a Postmodernism culture

1. Keep to a transcendent worldview

i) One can see things in light of our worldview, not through our worldview.

ii) As philosopher J.P. Moreland notes, “Our worldview is a set of habits that form and shape the way we see the world.”

iii) We constantly make a distinction between the foreground and the background.

(1) Our worldview informs us what to pay attention to and not to pay attention to.

(2) Our set of values help us choose what we pay attention to and not.

(3) Our values cause us to notice in the foreground things that which we value.”

iv) Here, one’s worldview is grounded in values, or important objective truths that are beyond the temporal and cultural, transcendent values.

(1) This would presuppose that, one has direct awareness of reality, that is, one has direct experience of the natural and supernatural.

(2) The most secular worldviews, even some religious ones, evolve and adapt as time passes and cultures transition.

(3) However, a transcendent worldview is a belief system that endures through any culture and any time without modification of values only their application.

(4) This transcendent worldview does not prescribe just going with the flow and not struggling with conflicting worldviews.
(5) It allows one to experience the world free from skepticism and trust our senses and reasoning. As such, one can transcend, reach beyond, the fullness of one’s own culture and experience a reality that holds all truth, knowable truth.

2. Keep to a passion for knowing reality

v) The worldview that most accurately corresponds to reality ought to be adopted.

vi) These are “the moral and intellectual duties of any thinking human, first, to believe as many truths as possible before we die, and second, to refuse to believe as many falsehoods as possible before we die.”

vii) One would hope that his beliefs are not just sincere but are actually right and truthful.

viii) Theories of knowledge that traditional orthodox Christianity (not developed during the modern or enlightenment era) teaches are much more attractive and compelling than the postmodern’s theories of knowledge.

3. Keep to the teaching of Jesus

ix) The teachings of Jesus correspond with reality and his life gives flourishing life.

(1) Embracing what Jesus teaches and offers will allow the power of the immaterial supernatural realm to be actualized in the material natural realm. One can truly experience the reality of the transcendent realm, the reality that Jesus rules.

(2) This realm actually includes the physical and the temporal, but it is not limited and is always being restored unto the order of Jesus.

(3) All other worldviews consider alternative realities, which fall very short in accessing this transcendent reality and offering what Jesus offers.

9 Moreland, J.P. Class lecture, 10-27-2006
The Intolerance of Tolerance

Harry Edwards
Founder & President, Apologetics.com, Inc.

“The facts are on the table, the stakes are high, and the moment of opportunity is closing. Unless the present generation restores civility in public life, the American republic will decline.”

– Os Guinness

Goals

Define Tolerance/Intolerance

Provide some examples

Important pointers to consider (add to your vocabulary)

Discuss some practical ways to address our challenges.

Q&A
Definitions: to tolerate

Oxford English Dictionary:

to endure, sustain (pain or hardship).

to allow to exist or to be done or practiced without authoritative interference or molestation; to allow, permit

To bear without repugnance; to allow intellectually, or in taste, sentiment, or principle; to put up with.

Definitions: to tolerate

Weber’s:

to allow; permit; not interfere with

to recognize and respect (others’ beliefs, practices, etc.) without necessarily agreeing or sympathizing.

to put up with; to bear; as, he tolerates his brother-in-law

in medicine, to have tolerance for (a specific drug, etc.)

Definitions: to tolerate

Encarta:

accept existence of different views

recognize other people’s right to have different beliefs or practices without an attempt to suppress them.
Definition: tolerance

the accepting of the differing views of other people, e.g., in religious or political matters, and fairness toward the people who hold these different views.

Subtle Difference

ACCEPT EXISTENCE OF DIFFERENT VIEWS

VS.

ACCEPTANCE OF DIFFERENT VIEWS

What do they mean?

“She is a very tolerant person”

Meaning 1:
Gladly puts up with a lot of opinions with which she disagrees?

Meaning 2:
She thinks all options are equally valid
What do they mean?

“We do not tolerate other religions”

Meaning 1:
Muslims do not think that other religions are permitted to exist?

Meaning 2:
Muslims cannot agree that other religions are as valid as Islam?

What do they mean?

“Christians gladly tolerate other religions”

Meaning 1:
Christians gladly insist that other religions have as much right to exist as Christianity does;

Meaning 2:
Christians gladly assert that all religions are equally valid?

What do they mean?

“You Christians as so intolerant!”

Meaning 1:
Does this mean that Christians wish all positions contrary to our own be eliminated or destroyed?

Meaning 2:
Christians insist that Jesus is the only way to God?
Examples

2005, Co-operative Bank, based in Manchester, England

2007, Donald Hindley, a sociologist prof. at Brandeis Univ. lecturing on Latin American politics

Hippocratic Oath

Pointers to consider

Spheres of influence (or power): God, Caesar & Family

Negative vs. Positive Rights

“Separation of Church and State”: Distinction vs. Strict Separation

Tolerant of people but not ideas

Hypocrisy

What to do?

Expose the new tolerance's moral and epistemological bankruptcy

Expose the new tolerance's condescending arrogance

Distinguish the good and the bad of cultures (inherent goodness of diversity vs. political motivations of multiculturalism) Amish vs. Nazi

Practice and encourage civility

Evangelize (apologetics)

Preserve a place for truth, e.g., model of ADC; honorific title of Dir. of Apologetics.

Be prepared to suffer (Jer. 29: 4-7)

God is in control.
If not this, what?
If not you, who?
If not here, where?
If not now, when?

