Postmodernism, Critical Theory, and Christianity.

TRUTH

truth

knowledge

By Stuart Lawrence
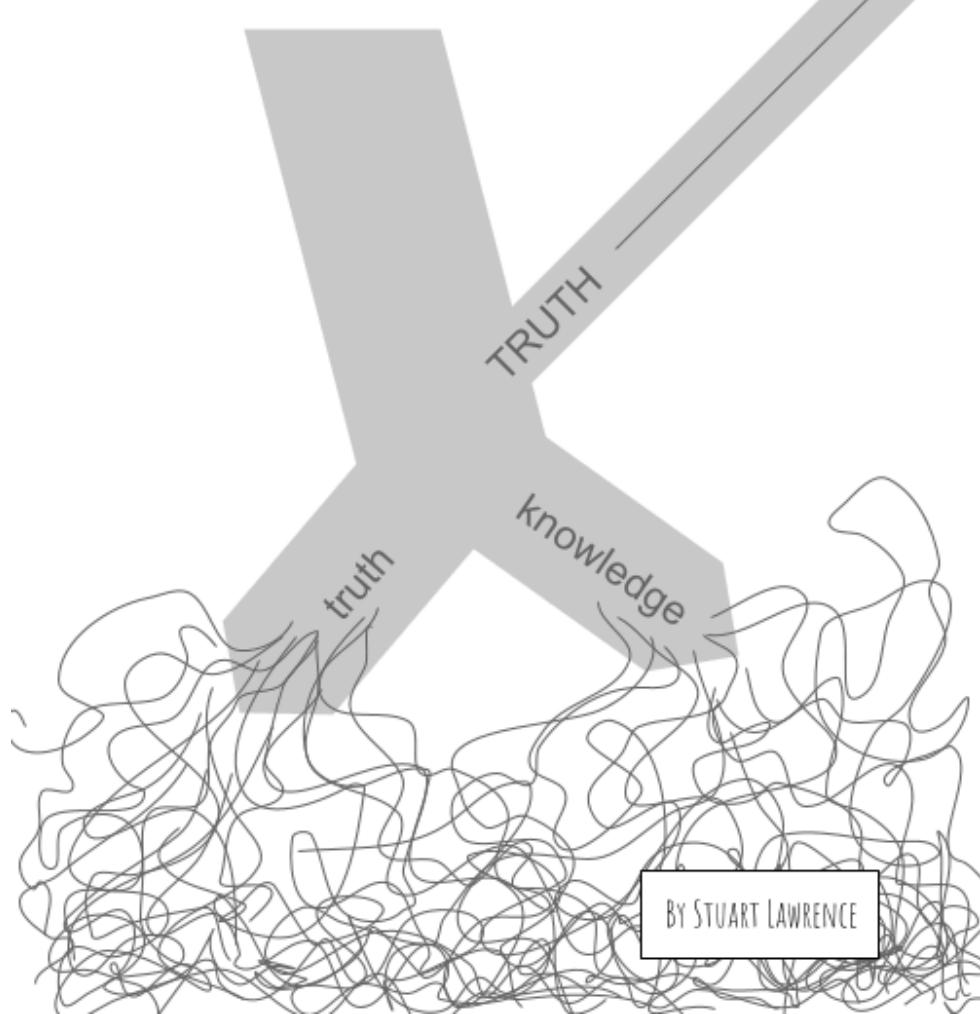
Extracted from the larger work
"The Blind Guide: A Christian response to Western Philosophy"

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life"
John 6.68

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise"
1 Corinthians 1.27

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE.

The two kingdoms of the Bible

   The Bible reveals that ever since the fall of Mankind, at the beginning of human history, there has been the emergence of two kingdoms. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of human autonomy, or as the Bible calls it - 'the world'. With regard to this book's focus, we can see them as two systems of thought. One, whose authority is singularly from divine revelation, and the other, whose authority is human ingenuity and self-reliance (even if that meant, in ancient days, the trust in the idol gods of people's own making).

  It is a history of human philosophy (or the 'wisdom' of the world) that, ever increasingly, pulls away from reliance on the God of the Scriptures. We see it from the 'seed' of the serpent contrasted with the 'seed' of the woman; from Cain contrasted with Abel; with Ham in contrast to Shem. We see it typified by that great city Babylon

contrasted with the faith of Abraham. Again we see the Egyptians and Canaanites contrasted with Israel and later with Judah (the southern kingdom of the Jewish nation). Judah would subsequently be taken captive by the Babylonians. The kingdoms of this 'world' system continue with Persia dominant, then Greece (Aristotle having taught Alexander the Great in the intertestamental period), then the Romans. We see it in individuals also. We, of course, see the Roman governor Pontius Pilate's thinking contrasted with Christ's authoritative statements in John 18.38. We see the Epicureans and Stoics contrasted with Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17.16-34. Then we can see as history moved on: Superstition contrasted with the Protestant Reformation; the Christian faith contrasted with Philosophy in general, up until the present day.

 In the book of Daniel, God's Kingdom is prefigured as a stone that wasn't cut out by human hands, and, it is predicted, would smite and break all the four other world empires before it. It would become a great mountain, and would fill the whole earth (Dan 2.34,35). After the Romans, the age of world empires was at an end, and true, biblical Christianity has filled the whole earth. The Bible prophesied it, and it has come to be so.

  We shall pick up this human philosophy as it emerged in ancient Greece. It seemed to lay low during Christianity's initial establishment. Then, riding on the coat-tails of the Reformation, and emboldened by the Copernican revolution, once again the kingdom reasserted itself with the age of the Enlightenment. The spirit of Cain tried to 'go it alone' once more and appeared to go from strength to strength. However, like a man with ever failing sight, the quest for objective truth seemed to have become ever more elusive. Like the prodigal son, at first full of optimism, but, in the end, Mankind finds himself in the dark epistemological 'pig pen' of

contemporary philosophical thought. Living as if he's nothing more than a beast, and without any sure knowledge to fill himself with.

The Ancient World 700bc-250ad

It has been said that humanity is 'incurably religious'. This (question begging epithet) seems to imply two things: One, that the religious tendency in humans is akin to a disease; two, that this religious tendency is instinctual within Mankind. This rather aptly suggests two truths taught in the book of Romans in the New Testament. Firstly, showing the fact that the truth of God is known to him because people will always have religious tendencies (Rom 1.19). Secondly, showing that modern Man holds down the truth about God, considering religious things as something needing to be purged or cured (Rom 1.18). This second aspect of Man is what was behind that which has been called the 'birth of philosophy' in the ancient world.

Before this time, humanity's religious instinct sought to solve the fundamental questions about life, in God or gods. However, some considered religious convention inadequate and tried to suppress their sense of God, holding it down, and, at the same time, elevating their own reason as a basis for inquiry into the nature of the universe and its workings. Viewed biblically, this is rather like a person closing their eyes because they don't like what they see, and hoping that their (as they understand it) more reliable sense of touch might bring them to a different conclusion. In Romans 1.18 this 'holding' *down* the truth is done in *unrighteousness*. Revealing that, rather than being a neutral quest for truth (as it is often characterised), it is a willful act of rebellion borne from a desire to rid oneself of an absolute Truth in favour of a more subjective human truth. In short, people don't want God and are on the run from Him.

Nevertheless, it is possible to find God as the apostle Paul says "*That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him"* Acts 17.27.

Going back to my illustration, it is not the sense of touch or its elevation in status that is the person's problem, but the rejection of another vital sense. Likewise, it is not the use of reason, in and of itself, but the rejection of the sense of God that is the problem that makes it near impossible to adequately understand existence. Just like a man born blind trying to comprehend the notion of colour by touching it.

Early science and maths

This great shift in attitude was adopted by Thales of Miletus (a Greek settlement in modern-day Turkey). His concern was the process of rational thinking, and what could be considered satisfactory explanations. This is why he is considered the first philosopher. He and his followers were largely interested in one question: "What is the world made of?" We can see the answers given formed the early stages of scientific thought. A little later came Pythagoras who was less interested in primal matter, but numbers, ratios and geometry (which the ancient world had already known well in Babylon, old Egypt and Ur of the Chaldees. The Mesopotamians understood Pythagorean triples way before Pythagoras). Here we can see the early makings of the two great areas of philosophical focus: empirical scientific discovery, or pure rationalism.

Classical Greek philosophy

As the city state of Athens grew to become the cultural centre of Greece the fledgling branches of Epistemology and Ethics were thought about by considering questions such as "How do we know what we know?" and "How should we live our lives?" The ideas of Socrates, the Athenian, became hugely influential, steering the course of philosophy. He seems to have been astute enough to be able to push his interlocutor's thinking to its uncomfortable implications and conclusions with his dialectical method. A quest for knowledge from reason alone wasn't going to be plain sailing. While Socrates seems content to ask more questions than offer answers, Plato, his student, attempts some answers. He is considered more rationalistic than his student, Aristotle, who preferred to seek answers from empirical observation of the natural world and from human senses. Again we see the seeds of the tension between Philosophy's two great schools of thought.

It is interesting to note Plato's distrust of art as a copy of a 'Form' (the essence of an object). He considered art, at its best, as entertainment, and at its worst, a dangerous delusion. His school, the Academy, is where we derive our word 'academic' from. Thus the rift between academic intelligence, and artistic or creative intelligence, can be traced back to Plato's preference for one over the other. The philosophical branch of aesthetics would go on to examine more of these issues.

After the death of Aristotle in 322bc philosophy fragmented into different schools of thought. Two of which, Stoicism and Epicureanism, seem to exhibit the outworking of what has existed throughout history. Namely, a malign twin strategy: Either to tempt people to trust in self-righteous rules or restrictions in an attempt to placate the conscience; or to be driven by a quest for earthly pleasure. This usually shows itself in trust in false religious laws and

ceremony, or in blatant worldliness and hedonism. The Bible reveals this to be the working of a realm 'at back' of everything in this world. An influence of "principalities and powers". A realm of fallen angels - Satan being at the helm. These two strategies are characterised in the book of Revelation as the false prophet, and the harlot Babylon. Satan, symbolised as the red dragon in Revelation chapter 12, will often switch between the two. If he can't bring people down with one he'll attempt the other. This 'dragon' stands against the Church - the 'woman' - in the old testament and in the new. This woman will bring forth a Child, whom we will consider shortly.

Another way this great 'Enemy of souls' exploits humanity's tendency to rebel against God is, of course, to tempt with doubt or hopeless negativity. The former was seen in the Skeptics and the latter in the Cynics of this time. Cynicism would ultimately lead to philosophical Nihilism in the coming ages, and Sceptical doubt would lead to Descartes' famous starting point- "I doubt everything..."

There is no denying the Bible is pessimistic about human nature, and offers no hope for self reform. It also denies much of what the world would proffer as truth. However, the Biblical doctrine of total depravity, and Scripture's exposure of falsehood, are taught in order to lead people to the hope of the Gospel. In contrast, Cynicism makes a virtue out of refusal to accept *anything* positive, especially this Gospel- the *'Evangelion'* (Good message) of Scripture. Scepticism makes a virtue out of stubborn doubt.

In all this we see the start of the sad, but understandable, progression of thinking that would begin with an assumption that human autonomy is the starting point by which humanity is to find knowledge. We return to the first chapter of the book of Romans to see the inevitable result, *"...their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"* 21b,22.

Jesus Christ

 As the Roman empire grew, Greek culture waned. For the Romans had little time for Greek philosophy apart from Stoicism. These earlier ideas were preserved largely because they were written down in manuscripts and translations and would resurface later in mediaeval times.

 The philosophical world, when it comes to history, seems to view Jesus Christ much like the wise man in King Solomon's book Ecclesiastes 9.15 - A poor wise man, briefly appearing in history. However, needless to say, the Bible reveals Him to be the long promised Messiah, the God-man, the incarnate Son, one in essence with the triune God. It reveals His life and death to be the very pivotal, and focal, point in all of history. His teaching confirms the earlier Jewish Scriptures, and adds much more. He authenticates Himself by miracles and teaches authoritatively, also authenticating what would become the New Testament through His Apostles.

 We have already remarked upon the importance of divine revelation, and Christ, as the Word, is the very embodiment of this Truth. An anchor of absolute object truth. The rejection of Him cuts the tie to this Anchor, and, although humanity seems to yearn for freedom, this sets humanity's ship loose to face the storms of human history without a mooring or a Captain for our souls. In the end it must be broken on the rocks of the inevitable ramifications of this decision (we shall see this keenly in philosophy's existentialist approach and what followed).