Questions?
I. Popular sayings we encounter that reflect pluralism

i. “All religions are the same."

ii. “All religions have the same teachings.”

iii. “There isn’t one correct way to God.”

iv. “All religions lead to God.”

v. “It’s arrogant or bigoted to say that your religion is the only right religion.”

vi. “Jesus isn’t the way, but just a way.”

vii. President Barack Hussein Obama at his first inauguration – “We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.”

viii. President George W Bush – “I believe in an Almighty God, and I believe that all the world, whether they be Muslim, Christian, or any other religion, prays to the same God.”

ix. Radio talk-show host, Howard Stern – "Religion has divided people. I don’t think there’s any difference between the pope wearing a large hat and parading around with a smoking purse and an African painting his face white and praying to a rock.”

---


II. Religious Pluralism – Social vs. Metaphysical

1. Religious Pluralism has two distinct meanings

   i. “The belief that all religions and secular world views are legitimate and valid. Each is "true" when viewed from within its own culture.”

   ii. “The fact that religious diversity exists within in a country or the world.”

2. Social Pluralism

   i. Recognizes that within society there is a multiplicity of religions and calls for tolerance for diverse religious expression

3. Metaphysical Pluralism

   i. “All religious truth-claims are equally valid and simultaneously true.”

   ii. Literal Pluralism is a helpful term to use to describe this view of religious pluralism, because in conversation you can simply ask, “When you speak of tolerance, are you advocating for social tolerance of the diverse races, languages, and cultures present in society, or do you literally believe that everything is one and the same?”

   iii. The way that metaphysical pluralism (literal pluralism) is “one and the same” varies:

      a. All is one, and one is all. There are no distinctions. All is the same substance, if we realize it or not.

      b. All leads to one. Recognizes the distinctions, but in the end all will be one or all will eventually come to the same positive conclusion.

4. Conversation Starter

---


i. What form of religious pluralism is being represented with the following image? Social or metaphysical pluralism?

![Coexist Image](https://www.peacemonger.org)

The following image is from www.peacemonger.org, the company with the registered copyright and trademark of this Coexist image.

**III. The Rise of Religious Pluralism in the West (Particularly America)**

**A. Postmodernism’s Influence Towards Religious Pluralism**

i. Postmodernists reject exclusive, objective, universal truth-claims

ii. Postmodernists create reality through speaking it into existence

   a. Humanity creates subjective truths through the use of language

   b. Truth is dependent on the language of our subcultures

   c. The reader’s meaning of the text is all that matters – the author’s meaning is non-existent

   d. This leads to a rejection of the God of the Bible that spoke all things into existence through the Word, Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14), who still holds all things together (Colossians 1:16-17).

iii. Independent realities are rejected thus uniting the world as one

   a. Nothing is independent, everything is dependent.
b. There is no objective reality to be understood through reason, science, and logic (as in Modernism), but instead truth is gleaned through personal experience and emotion.⁵

c. This leads to a rejection of the transcendent God of Judaic-Christian theology that is an independent reality unto Himself. God is separate and distinct from all things and is dependent upon no one.

iv. Postmodernists embrace a holistic system of truth – if a truth claim coheres to the other beliefs in the system then it is accepted and added to the mix.

B. Hinduism’s Influence Towards Religious Pluralism

i. For the Hindu, truth has many names, but there is only one truth. That one truth is the all-pervasive Brahman, the eternally divine essence at the heart of all things. Everything is One and divine through Brahman, but we don’t recognize this oneness due to an illusion that must be overcome through experience.

a. Brahman is similar to the Dao in Daoism (Taoism). The Dao remains an indescribable mysterious force (represented by the Yin and Yang symbol). The opening lines of the Daodejing express that the Dao that is truly the Dao cannot be experienced or named. Everything in existence came from the Dao and shall return to the Dao. The Dao flows through all things, and it is the goal of all Daoists to follow the way of the Way.

b. Brahman is similar to the Force in Star Wars. Obiwan Kenobi teaches the concept of the Force in Star Wars, saying, “The Force is an energy field created by all living things: it surrounds us penetrates us, it binds the galaxy together… it is all-powerful [and] controls everything.”

c. In these examples, the uniting essence is eternal, divine, impersonal, and cannot be seen or understood through reason, logic, or science. It can only be experienced through intuition, meditation, or acts that lead to a denial of an independent self towards recognizing a dependency and unity with all things.

d. Brahman is a monistic view of reality (All is One).

ii. Hinduism has had influence in America through the Transcendentalist Movement that questioned governmental authority, social norms, and religious institutions, turning inward to the spiritual self to serve as a guide for truth and goodness, a concept that the Transcendentalists picked up from Hindu texts.

a. David Henry Thoreau – “In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta [Hindu text], since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma, and Vishnu and Indra [Hindu gods], who still sits in his temple on the Ganges [the sacred river in India in which Hindus regularly bathe in ritual cleansing rites] reading the Vedas [four collections of Hindu priestly chants], or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water-jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets, as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.”

b. Ralph Waldo Emerson says in his essay “The Over-Soul” that within us “is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every particle is equally related; the eternal ONE.” Emerson adds that this nature appearing in us all “is not social; it is impersonal; is God.” To receive a “revelation” from this soul, Emerson explains that one “must greatly listen to himself, withdrawing from

---

all accents of other men’s devotion” because “the Highest dwells with him; that the sources of nature are in his own mind.”


b. He closed his address by leading the crowd of 300,000 plus youth in a chant of “Hare Om” and “Hare Ram”.

c. His address was called an “invocation” by John Morris, the head of Woodstock production.

d. The embrace of Hinduism at Woodstock rolled on through the festival with yoga led from the stage as a time-filler while bands arrived and set up for their sets. Like most aspects of postmodernism, words and practices were removed from their original context and application and cast into an eclectic conglomeration to meet the purpose and desires of any individual. Yoga was presented as just another way to get high.