 In Solomon's parable the poor wise man saves a city, but is forgotten. The philosophical world, it seems, would like to forget Him in the same way, writing him out of their history. Even though the Bible reveals the Lord Jesus Christ saved, not only a number of people of a city (by warning His people to flee Jerusalem before its destruction in AD70), but the vast numbers of a planet (by working a

great redemption for His people through an atonement on Calvary). He is the 'Child' mentioned in Revelation chapter 12 who is brought forth by the 'woman'- the Church. Behind the antagonism of the 'world' against Him, is that 'great red dragon' seeking to devour.

Any kingdom must have a king, and the Kingdom of God has the ultimate King. When Pilate inquired into this, Christ said in John 28.37 *"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."* In Romans 10.17 we are told that *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

Once again we see *faith* in the King and in His Scriptures as key to knowing absolute, objective truth. How we define that faith is crucial. We shall see that what human philosophy makes of it is a very different thing to what the Bible does.

The Apostle Paul

It is during the ministry of the Apostle Paul that Christianity brushes up against Greek philosophy as I have already mentioned. Namely the Epicureans and the Stoics. In the book of Acts 17.21 it says *"For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."* Paul revealed to them the one true God that was unknown to them. The God who is the Creator and sustainer of His creation but separate from it. He explained that God has set humanity within bounds and revealed their consciousness and ontology to be in Him. He explained that people have been wilfully ignorant of this and are commanded by the authority of God to repent and believe in Christ and His resurrection. The response was the same as much of humanity since; some mocked, some procrastinated, but certain among them believed.

The Mediaeval World 250-1500

Vicious persecution failed to prevail over the vigorous and lively early Christian church, and the newly complete word of God. So a different tack can be observed to have been employed by this invisible earthly kingdom, and the demonic 'puppeteers' behind it:- Infiltration! This was a familiar tactic of Satan, previously exploiting the Jewish church of old, existing as a 'mixed multitude'. This resulted in the sects of the Jews such as the Pharisees, for whom Christ reserved some of His harshest criticisms.

  A pivotal moment came when the Roman emperor Constantine claimed to see a vision of a cross in the sky, before a battle, and dubiously converted to Christianity. Previously the Church had been kept relatively pure under Roman persecution. After all, who would claim to be a Christian if they weren't truly so, seeing the peril that would expose you to; but now, with the promise of status for Christians, instead of persecution, false converts infiltrated the Church for gain.

The Roman Catholic Church

  The Church was infected, and the foul disease of the human 'pride of life' started to spread. This cancour manifested itself in a number of ways: Veneration of the dead (of notable Apostolic fathers); a quest for earthly power and status; iconographic art (which amounted to old idolatry and false worship by aesthetics); and ceremonial show and vanity. With the emergence of Monasticism and the Roman Catholic church, error also worked through the doctrines, and ripped the heart from the Gospel. A free gift of grace

for salvation was replaced with the human works of baptism, sacramentalism, confessions and penance. Crucially, the authority of the Scriptures as the sole source of divine truth was usurped by the authority of the Papacy. This counterfeit church redefined 'grace' to mean God's help to live a righteous life. The same old difference between the kingdom of God and the 'false prophet' was seen again: Salvation by a free work of God, contrasted with a fake salvation earned by human effort. Superstition reigned, the Scriptures were inaccessible to the majority, and under this dark cloud rational enquiry stagnated.

However true converts kept the light burning as Christianity came to the British Isles. Later, notable figures became the forerunners of the Reformation: The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, John Huss, and Savonarola. This Reformation was a bright light that dawned across Europe. However to understand what became of philosophical thought after the time of Christ we must now return back to the time of the 'Church Fathers', who followed on from those who were taught by the Apostles.

A look back at Augustine and the Scholastics

The Romans had little time for Greek philosophy apart from Stoicism, which was admired for its emphasis on virtuous conduct and duty. Therefore classical Greek philosophy was effectively marginalised. However true Christianity is a 'reasonable' faith and early Church fathers such as Augustine of Hippo addressed the reasoning of Greek thought. This grew into what has come to be known as 'Scholasticism' and was renowned for its rigorous dialectical reasoning. The difference between, what we might call,

the 'human wisdom' of the 'world', and Augustine's teaching, is that Augustine humbly sat firmly under God and His revealed Word. He had experienced a true conversion, testifying to having been delivered by an act of God from a slavish, lascivious and wanton lifestyle. Now he would put God front and centre and would use the reason, he knew to be from God, for His glory. This was the God, he knew to be real, by a gift of faith. Human wisdom would seek to set its own fallible reason above all else and ask questions such as "Is there a God?" or "Does man have an immortal soul?" Whereas scholastic philosophers searched for rational justification for belief in God and an immortal soul. We will examine later whether they achieved this with pure reason alone. We shall also see secular philosophy would run into epistemological problems of its own when relying solely on pure reason. Of course, Augustine wasn't seeking to trust in pure reason alone and this is the crux of the matter, namely - what we make of 'faith'.

The Dark Ages

 The Roman and Greek cultures mostly disappeared, as the Roman Catholic church held the monopoly on learning, and Europe sank into the 'Dark Ages'. A form of Platonism survived as it was deemed compatible with Christianity. Aristotle's teaching was treated with more suspicion but there was a translation of his *Logic* made by Boethius.
 In China and Japan, at this time, their religions coexisted with their eastern philosophies. While in the Middle East Arabic and Persian scholars translated the works of classical Greek philosophers, as their lands had been part of Alexander the Great's empire, and so these ideas commanded more respect. These ideas were also incorporated into Islamic culture. This comfortable assimilation is

unsurprising if we see that they were all really part of the same 'kingdom', as I have asserted.

Through Islamic sources European scholars started to rediscover Greek philosophy and maths. A resurgence of philosophical thinking in the church of Rome was sparked by the works of Aristotle in particular, although still treated with suspicion compared to Plato. Plato's philosophy could be aligned more easily, as it provided a rational justification for belief in God and the immortal human soul. However, philosophers of the Catholic church such as Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham embraced Aristotle with enthusiasm.

Because of superstition and lack of reliance solely on the Scriptures, the church authorities had little discernment when it came to scientific study, and kept Europe under its dark cloud. There was little advance in science and technology, and a restriction on thought (born out of the fear of being toppled from power) was adopted to keep the Catholic church in a position of political strength. Ignorance reigned, and the Scriptures were only accessible by the clergy. They were kept in Latin, and only understood by a few.

The Renaissance

In old Persia, in Ur of the Chaldees, there had been knowledge of sophisticated mathematics millennia before this time (Abraham would have been familiar with it), and the oppressive restriction of thought that was prevalent in Europe was not so in Persia at this later time. Now the Islamic world would embrace Aristotle's early scientific method. This was introduced into mediaeval Europe and seemed to undermine the authority of the Roman Catholic church.

These new ideas sparked a change of mood in the late 14th century. This was the Renaissance, the rediscovery of classical philosophy, literature and art, and resulted in a flurry of intellectual and artistic activity, starting in Florence, Italy. The invention of the printing press allowed for improved communication throughout Europe and for ideas to spread more quickly.

The Reformation

 The time of the Reformation has been characterised by some as a time where reason rather than faith was relied upon to provide answers. Although undoubtedly true of some, to make this a characteristic mark of the dissent that caused the Protestant Reformation is to misunderstand its core teaching. The ground for reason (the God of the Scriptures) was indeed re-established and superstition quashed, but, more importantly, true 'saving faith' was put back where it belonged, by men such as Martin Luther, who rediscovered the truth from the Scriptures alone. The Gospel message of salvation by faith alone was recognised once again. This salvation is given freely as a gift of grace alone, by Christ alone, through faith alone; not by the rites of a false religion. All this was for the glory of God alone, as Augustine had taught all those years before. Luther had recognised, from the Scriptures, that a person may be justified by God, and live, by a free gift of faith. The correct teaching from the word of God was once again rising and working through society. The use of the mind and our reasoning faculty, to grasp theology, was restored to its rightful place. But, more importantly, many came to know that experience of conversion, that Augustine testified to, and Luther also had known, by grasping the core 'good message' of theology- the saving Gospel. Making good use of the printing press, the Bible was

translated into the language of the common man, with much opposition and persecution from the Roman Catholic authorities.

This was 'humanism' in the old sense of the word, and put the Scriptures in the hands and minds of many, setting them free from dark superstition and restoring reason by showing humanity where that reason comes from. Literacy rates soared because of the desire for people to read the Bible for themselves. This sparked new interest in science as Christian men felt free to study God's creation without fear of angering an unknown, mysterious, god or gods. This new study was bringing glory to God in the increased understanding of the way God has ordered things in His universe. The uniformity of the natural world could be assumed because an underlying truth was believed:- *"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."* Gen 8.22. The Bible clearly taught that God upholds the laws of nature, a natural world He Himself spoke into existence '*ex nihilo',* but He Himself was separate from. Early scientific discoveries were overwhelmingly made by people of faith in the God of the Bible.

However, the 'world's kingdom' was still alive and well as Philosophers themselves turned their attention away from questions of God, and the immortal soul, towards the problems posed by science and the natural world. They took the new freedom of thought to be freedom *from* God rather than freedom *by* God. In other words, humanity continued in its desire for autonomy from God, because of a wayward nature. They started to raise science and rationality onto a pedestal it should never have occupied. Instead of God given tools for human progress and God's glory, science and rationality had begun to be considered the arbiters of all objective truth!

The Renaissance continued, and the Enlightenment 1500-1750

The Protestant Church

The Kingdom of the true Church continued to grow in strength as it broke away, and increasingly separated from, the error of the apostate church of Rome. With notable individuals such as Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin leading the charge. It reached its zenith in Biblical understanding with the English Puritans in the 17th and 18th centuries, and, after that, those Baptists who followed reformed theology. With missionary movements and great 'awakenings' of revival, many were brought via the Protestant Church into the Kingdom of God. However, Satan has continued to orchestrate its downfall, and in recent times he has attempted an unholy union with error, even with the Catholic church once again (the ecumenical movement) - with a call for unity at the expense of truth. When that strategy largely failed, we see the contemporary assault to pollute with 'worldliness' in worship and walk. This battle for truth, once again, can be seen on two fronts, as it is symbolised in the book of Revelation: an attack by infiltration from the false prophet; and by seduction to fornication with the harlot Babylon, with which the 'kings' of the world are brought down.

 Now we must turn our attention to that kingdom of the world again, as it increasingly took that 'wide road', spoken of by Christ, running away from revealed Truth and God's Kingdom of faith.

The Age of Reason

The Renaissance saw the renewal of interest in classical Greek and Latin culture, and although it was interested in the mathematical and philosophical texts merged into Scholasticism, at its heart, as we have seen, it sought to place the autonomy of Man front and centre rather than God. This was new humanism severing ties to God, and it worked first through art, then politics, then the social structure of Florence.

   The Church of Rome had held an iron grip on what people could learn, especially the Scriptures. But now the secular world was restless and asserting itself. Deriderius Erasmus' translation work and call for reform of the Catholic church from within, and Luther's fight from without, had led the charge against Rome. However, those who couldn't discern between true and false religion saw a newly opened door which led, not to the truth about God, but to freedom from the idea of Him. Humanity would find out that there is *real* freedom by access to absolute, divine truth; or a *supposed* 'freedom' based on fallible human ingenuity. The latter is like the freedom of jumping out of an aeroplane with only a paper parachute called rationalism!

  The final blow to the Catholic church's authority came with what has come to be called the Copernican revolution: The Bible doesn't teach that the earth is the centre of the solar system, only that it was the focus of God's creative work, and created for man and woman-the crown of His work. The sun and moon were made, amongst other reasons, to serve the cycles of day and night, to keep the seasons of time and, in the case of the sun, to give heat. The Catholic church, however, had never been that interested in sticking tenaciously close to the word of Scripture. Assuming that the earth was the centre of the cosmos, it made this a dogmatic teaching, one that even Luther was unwisely influenced by.

It was the Alexandrian astronomer and mathematician Claudius Ptolemy that placed the Earth at the centre of his geocentric model. Using the data he had, Ptolemy thought that the universe was a set of nested spheres surrounding the Earth. However, firstly Nicolaus Copernicus, then Johannes Kepler, and finally Galileo Galilei showed that this was wrong and it was in fact the earth that orbited the sun. Their demonstrations didn't overturn the authority or truth of the Scriptures, but merely the mistaken assumptions of the church of Rome. However, it was widely seen to have done so by people eager to be free from God, and who had no interest in finding out what the Bible really taught with a careful reading.

The viciously oppressive and power hungry Catholic church fought back, and ultimately imprisoned Galileo for heresy, as it had done to William Tyndale for having the temerity to translate the Bible into the vernacular. Only, with him, they burnt him at the stake! The Catholic church was fighting for a teaching the Bible had never stated, and the battle would be lost. It was seen as a victory of rational, scientific discovery over Christian dogma. This epitomised 17th century thinking.