C. Ancient Gnosticism’s Influence Towards Religious Pluralism

1. Gnosticism is a pagan spirituality that comes from the Greek word gnosis which means “knowledge.” All of the following points on Gnosticism are taken from Dr. Peter Jones’ book Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America.  

   i. The “knowledge” that Gnostics possess is that the self is divine.

   ii. Gnosticism embraces individual experience as the ultimate guide for truth.

   iii. Gnostics were free from all authority, human or divine.

   iv. Within Gnosticism diversity is embraced yet syncretized, and individual creativity is embraced, combining the gods and goddesses of Eastern cults, Greek mythology, and the Roman pantheon.

   v. Traditional morality is rejected and each individual can do as they choose.

---

2. Gnosticism emerged through the West meeting the East

i. Peter Jones, founder of TruthXchange, explains that “This pagan spirituality began when East met West in the fourth century B.C. Alexander the Great took Greek (Western) culture to the Eastern ends of his far-flung empire. In that meeting, the rational culture of Greece was significantly modified by the great religions of the East (Hinduism, Manicheism, Zoroastrianism, Babylonian astrology, the Egyptian goddess worship of Isis, and Judaism, whether orthodox, mystical or apostate). The blending of these great traditions produced the intellectual and religious syncretism of the so-called Hellenistic age (4th century B.C. – 4th century A.D.).”

ii. Gnostics later incorporated Christianity into their spirituality, reenvisioning and rewriting the Bible to fit the Gnostic worldview.

3. Connecting the dots to today’s religious pluralism, there has been a resurgence of Gnosticism due to the recent discovery of 47 Gnostic documents in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt.

i. Gospel of Thomas

ii. Gospel of Philip

iii. Gospel of Truth

iv. The Secret Book of John

v. The Hypostasis of the Archons

vi. To read categorized excerpts from key Gnostic texts, I recommend The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back by Dr. Peter Jones.

vii. An article by Dr. Brian Mattson entitled, “Sympathy for the Devil” demonstrates how the new movie Noah, starring Russel Crowe, based its screenplay not on the Biblical

---

12 Peter Jones, Spirit Wars, 65.
narrative of Noah, but the Gnostic narrative of Creation and the Flood.\textsuperscript{13}

D. **New Age Influence Towards Religious Pluralism**

1. The New Age Movement is an eclectic spiritual movement that is a conglomeration of Eastern religions and philosophies (Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism, and more) with Western pagan practices.

   i. Yoga

   ii. Meditation

   iii. Crystals

   iv. Tarot Cards

   v. Palm Reading

   vi. Astrology

   vii. Holistic Health

   viii. Channeling

   ix. Casting Spells

2. New Age beliefs resemble those of Hinduism and Gnosticism.

   i. All is one.

   ii. All is divine.

   iii. Experience and esoteric knowledge reveal truth.

   iv. Karma

\textsuperscript{13} http://drbrianmattson.com/journal/2014/3/31/sympathy-for-the-devil
v. Reincarnation

E. The Heart and Mind Behind Religious Pluralism

1. The heart position is one of love.

i. The thought is that divisions cause strife. If all divisions can be erased, then there will be no more strife.

ii. Religions are viewed to be a root cause for the strife in the world. If all religions can be reduced to a common denominator, better yet, if all religions are the same, then there will be no more strife.

   a. During the 60s Counter-Cultural Movement there was a distrust of government, religion that were seen to be oppressive through the civil-rights movements and the lack of support for the Vietnam War. These foundations were therefore deconstructed.

   b. As the traditional values that came from Christianity were rejected along with the God of the Bible that accompanies them, Hindu spirituality filled the void.

iii. Exclusive religions divide people, not just in this life, but even in the next life. The claim that all religions are true is very appealing because it means we won’t lose loved ones who don’t adhere to a specific belief system forever.

2. The mind is ignorant to religious truth-claims.

i. If a person does not know the teachings of the world’s religions, then it is very easy to assume that they all are basically the same.
ii. A basic understanding of the world’s religions would reveal contradictions on the fundamental doctrines of each religion; however, many Americans don’t have this fundamental knowledge as the following surveys indicate.
On questions about Christianity – including a battery of questions about the Bible – Mormons (7.9 out of 12 right on average) and white evangelical Protestants (7.3 correct on average) show the highest levels of knowledge.
Spirit and nature: Many Christians have adopted beliefs or experiences that conflict with basic Christian doctrines. People who say they:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have been in touch with the dead</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Found &quot;spiritual energy&quot; in trees, etc.</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had ghostly experience</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulted a psychic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


IV. Countering “All Is One” Religious Pluralism

A. Law of Non-Contradiction

1. \( A \neq \text{Non-}A \)

   i. A statement cannot be true and not true at the same time in the same respect.

   ii. \( A \) (Jesus is God, Christianity) \( \neq \) Non-\( A \) (Jesus is Not-God, Judaism and Islam)

   iii. The Law of Non-Contradiction has already disproven that all religions are equally valid and true.

B. The Law of Excluded Middle

1. \( A \) is either \( A \) or Non-\( A \)

   i. A statement is either true or false.

   ii. Jesus is God or Jesus is not God.

   iii. Evidence is needed to show which statement is true. Demonstrating the historical
reliability of the Gospels, evaluating the claims of Christ, and examining the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a good way of showing that Christ is the Son of God.

C. The Law of Identity

1. A is A
   i. A thing is what it is, so a true statement is true.
   ii. Jesus is God. If that statement is true, then Jesus is God.