These and other advances in science were seen to provide people with a foundation to build knowledge completely apart from divine revelation, instead of being complementary to it. It would ultimately turn out to be the rejection of a rocky foundation, for a sandy one, when exposed to the storm of epistemological rigour.

Scientific reasoning was integrated with philosophical thought by men such as Thomas Hobbes and Francis Bacon. They led the field in what was the start of the Age of Reason, as it came to be known. Here the connection between mathematics was also revived which was thought to have only dated back to the pre-Socratic philosophers like Pythagoras. In actuality, according to Biblical history, it was known by the ancients, especially those of the pre-flood period. Who, in all likelihood, would have been

intellectually superior to modern people in and of themselves; although they would have been without the benefit of being able to build upon the knowledge of many past generations, as modern people have.

The Enlightenment

It seemed as if the 'world' had finally turned its back on reliance on God for objective knowledge (even though still paying lip service to Him), and, with its new found hubris, it was building a philosophical effigy to the glory of this kingdom. It was to be built on the twin foundation that Plato and Aristotle had begun to build centuries before. On the one hand, rationalism, especially in continental Europe; and on the other, empiricism, in Britain. The great monument to human autonomy, and a self-centred, self-confident quest for knowledge was being erected and 'worshipped'. Many today still seem to assume this wonder of reason stands, as it did in this 'golden' age. But the cracks would later appear as philosophical history continued, and now it stands in a broken state of disrepair as a representative of objective truth. Instead of humanity freeing itself, it was actually locking itself into a box of its own reason and sensory experience, and throwing away the key. The key which had 'Faith' written upon it.

Mathematics seemed to provide solid ground, and, linked with logic, provided the basis for 'rationalism' - the belief that knowledge comes from reason alone. René Descartes and Blaise Pascal were following this route, as did Gottfried Leibniz in Germany. The question occupying Descartes' mind was "What can I know?" By rationalism he sought to answer this question, and for the next century, it became the predominant belief in continental Europe.

At the same time, in Britain, the other philosophical tradition was being established, that of empiricism. John Locke, following the scientific ideas of Francis Bacon, came to the conclusion that our knowledge of the world comes from experience, not reason. This empirical approach became the dominant tradition in British philosophy during the 17th and 18th centuries.

There was an obvious divide between the two traditions, nevertheless, they both placed the human at the centre. The starting point was with the human being, with one's reason and experience, not the Being of God. The scientist Isaac Newton was looking at the nature of the universe at this time, still with God firmly in the foreground. However, these philosophers were no longer looking at the nature of the universe, but questioning how we can know what we know - the branch of philosophy called 'epistemology'. They did this by investigating the nature of the human mind and of self.

The artist Goya would paint a picture entitled "The sleep of reason produces monsters" which would suggest his adherence to the values of the Enlightenment. However the reliance on pure reason severed from its Divine source would provide different kinds of monsters.

The Age of Revolution 1750-1900

The focus continued to be on France and Britain when it came to philosophy. In Britain the Scottish philosopher David Hume seemed to have taken empiricism to its high point, and at the same time there was a move to social and political issues (much like there is today with contemporary 'critical theory'. Although the ideas that emerged were philosophically very different).

Bentham and Ethics

 When God is no longer the ground of right and wrong, humanity must seek to find a basis for morality, even to understand what right and wrong are! Morality would seem to be intuitive. This search for a ground would become a thorny problem after the tablets of God's law had been removed as a foundation from beneath their feet. Britain had already undergone a revolution, and thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham were considering matters of morality, which in philosophical language comes under the branch of 'Ethics'. He developed a theory called 'Utilitarianism' whereby the ground for morality wasn't the law of God, but now merely what makes the majority happy. He developed a sort of 'happiness algorithm' called the 'felicific calculus'. John Stuart Mill refined these ideas in a more practical way and thus helped establish a liberal democracy and a framework for civil rights. This was all being established alongside the Industrial revolution that had started in the 1730s.

Romanticism

Things in France were more politically unstable, and philosophy had become more politicised than had been the case with the thinking of Descartes. A more radical philosophy became popular, adopting the new scientific way of thinking. Notable philosophers were the encyclopedist Denis Diderot, the literary satirist Voltaire, and the most revolutionary of them all, Jacques Rousseau.
 Rousseau's battle cry of "liberty, equality, fraternity" encapsulated his vision of a society based on these principles. As is often the case, what starts on the page of a philosopher's notebook in their study, ends up out in society. This battle cry would become the cry of the French Revolution in 1789. Rousseau was hopelessly naive

about human nature from a Christian point of view. He believed people were instinctively 'good' (whatever he means by 'good'!), but that it was civilization which was the corrupting influence. This set the tone for the movement that followed called 'Romanticism'. This deftly sidestepped human responsibility, when it came to its crimes, and placed the responsibility upon, what it saw as, a mistaken system designed to protect private property. He believed people were born free but that civilization enslaved them. The idealised 'hippie' communes of the 70's would revive and test this idea. They have largely died out due to disillusionment, failure to realise their 'utopia', and the experiential reality that there's something far deeper wrong with humanity. Because so often, all the same ills of wider society, could eventually be found within these communes - even far worse.

 Romanticism 'worshipped' the creation rather than the Creator and provided an idealised view of nature. It could see the good that still resided even in a fallen and cursed creation, although it gave no credit to God who had made it good in the first place. It was in marked contrast to the more urban focused Enlightenment. It valued the affections above the mind, placing intuition and feelings over reason. European literature, painting and music (which major on the feelings system), would become preoccupied with these ideas. This moves into the philosophical branch of thinking called 'Aesthetics'. The idea of Romanticism was very beguiling and took hold until the end of the 19th century.

Kant and Idealism

The stark reality of a purely autonomous way of seeking the truth in the three main branches of philosophy (Metaphysics, Epistemology and Ethics) was now beginning to be realised. A

pivotal figure in this quest was the German philosopher Emmanuel Kant. He heralded the new generation of thinkers. His thinking was seminal, and in many ways has never been surpassed. He, on the one hand, managed to unite the twin approaches of rationalism and empiricism like never before; on the other hand, he demonstrated the limits of human knowledge, when it comes to what can be ascertained actually exists, when *only* using these 'tools'. In short: he said we can never know anything about things that exist beyond ourselves. This was 'idealism', and was a natural outcome of the road philosophy had taken. The inescapable outcome of taking the individual as a starting point was the bizarre, but logical, conclusion that in the end you can't know for sure anything metaphysically outside of the individual's world of mental phenomena. He concluded that, because of how we perceive time, there were therefore two worlds, the *phenomenal* world of individual experience, and the unknowable *noumenal* world of things as they are (Kant called his approach 'transcendental idealism').