D. Plug in religious doctrines into the Law of Non-Contradiction

Reincarnation (Hinduism and Buddhism) contradicts the belief that this life is the only life before eternity (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam).

Pantheism (Hinduism) contradicts the belief that there is only one transcendent God (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), and both of these beliefs contradict the belief that there is no God (Theravada Buddhism and Atheism).

Salvation from sin (Christianity) contradicts the belief that there is no sin to be saved from but simply pain that can be escaped through enlightenment (Buddhism).

Jesus Christ being the incarnate, Son of God (Christianity) contradicts the teaching that he is just a prophet (Islam) or that he was a false prophet (Judaism).

Jesus dying as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world and rose from the grave contradicts the belief that Jesus ascended into heaven while never dying on a cross, or facing death of any kind (Islam).

E. There are only two religions!

1. Paid vs. Not Paid
   i. Christianity is the only PAID religion – Jesus Christ paid for the sins of mankind, and
he paid in full.

ii. Romans 4:4-5 – If you want to work and get paid for your deeds, God will allow that. If you want to not work and trust God who justifies the wicked, then you shall be credited as righteous.

iii. All other religions are NOT PAID religions.

a. Hindus must practice yoga.

b. Muslims must submit to Allah and in particular practice the five pillars.

c. Buddhist must follow the 8-fold path.

d. Scientologists must be audited and release the engrams. The list goes on…

iv. Paid ≠ Not Paid

2. From God vs. From Man

i. Christianity is the only religion that is From God – founded by God in the flesh.

ii. All other religions are From Man – prophets, gurus, enlightened men, heroes, etc.

iii. From God-Incarnate ≠ From Just a Man

iv. Note: The only religion that is From God is also the only religion that is Paid! And most of the religions that are From Man try to incorporate the only religion that is From God by including Jesus in some way.

F. This view is actually intolerant!

1. To make all religions the same, a person would have to distort or completely ignore the orthodox teachings of all religions.

2. Only inclusive religions are embraced, such as Hinduism and New Age
Spirituality. Exclusive religions don’t cohere to the system and must be eliminated or changed, just as the Gnostics reimagined Christianity.

V. Countering “All Leads to One” Religious Pluralism

1. All leads to one is logically possible.

   i. Scenario 1: All religions would be wrong but they all lead to the same end (salvation, God, etc.)

   ii. Scenario 2: An inclusive religion could be correct, and all religions would eventually lead to God, though the others would be wrong in their claims to truth.

   iii. Scenario 3: The correct religion has not yet been discovered or revealed to mankind and that religion will be all inclusive of the currently existing religions.

2. The Mountain Analogy
3. The Elephant Analogy

i. The story of the blind men and the elephant has connections to Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and even Sufi Islam.

ii. A popular version is the poem by John Godfrey Saxe.

iii. The blind men are touching various parts of the elephant and come to different conclusions concerning what the elephant is. “All Leads to One” pluralists use this analogy to claim that finite humanity is unable to know ultimate reality (usually used in respect to who God is). The finite is incapable of discerning the infinite.

iv. Based on our experiences we all know God to a degree, but not in whole. Thus debate over the person and nature of God is futile, and we’d be better off to syncretize our knowledge of God instead of bickering.
v. All religions are true based on their adherents’ experiences of the divine (relativism).

vi. All religions eventually lead to God, since all religions are touching God!

4. Countering the Elephant Analogy

i. Ultimately, this analogy is saying that all religions are false and that we’ll never know the truth concerning God.

ii. The religious pluralists’ claims with this analogy are self-refuting. The pluralists are claiming to know that God is unknowable due to our lack of sight in the realm of the divine, but how do they know this. They are rejecting all absolute truth-claims about God, yet making one themselves.

iii. The original story has a king looking down at the wise men and he reveals to them that they are foolish and in fact they are all touching the same reality, the elephant. The elephant is an elephant in the original story, not God. The story tells us that we need knowledge from above to come down to enlighten us. The Bible reveals that Word from above that has come down to us!

iv. The elephant analogy ignores Christianity’s claims that Jesus is God in the flesh. It completely ignores the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

v. To accommodate Christ, the story would have to have the elephant healing the blind men and introducing himself to the men.  

---

VI. Contradict – They Can’t All Be True

Stickers, Tracts, Videos, Blog, Facebook Community Page, Discussion Guides, and More at www.contradictmovement.org

Now there is also a book, *Contradict – They Can’t All Be True*, available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble online, as well as by asking your local bookstore to order the book for you.

For more information contact Andy Wrasman at andy@contradictmovement.org

Blog: AndyWrasman.Com

Youtube Channel: AndyWrasman

Twitter: @AndyWrasman
Contradict
Evangelism Table
At
Saddleback
Community College’s
Free-Speech Area

The conversation starter:
“This sign simply means that all religions
can’t be true because they contradict
each other. They could all be false, but
they can’t all be true. I believe the
Bible is true, that Jesus is the Son of
God who died for the sins of the world.
I’m here to talk with anyone who wants
to know more or who has questions.”

If you want to start an evangelism table,
I want to help you.
andy@contradictmovement.org

Why do table-top evangelism?
• Eye-catching – Controversial – What does it mean?
• Many think Contradict represents atheism,
so imagine their surprise when they
find out you are a Christian. They are
hooked and want to know more!
• This isn’t preaching – it’s discussing.
• One on one, Christ-centered conversations.
• An opportunity to share and defend the Gospel.
• Anyone can ask anything!
• Pick the type of sign that works best for you.
I. **Additional criticisms of Postmodernism**

A. **Postmodernism is self-refuting because it contends that all truth claims about reality are a matter of perspective.**

1. Postmoderns deny the possibility of a God’s eye view while claiming the non-perspective view for themselves.\(^1\)

   i. They claim that they know that we all see from a perspective.

   ii. This implies that their vantage point gives them an accurate perspective of our perspective.

   iii. From their vantage point they can see that all of us have vantage points that cause our perspectives to be limited.

   iv. Only their vantage point gives them accurate readings of all vantage points to say that we are all limited.

   v. So they are in fact claiming the God’s eye view and claiming that none of us have it.

   vi. So they claim it while denying it exists.

   vii. This claim is self-defeating.

   a. Ken Samples: “[Postmodernism] reflects a universal perspective that stands above all other perspectives...”\(^2\)

   viii. It seems that Postmoderns claim to the right perspective is self-refuting.

---


2. Postmoderns claim the above while claiming that ‘worldviews are perspectival.’

i. But if this is true, than postmodernism as a worldview is just 1 perspective amongst many.

ii. In fact, their worldview seems to stand from their biased perspective.

iii. It doesn’t have any more authority to describe the actual world, as it is limited as well.

iv. So why would one trust the claims of a worldview that describes itself as just 1 perspective that is limited like all the rest and may actually be wrong?

v. Greg Koukl: “The only alternative left is to apply the postmodernism to postmodernism itself, reducing it to nothing more than a linguistic construction. But this renders the postmodern view trivial, a regional, parochial perspective that has no more claim to universal legitimacy than any other view. It can simply be ignored by any of us not interested in playing that particular language game.”

vi. The Postmodern retreat to just 1 perspective reveals the inadequacy of Postmodernism as a worthwhile worldview.

3. If perspective cannot be shifted, the Postmodern theory deals with the same subcultural perspective issues of the rest of the population they are trying to reach with their message.

i. Postmoderns want to tell everyone about their theory: that we are all stuck in the norms of our unique cultural setting we inherited and were raised in.

ii. Accordingly, everyone on the planet ought to remain skeptical of his/her theory of another culture and skeptical of his/her theory of the universe as a whole.
iii. However, they seem to think that their own unique cultural setting they inherited and were raised in does not affect their own theory. That their theory is immune to the perspective of their time, subculture, and chronological setting.

iv. This is self-refuting as it claims their theory is immune to the effects of perspective that they say no one’s theory is immune to.

v. Greg Koukl: “No one can escape the linguistic trap, not even postmodernists.”

vi. If all theories are tainted by perspective, than so is postmodernism.

vii. If postmodernism is not tainted by perspective, than neither is Christianity.

viii. “Implicitly, postmodernists think they have beaten the language game, at least in this instance. But if they can escape the trap, why can’t anyone else?”

B. Postmodernism is flawed because its author’s own writings claim that all original texts are always misinterpreted.

1. Background of the issue…

i. The main Postmodern thinkers communicate in speeches but mostly in writing.

ii. They write books describing how texts cannot be accurately understood because of our own sociocultural setting.

iii. Thus the author’s intent is never clearly understood because we cannot get back to the original author’s unique sociocultural, historical, language-based moment.

iv. So, we see Skepticism of our ability to know history or another culture.

a. All we really know is our own unique sociocultural, historical, language-based

---

moment.

v. Postmoderns contend that meaning lies in the interpretation of the reader or reader’s community rather than the original intent of the original author.

vi. So the actual meaning of the writing is what you or I make of it.

vii. The meaning is derived from the interpretation.

viii. For Deconstructionism all interpretation is misinterpretation.

ix. All readings are mis-readings.

x. Readers create the meaning of texts.

xi. Words refer to other words, not actual content out there.

xii. There are no stable meanings to literary texts.

a. Only locally contextual linguistic definitions.

b. The impossibility of accurate definitions.

2. Postmoderns use writing to declare that writings will always be misinterpreted.

i. They are communicating with a media that they say we will always misinterpret because of our contextual specific situation.

ii. But, how can we ever understand the original meaning of the Postmodern text if we always misinterpret texts?

iii. We cannot understand the Postmodern writing accurately.

iv. We can only misinterpret and misunderstand it.
v. Therefore, their communication is misunderstood by all.

vi. So, we see here that Postmodernism is flawed because Postmodern author’s writings claim that all authors’ texts are misinterpreted, including their own.

3. Postmoderns use writing to declare that writings need to be deconstructed.

i. Ken Samples: “When Jacques Derrida set forth this intended theory in his writings, couldn’t his text have been deconstructed? In fact, couldn’t a text be deconstructed virtually ad infinitum? And if this process went on and on, where would meaning be found?”

ii. Derrida was communicating with text the need to deconstruct texts. He wanted his own theory of deconstructionism to be applied to all texts.

iii. But if we take his view seriously, we would need to deconstruct his text as well.

iv. If this occurs, the author’s specific intent and exact view will not be fully understood by the reader.

v. So, as a whole deconstructionism ultimately is self-refuting as it would deconstruct itself.

4. Postmoderns write with language to claim that language is ambiguous to the reader.

i. Mark Lilla, Professor of the Humanities at Columbia contends, “How then are we to understand the deconstructionist’s own propositions? As more than one critic has pointed out, there is an unresolvable paradox in using language to claim that language

---

cannot make unambiguous claims."

ii. The Postmodernist is using language to claim that language gives only ambiguous information.

iii. This leads to the ambiguity and untrustworthiness of their own writings.