His ideas concerning ethical matters were far more optimistic epistemologically, relying on a purely logical rationale for morality (the 'categorical imperative'). He is often known as a 'Deontologist' (a believer in moral duties from a normative ethical position), as opposed to a 'Utilitarian', when it comes to Ethics. However, from a Christian point of view, his epistemological optimism, in this area, was sorely misplaced. Only causing one to raise the question "Why should rules based on logic be any more adhered to than rules made in some other way, if there is no absolute authority to appeal to?" Later moral philosophers would expose his thinking in this area.

Germanic philosophy was dominant in the 19th century, led by Kant and his followers. Men such as Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, became known as the German Idealists. Some years earlier, bishop George Berkeley had developed his Idealism,

finding an ultimate ground for it with the 'mind of God'. This was unsatisfactory for those who came later.

Marxism

Hegel espoused a particularly rigid form of Idealism, and it was followed by Karl Marx. However, although Marx brought these ideas into his thinking, it was not primarily the idea of understanding the world that interested him, but the idea of changing it.

The kingdom of this *'world'*, according to the Bible, is just that - a *worldly, or earthly* minded kingdom. Therefore although it will try to address the spiritual, it can never really understand these things. Therefore the things of earth and time will always come to the foreground, and philosophy will lurch back to the political. This was the case with Marx who brought together British economic theory and French revolutionary ideas. His writings became very influential and within decades of his death countries around the world had set up states according to the revolutionary ideas he had proposed in the *Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital.* If the success of a political philosophy is to be based on the outcome of its implementation, then Marxism failed. (The idea of oppression of the proletariat by a powerful bourgeoisie has resurfaced in our present age in another guise. Except that instead of being applied economically it is being applied socially, with the idea of the powerful oppression of marginalised groups).

Marxism was naively optimistic about human nature when it came to the proletariat, pessimistically cynical when it came to the bourgeoisie, and it was prejudistically atheistic when it came to God. If Marx had accepted the fall of Man in Genesis, and that aspect of the curse which states, *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken:*

for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return", he would have better understood the common toil of humanity. Instead he saw cultural super-structures, such as religion, as a way to placate and control people and keep them under the oppression of the bourgeoisie. Marxism says that humanity's main problem is not ultimately sin, but socio-economic conditions, that people are guilty or innocent based upon which classes they belong to, and that our hope lies in re-distributing wealth by force or violence if necessary.

Marx, judging things from a purely 'earthly' perspective, got the origin of humanity wrong, the problem wrong, and the solution wrong. Once again this old kingdom grasped a 'solution' of its own making. One that cut the idea of God out of the picture, except to see religion as a problematic sedative used to keep the oppressed down. This explanation, when it comes to Christianity, was never proved by Marx, just arbitrarily asserted by him, and seeing as no-one wants to be a dupe, enthusiastically accepted by those looking for an excuse not to believe.

Hume had considered the religious irrational, thinking that, although religion can give life meaning, it can never be logically justified. Therefore much of the philosophical world was content to live in a place they saw as reasonable, even if there was more of a problem finding meaning and purpose. This problem would come to the fore in subsequent philosophical approaches.

During the French Revolution the 'goddess of reason' had been set up in the cathedral of Notre Dame. However, unbeknownst to them (possibly by willful ignorance), the philosophical world had the same issue with reason that they had with the God of Christianity (which this goddess was supposed to replace). Namely; why should you arbitrarily trust, and follow, a deity of which you have no satisfactory explanation as to how it came to be? In other words; why should you trust reason and logic if you can't explain where they came from?

Pragmatism

 Puritan Christian values of the Protestant Reformation had found a new home in the United States of America, and a republic had been set up after overthrowing colonial rule. Independent of its European roots a different philosophical culture began to emerge (for that 'old wide road' was ever present). If the discovery of absolute truth was elusive, then maybe what worked practically is all that matters? This was the thinking of a new homegrown philosophical strand, that of 'Pragmatism'. It emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, after a more Romantic period. It seemed to fit well with the democratic roots of a new world and a new century.

The Modern World 1900-1950

 At the end of the 19th century the light was growing increasingly dim on the 'wide road' of this world's kingdom, and philosophy reached a crucial milestone.

Darwin and Evolution

 When Charles Darwin proposed his theory of evolution (1859), secular humanity slowly realised it finally seemed to have what it wanted, namely, an alternative explanation to the origins of life on earth without God. If God is discounted then everything must be explained by purely naturalistic means. No matter how unlikely, this seemed to be the best option. Later would come the 'big bang'

theory, which essentially says that nothing 'banged' and became everything! If this scientific impossibility is 'swept under the carpet', then you immediately run into the problem of entropy seemingly working backwards! Or if you assume a low entropy for the initial big bang, then how did it get so ordered in the first place! But, for these thinkers, 'Science' seemed to have dealt a death blow to the Biblical account of creation. The German philosopher Fredrich Nietzsche would pronounce the job done when it came to the idea of God-proclaiming Him dead. The desire behind this earthly kingdom (to be free from God), and the strategy to achieve this aim, had seemed to have finally worked. One can almost see that 'old Enemy' rubbing his hands together and cracking a smile as he held humanity as his prized slave.

However, the 'science' used to propose this new theory hadn't empirically proved 'molecules to man' evolution. Life never having been observed to have come from non-life, and the supposed process having happened in the untestable past. The burgeoning fossil record could be far better explained by a global flood with animals being buried in sediment (sedimentary rock is where the fossils are found throughout the globe). It didn't show evolution, only people's attempts to 'shoe-horn' evolution into it. There was an inexplicable 'Cambrian explosion' of life of all kinds, and a lack of 'transitional' fossils. All Darwin observed was the process of *speciation* in the present, which he called *natural selection*, something not at odds with the Bible's revelation of animal 'kinds'. But the dominant, now secular, scientific world seemed as un-interested in finding out what the Scriptures actually say, as it was during the Copernican revolution. Especially with regards to life's origins, it is certainly the case that it is more reasonable to believe the Bible's account of origins than to accept the impossible odds of abiogenesis (which was believed until Louis Pasteur proved it false). Life still hasn't been observed to have generated itself to

this day, and moreover, we now know that there is no known observable process by which information can be added to an organism's genetic code. This leaves the cherished theory without a mechanism for upward progression and increased information. Not to mention the understanding of 'fine-tuning' for life that has emerged in physics, and the existential problem of getting something from nothing. The "Boltzmann brain paradox" makes a somewhat amusing point, with regards to this, in saying that it's more likely for a single brain to spontaneously form in a void, complete with the memory of having existed in our universe, rather than the entire universe to have come about in the first place!