5. Postmoderns use texts to communicate, while implying the futility of texts.

i. They are using written language to claim that written language gives only a text that the reader must re-author, so to speak.

a. The reader brings the meaning to the text and ascribes it to the text.

b. So what is the use of the original text?

c. So, the Postmodern view of textual communication is flawed as it implies that the written works of the Postmoderns are futile wastes of time.

6. Jürgen Habermas critique of Foucault is successful.

i. Philosopher Gary Aylesworth describes Jürgen Habermas critique: “he criticizes Foucault for not subjecting his own genealogical method to genealogical unmasking, which would reveal Foucault's re-installation of a modern subject able to critically gaze at its own history."

ii. Jürgen Habermas: “Foucault cannot adequately deal with the persistent problems that come up in connection with an interpretive approach to the object domain, a self-

---


referential denial of universal validity claims, and a normative justification of critique."^8

7. Overall, Postmodernism is flawed because its author’s own writings claim that all original texts are always misinterpreted, and as such, it is useless view.

C. The Postmodern view of textual interpretation allows for the violation of the laws of logic.

i. Postmoderns allow for any interpretation to be valid.

ii. According to the Postmodern view, opposite interpretations are permissible and expected given the various contextual backgrounds of the variety of readers.

a. With 1 million readers, there could be 1 million different interpretations.

b. Any and all interpretations are possible.

c. An interpretation of the text accurately is possible or an completely wrong interpretation of the text is possible.

d. The reader can interpret the text in the exact opposite way the author originally intended.

iii. All interpretations are valid, even opposite ones, as the reader is the truth-maker.

iv. In effect, the Postmodern writing could be explained a hundred different equally valid ways.

^8 Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 1987.
v. But, this clearly violates the laws of logic, namely the law of non-contradiction.

vi. Therefore, this view fails as the law of non-contradiction is an indestructible wall.

vii. So, the Postmodern view of textual interpretation violates the laws of logic.

D. Postmodernist academic writings are notoriously unintelligible.

1. Postmodern writings are unclear, lacking substance, and often merely rhetorical literature that is hard to take seriously.

   i. Many critics of Postmodernism argue that their writing is so difficult to understand it is borderline useless. Not difficult in content, but difficult in intelligibility.

   ii. It is extremely difficult to understand exactly what the Postmodern means in concrete terms.

   iii. They are filling their writing with such rhetoric that they are hiding a lack of substance to their view.

2. Postmodern responses:

   i. Postmodernist often respond: well you just don’t understand!

   ii. Postmodern academics respond that they are using highly specialized dense jargon that only astute students of modernism will understand.

   iii. They also respond that the style of 20th century French thought is not to use detailed citations in their works (say as we Americans do), rather they prefer contextually implied references to previous thinkers or ideas.

      a. So their references are more alluded to or understood by their audience rather than
explicitly defined individually.

b. They use rhetoric, style, and form as an element of the argument.

iv. Postmodern academics are making strides in becoming clearer in their articulation of their ideas.

E. Academic (non-Christian) philosophers criticize other academic’s Postmodernism as Relativism.

i. Hilary Putnam (himself an “Internalist”) refers to Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, Michel Foucault, and Richard Rorty as Relativists.  

ii. Jürgen Habermas refers to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s position as Relativism.

iii. Academic Postmoderns sometimes use the term Relativists to describe a variation of their view.

a. Paul Feyerabend uses the term Relativism to describe his own view.

b. Rorty himself refers to a variation of his view (Postmodern Neo-Pragmatism) as self-refuting Relativism. He argues that this variation of his view should be rejected outright to avoid self-refutation.

iv. Academic Postmoderns then opt for an alternative view to avoid Relativism.

a. Rorty contends that all Postmodernists ought to reject Relativism completely and in turn embrace Ethnocentrism (our culture is better than their culture) even though Ethnocentrism is circular reasoning. He says that it’s the best alternative

---

for what the postmodernists have to work with.

b. “He can only be criticized for ethnocentrism, not for relativism.”\(^{12}\)

c. Rorty realized the deep need to avoid Relativism while preserving contemporary Western culture. He recognizes and defends his view against the charge of Relativism as he opts for Pragmatism with Ethnocentrism instead. But these views still inherit much of the Postmodern notions and criticisms given above.\(^{13}\)

d. Rorty shifts the conversational perspective from metaphysics and epistemology to morality, culture, and politics to avoid answering the question “What is Truth?” and “What is Knowledge?” Instead, he asks “What is the self-image that a society wants?”\(^{14}\)

e. Rorty argues back that the charge of relativism is just projecting Enlightenment habits on them; habits that presuppose that one can have knowledge of objective reality…which is merely one claim of one particular “modern era” type of community of the in western world.

1) Rorty puts it this way: “The realist is, once again, projecting his own habits of thought upon the pragmatist when he charges him with relativism…. [The Realist] thinks that everyone, deep down inside, must want such detachment [objective perspective of reality].”\(^{15}\)

f. Rorty also charges the Realist with being Ethnocentric too because everyone is.

v. But these alternative views (such as Rorty’s Neo-Pragmatisim) and charges against


\(^{13}\) He argues that pragmatists aren’t trying to describe the nature of truth nor say that one can’t break out of his/her cultural-language lenses.


F. The Postmodern view of power is problematic.

1. The Postmodern view of power leads to anarchy & hedonism.
   
i. Foucault wanted bring freedom to those subjected under oppressive regimes.

   ii. He wanted his audience to understand that they can break free from oppression.

   iii. He also wanted personal freedom to maximize pleasure.

   iv. His philosophy ultimately leads to anarchy and hedonism.

   v. These goals are wrought with difficulties and ought to be avoided whenever possible.

   vi. Ronald Beiner’s essay on Foucault discusses his agonizing over whether or not rape should be legal. Beiner says that for Foucault, “\textit{law = repression; decriminalization = freedom.”}^{16}

   vii. Foucault’s homosexual lifestyle led to the contracted HIV after several visits to the LGBT community in San Francisco during the 1970’s. He eventually died from his illness in the early 1980’s.