 These, and a multitude of other scientific problems, seems to make little difference to a kingdom which has its initial prize, and is *extremely* reluctant to relinquish it. The lack of consensus within evolutionary biology ironically seems to keep it alive. With no overarching agreement as to the details in different areas of study, many are content to agree that we can't know the details, but we can know it happened! The problem, according to a growing number of scientists, is that the explanation of how such things as eyes and wings, (not to mention the complexity of a single cell) for example, came into being is absurdly crude and misleading. The explanation for the eye in countless textbooks starts midway through the story, taking for granted the existence of light-sensitive cells, lenses and irises, without explaining where they came from in the first place. Nor does it adequately explain how such delicate and easily disrupted components meshed together to form a single organ. There is still no good explanation for the irreducible complexity of such things, and the classic idea of gradual change, one happy accident at a time, has so far fallen flat.

 It should be noted that many Christian and non-Christian scientists alike have contested, and continue to contest, the theory of evolution's scientific validity. The 'scientific consensus' argument,

that the majority of scientists agree, ignores the fact that the majority can, and have often been, wrong. Nevertheless, Creationism is characterized, and dismissed, as non-scientific religion. However, what is observed is perfectly consistent with the Biblical account of origins;- that the essential act of creation has long been finished (apart from the miraculous), and all that remains is the continual sustaining of matter, through a pre existent framework of laws. The quest to find another naturalistic creating process is an exercise in futility.

Nietzsche and Existentialism

A fire had been lit, giving energy to the desire for 'freedom' from the idea of God, and the goal was tantalisingly close. Nietzsche took the opportunity to snatch the ultimate prize, jumping to a conclusion. He seemed to assume that he didn't need to provide conclusive proof for his premature obituary of God, that the case was closed, and philosophy had already concluded the matter. It had done no such thing, and the case was far from closed. The consequences to all this would be far worse than Nietzsche himself, or the western world, had bargained for.

Kant's phenomenal world of individual experience provided the starting point for Existentialism. But it was the enduring idea of the realm of Plato's 'Forms' or the noumenal world of Kant (where things exist as they really are), which Nietzsche took exception to, and said should be discarded. Of course, as he saw it, this was to rid oneself of the realm where God could exist philosophically.

Influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, Nietzsche considered the old ideas, based in Greek and Judeo-Christian tradition, were not suited to this new modern world. The inescapable result of this belief was to take ultimate meaning and purpose away. This had been what

Solomon had concluded, centuries before, when viewing life merely from a material perspective - '*under the sun*' as he puts it. Nietzsche proposed a new radical approach to finding meaning in a world he had stripped of objective meaning, purpose and morality: The old, limiting, values and traditions should be transcended, and cast aside, in favour of subjectivity, choosing those meanings of your own making instead!

 The Bible teaches humans were made to worship, and if they won't worship God, then they'll worship anything and everything instead. The worship of mere earthly things, especially of the individual themselves, means a man can be a king of his own short lived kingdom, a kingdom of the 'here and now' with its motto "Live for today for tomorrow we die".

 In proposing what he did, Nietzsche essentially made a selfish ideology of earthly life itself, and set up the individual as one's own personal deity: A 'Superman' or, more accurately, 'Overman' who can make his own rules if he is brave, powerful and willful enough to do so. This was existentialism in its over optimistic guise, although Nietzsche was a tortured paradox, and undoubtedly opened the door to Nihilism (the more realistic, logical conclusion of these atheistic beliefs). The gaping hole created by attempting to remove God, resulted in an approach that said "As of now, there is no greater meaning and purpose other than what you make for yourself". It was like a false friend of humanity, who robs a person, and strips the individual of all his possessions, employment and old beliefs, only to say "Well, isn't that great! I have freed you to be whatever you want to be...run along now and be strong!" Man had been crowned king of his own dung heap! But it offered a false promise of freedom which only resulted in the 'self' staring into the void. It was a baited hook, and one that was swallowed, setting the philosophical agenda for much of the 20th century.

In Germany, philosophers, who had taken Nietzsche's bait, took existentialism forward. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology provided a basis for Martin Heidegger, who had been greatly influenced by the 'Great Dane' Soren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard still clung to what philosophy had reduced the idea of 'faith' into being, instead of what the Bible reveals faith to be - 'eyes to see', Kierkegaard, in contrast, considered faith a 'blind leap'.

Nietzsche was an influence upon the Nazi party, and Heidegger had strong links to it. It's not hard to see how these ideas were the seedbed of what was about to follow in World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust. Nietzsche predicted a bloody 20th century and this would become sickeningly prescient. If the focus of his philosophy was 'life', the outworking of these ideas brought about the exact opposite. The dark night had descended upon the road of human autonomy.

Nevertheless, even with its rotten fruit, the work of Nietzsche and Heidegger were key to existentialism's development. Such is the prejudice against God, instead of the rejection of these ideas, they became important to the culture of the late 20th century.

Einstein and Freud

Physics

In the 20th century science was starting to make great inroads into the traditional concerns that philosophy questioned itself about - such as asking what exists. The theories of general and special relativity explained the nature of space-time far better than the old Newtonian physics; and quantum mechanics was probing the nature of the subatomic world, giving some very 'weird' results. The great mysteries of the created, material realm, that God had "stretched out", as it says in Isaiah, were gradually being discovered

in small measure. Like a child playing in the shallows of the great ocean of the cosmos. The discovery that the fabric of space-time is flat like a sheet, and can be bent with gravity, is intriguing when we read verses such as Revelation 6.14 which talks of the heavens being rolled together as a scroll.

 In the book of Daniel 11.37-38a it talks of a man "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces:" Mankind was now doing this in the scientific world. Albert Einstein was honouring these forces of nature, while paying no more than lip service to the God who gave these forces and their mathematical order. He was brilliant in the use of the 'tools' but downplayed their Maker. Popular science has long since abandoned this lip service, and, on the whole, arbitrarily assumes the stability and order of the forces of nature, and the provision of being able to understand them in this way. Many seek to glorify human achievement in scientific progress, rather than giving glory to any supposed God. They fail to ask why they might be able to achieve such progress in understanding. More than a '*God of the gaps'* in their understanding, they need a *God of the hole beneath their feet!* Bishop Joseph Hall once said;

   "It is an ignorant conceit that enquiry into nature should make men atheistical. No man is so apt to see the star of Christ as the diligent disciple of philosophy. Doubtless this light was visible unto more; only they followed it, who knew it had more than nature. He is truly wise, that is wise for his own soul. If these wise men had been acquainted with all the other stars of heaven, and had not seen the star of Christ, they had had but light enough to lead them into utter darkness. Philosophy, without this star, is but the wisp of error."