2. The Postmodern view of power puts Postmodernism itself in a negative light and leads to its self-refuting.

   i. James Sire: “If we hold that all linguistic utterances are power plays, than that

---

utterance itself is a power play and no more likely to be proper than any other.”

ii. We ought to reject utterances, language, narratives, etc. that are power plays so we can avoid being oppressed.

iii. In this case, the Postmodern utterance, story, etc. is a power play over us. Therefore, we ought to reject Postmodernism utterance, story, etc. to free ourselves from its oppression.

G. **The Postmodern view of morality provides no basis for judging the power grabs and oppression of the 20th century.**

i. Ken Samples: “If ultimate right or wrong in a moral sense cannot be determined, then on what basis do postmodernists criticize the totalitarian regimes that oppressed and enslaved millions of people in the 20th century?”

ii. Since Postmodernism rejects a foundation for morality, rejects objective moral truths, and rejects our ability to know objective moral truth, Postmodernism has no basis for judging oppressive regimes that murdered millions.

iii. Because of this, Postmodernism has no basis for rejecting as evil the use of a metanarrative by 1 group to leverage power over another.

iv. Based on their view of morality, the Postmodern cannot denounce evil power plays that they want to.

---


H. The Postmodern view is a form of Skepticism and suffers from the same criticisms of skepticism.

1. Postmodernism is a retreat back to Skepticism.

   i. Postmodernism is an impoverished metanarrative that ultimately is presupposes skeptical notions and concludes with suspicion.

   ii. Ken Samples: “Maybe the real reason for dismissing metanarratives is that this position has no big-picture perspective to offer humankind; instead, it offers a retreat back to skepticism, which becomes a self-perpetuating, subjective, and ultimately meaningless cycle.”

   iii. “Skepticism, of which Postmodernism is yet another version, is self-defeating.”

2. Because Postmodernism embraces many skeptical notions, it suffers from the same critiques that Skepticism does.

   i. Mere skepticism about reality fails as an adequate attack on Realism as noted in the 1st few classes. It fails in its goal to keep us from accessing reality.

   ii. See the outlines on Skepticism for the failures of Skepticism.

---

1. **Popular Sayings**

   a. “Christianity is as an overbearing imperialist moral system that seeks to strip cultures of their right to define themselves.”

   b. “Christianity has done so much wrong. It is evil. Just look at the Crusades, Inquisition, Western Catholic/Protestant nation’s imperialism in the colonial era, Catholic/Protestant fights in Ireland, and the recent Catholic priests sex abuse scandals.”

2. **Introduction**

   a. We will be discussing themes in chapter 8 of the book “God is Good, God is Great” by Craig and Meister.

3. **Goal**

   a. **1st Goal**: Christianity and Atheism are not evil in and of themselves, but that when power is abused and doctrines are distorted, evil results.

   b. **2nd Goal**: Christianity has produced tremendous and significant good in the world which greatly triumphs over the evil done by those acting inconsistently to its teachings.

   c. **3rd Goal**: Within Atheism, but not within Christianity, there are doctrines that result in the degradation of moral life and the collapse of societies.
4. **Motivation**

   a. Many people still consider Christianity to be a religion that benefits society and the world. But there is another perspective that is alarming and, to be honest, quite challenging.

   b. the New Atheists argue that Christianity is evil.

   c. If Christianity is evil, reasonable moral people ought to reject it. (for who would be rational or justified in holding to something that is evil).

   d. Christians are reasonable moral people.

   e. So, Christians ought to reject Christianity.

5. **Preliminary Items**

   a. Clarifying religion:

      i. There is no “religion”, rather there are religions.

      ii. Atheism can also be understood as a religion.

      iii. Each religion does not teach the same thing but very different things and many times have contradictory doctrines.

      iv. Some religions promote peace and goodness while some promote hostility and evil.

      v. Saying “All religions are bad, because one is bad” commits the informal fallacy known as “hasty generalization”. I.e., one instance is extrapolated
as the norm for all instances. I.e., accept this general conclusion because these atypical cases support it.

b. Clarifying “God”

i. Atheists may ask themselves “Would God command Christians to kill or enslave others? Are his followers to obey him if he does? Shouldn’t we stop these followers from doing so, so we are not killed or enslaved?”

ii. God is not this kind of God.

1. Omnibenevolent.

iii. Christians have a good sense of understanding objective morality.

1. Absolutism – theory of morality.

c. Do atheists even have a right to point out that something is evil?

i. Referring briefly to conclusion of previous show.

1. What do they mean by it?

2. Is there objective evil in their worldview?

3. Objective evil is evidence for God’s existence.

6. Defensive Arguments

a. Atheist attack #1: History shows that Christianity is evil.

i. Response #1: Persons are moral agents that can inflict evil not a belief system. Thus, Christianity itself cannot perform evil acts.
ii. Response #2: While actions of followers of a belief system can shed light on the belief system, it does not follow that the followers are true to the belief system.

iii. Response #3: It is simply not true that all of history (all previous times, events, etc.) shows Christians being evil. In fact, it rarely shows Christians being good, but tremendous emphasis is placed on the evil Christians (or Catholics).

1. History of Christianity
   a. Good History
   b. Bad History

2. History of Atheism
   a. Good History
   b. Bad History

b. Atheist attack #2: Atheists contend that throughout the ages the leaders (popes and church authorities) of Christianity, who know and teach the doctrines of Christianity, have performed or ordered immoral and horrible acts. (Crusades, Inquisition, Sex Abuse Scandals, etc.)

i. Response #1: Hasty Generalization

1. All Christian leaders haven’t performed these acts. In fact most do not.
ii. Response #2: Fallacy *ad Verecundiam*: Fallacy of appealing to an inappropriate authority as determinative of the truth of an argument.

1. This reasoning appeals to an inappropriate authority as these leaders were not being consistent with the basic concepts of morality taught by Jesus.

iii. Their response is “Well others have obviously interpreted and emphasized certain teachings in your Scripture that justify their actions…just as you are doing right now with the teachings of Jesus.”

c. Atheist attack #3: Christians have shown themselves to be intolerant, imposing, self-righteous, hypocrites. How could I follow their moral teachings if they are such evil people.

i. Response #1: Hasty Generalization

1. All Christians are not this way. Most Christians though do sin and do so in ways that are against the teachings of Scripture. However, this is expected of Christians, as the Bible teaches that there is a struggle for righteousness and Christ-likeness.

ii. Response #2: Performance according to a moral standard is not what makes one a Christian.

1. E.g., High School students passing Algebra, may still incorrectly answer 30% of the problems on the final. But they are given the right to graduate from that course.

iii. Response #3: Fallacy *ad Hominem* (abusive): argument against the man instead of the propositions or argument. The truth/validity of an argument
or proposition is independent of the person and must be considered by itself.

1. E.g., Suppose a man who had a mental illness and reported to the police his eye-witness account of abuse in a facility for patients. Rejecting the report on the basis of his brain’s condition would be this fallacy.

iv. Response #4: Fallacy *ad Hominem* (circumstantial sense): argument against the other beliefs & teachings of a person, rather than the propositions or argument.

1. E.g., if someone claiming to be Christian is teaching Mormonism as Christianity, we would be fallacious in determining the truth claims of Christianity from such inaccurate teaching.

d. Atheist attack #4: The basis for Christianity, The Bible, contains malignant and immoral moral commands such as stoning people, killing animals, murdering innocent civilians (women and children).

i. Response #1: We will get into the specifics of the OT in another show.

ii. Response #2: Bible clearly teaches a high moral code whereas atheism’s moral theory is faulty and impoverished.

1. Moral absolutism aligns well with Christianity understanding of reality.

2. Moral notions found in Christian Scripture (here are just some…)

   a. Be perfect – Jesus (Matthew 5:48)
b. Love your enemies. – Jesus

c. Fear God. – Jesus

d. Transformed by the renewing of the mind. (Romans 12:1-2)

e. Consider it pure joy when you go through trials…testing of your faith develops perseverance…so that you may be mature. (James 1:2-4)

f. Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (1 Peter 2:1)

g. Col 3:5-14

h. Proverbs 3:34 & 1 Peter 5:5

i. …Becoming like him in his death…(Philippians 3:10)

3. Moral theories and notions found in Atheism

a. Ethical Skepticism

b. Normative or Ethical Relativism

c. Ethical Egoism

d. Utilitarianism

e. Keep in mind that we are not saying that because the consequence of Atheism is a negative state of affairs, therefore it is wrong (as this would be committing the
fallacy known as *Ad Futuris*: Fallacy of appealing to some possible future state of affairs as determinative of the truth of the argument). We are simply saying that if Christians stick to the teachings of Scripture and solid Christian doctrine, the future is very bright for the believer. Whereas, with Atheism the future is negative (and perhaps hopeless where evil reigns) for all of us.

7. **Offensive Arguments**

a. Are the New-Atheist arrogant, self-righteous, and aggressive?

   i. Yes, but most atheists are civil and decent people.

b. Has history shown that Atheists commit evil acts against religion?

   i. Yes, but most atheists are civil and decent people.

c. If religion is taken out of the world, would people be divisive, evil, and ill-intentioned?

   i. Yes, but most atheists are civil and decent people.

d. Does Atheism as a worldview/philosophy/presupposition conclude that evil is acceptable?

   i. Yes, but most atheists are civil and decent people.

8. **Conclusions**

a. Paul Chamberlain, Director of ACTS Seminaries’ Institute of Christian Apologetics wrote a book *Why People Don’t Believe: Confronting Seven*
Challenges to Christian Faith, Baker books, 2011. In the end, Chamberlain draws seven conclusions:

i. 1) Both religious and irreligious people commit many acts of violence.

ii. 2) When they occur the vast majority of religious people around the world are outraged by them whether they are committed in the name of religion or not.

iii. 3) These acts are often driven by deep political and cultural motivations which would remain whether or not religion played a part.

iv. 4) Religion is sometimes turned into a tool to help recruit soldiers to fight these political and cultural battles.

v. 5) While this is a horrific abuse of religion, virtually any ideal, including secular ones such as liberty, equality, nationalism and patriotism can and have been abused.

vi. 6) Humans will always divide into communities resulting in divisions and binary oppositions which lie at the heart of human conflict. Some of these divisions are religious in nature (e.g., Protestant vs. Catholic, Shiite vs. Sunni) but most are not (e.g., Tutsi vs. Hutu, Conservative vs. Liberal) and would remain even if religion were eradicated.

vii. 7) Christianity, understood as following the teachings of Jesus, is not only free of the main allegations leveled against religion by its twenty-first century critics, but it is the source of great good in the world. If we demand it be eradicated, we may not know what we are asking for.