 General relativity's greatest weakness is the way it doesn't mesh with other bits of physics, which are all explained by quantum theory these days. Today there is talk of the 'crisis in cosmology' owing to discrepancies in the 'hubble constant' amongst other things.

Instruments such as the James Webb space telescope will, no doubt, cause old ideas to be thrown out, or ever adapted. This is due to the assumption of a naturalistic origin of all things.

Science is a wonderful tool given by God, part of His *natural* revelation. It can answer much of the 'What' in the created realm, but little, if anything, about the 'Why'. It certainly can say nothing about the spiritual, making the assumption that if I can't taste, touch, see, measure, or see its effects etc, then it doesn't exist . For the spiritual, we need the *special* revelation of God's Word. Certainly, without God, science's foundations are rather unstable to say the least. Without various fundamental assumptions, science can have no real basis. These assumptions are: The uniformity of nature - things doing tomorrow what they did today; the certainty of cause and effect (which God promises to continue in the Bible: Gen 8.22); and the ability to trust one's rational, logical faculties (because they are God given).

Nevertheless humanity presses on in its quest for a purely materialistic explanation for the physical world. It scoffs at the notion of a Creator God, but offers 'something coming from nothing' as an alternative, or infinite universes (even though there is no evidence for such a thing) when its experiments with quantum mechanics can't be fathomed. Once again, it is only with a Divine revelation of information that such metaphysical truths can be known, and the Bible clearly teaches there is but one universe with a spiritual reality behind it all.

Scientific 'truth' was going to be exposed by future philosophers. Postmodern relativism would show the provisional nature of scientific 'truth'. Einstein's theory of relativity, Bohr's quantum mechanics, and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle all make the role of the observer central to scientific knowledge. Are scientists really the neutral investigators that people like Francis Bacon and Enlightenment dogma would have us believe? Can any scientist be

truly objective? Many modern scientists are now sensibly evasive when asked about scientific 'truth'. Many would admit they no longer believe in neutral, objective science and fixed 'laws'.

<u>Psychoanalysis</u>

Empiricism was making great gains in probing the nature of the universe, but what about the workings of the mind? The task now for the atheist was to explain the mind, and the religious tendency of humanity, independent of God. Sigmund Freud took up the task, but immediately fell into the logical fallacy of deciding the truth or falsehood of a view on the basis of its origins. For example, he negates the claim that many find a belief in God is the real solution to psychological needs, because he assumes atheism is true. To him, atheism was a given. His essential starting point was that; since God doesn't exist, what is the religious notion and inclination within people? From a biological, scientific standpoint, his ideas have largely been debunked. His ideas, especially when it comes to one's parents, and sexual desires, reveal more about his own neurosis than that of anyone else. His psychoanalytic theories attempted to give new insights into the workings of the mind. However, instead of throwing light on these things, from a Biblical perspective, he seems to be more like a person, using fine sounding language, to analyse a lightbulb, having first thrown out the notion of electricity. Or a car mechanic, seeking to understand the workings of the internal combustion engine, while throwing out the notion of internal combustion.

Analytic Philosophy

Leaving science aside for the time being, philosophy became more concerned with the moral and the political. It also turned to the more abstract areas of linguistic analysis and logic.

Language, like science, would need to be studied precisely in order to get at an ever increasingly elusive 'truth'. But severed from its Originator, this task of finding how our language was related to the world, would be just as difficult as finding objective truth was with science. It had been posited in the Enlightenment that language was created by humans. Later, evolutionary explanations were postulated.

Considered the father of *analytic philosophy*, Gottlob Frege, linked logic with mathematics, and his ideas were taken up enthusiastically by the British philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell. He thoroughly applied the same principles as Frege to mathematics, and then, in a revolutionary move, applied them to language.

This new linguistic analysis was to be majored upon in British 20th century philosophy. Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of Russell's pupils and developed these ideas. By being extremely precise about language he tried to link and limit language to facts in the world. He additionally contributed to areas such as ethics, aesthetics and even perception. Interestingly he is quoted as saying "If Christianity is the truth, then all the philosophy written about it is false".

Another Viennese philosopher, Karl Popper turned his attention back to science, trying to strengthen it philosophically. He focused on the problem of induction; which moves from the particular to the general, and is unable to prove anything for sure, because it could be disproved by later observations. He concluded that, insofar as a scientific statement speaks about reality, it must be falsifiable. 'Big bang' theories and evolutionary thinking rather fail his test, being ever adapted to new problems which arise with it.

This earthly kingdom, having turned its back on its Creator, was now trying to write Him out of language and history, but were struggling with objectivity, without a fixed reference to build knowledge and truth from. This would play itself out alarmingly in the contemporary world especially in the branch of ethics.

War and Communism

<u>The Holocaust</u>

Some time ago the writer remembers seeing a poster for an exhibition on the Holocaust. It read "*Look what man can do when he puts his mind to it"*. This rather aptly sums up the most important influence on post-war ethics - the Second World War itself, and more specifically - the Holocaust. A western, civilised and 'rational' nation, had slaughtered millions of innocent civilians in a sickeningly industrialised way. The optimistic Enlightenment belief in human potential and progress, had been given a dose of reality when it comes to ethics.

The Bible teaches that all people have a sinful nature. With this in mind, look at the words of the Roman historian Tacitus, and his comments on the 'crimes' of the Christians:

"*Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind"*

This characterisation, of course, was a prejudiced caricature of the Bible's teaching. It shows the indignation with which the kingdom of this world treats this *'pernicious doctrine'* (as it sees it). The Christians didn't hate mankind, but they did speak realistically about its sinful nature, and propensity to evil. The horrors of the concentration camps bore out this truth about what people were capable of, like never before. This led to the inescapable realisation, for many, that there might be something quite nasty lurking in the 'sediment' of the human heart, ready to be churned up. Humanity had been too optimistic about itself, and this event in history put a check on that thinking, leading to a more cynical view of human nature. The Bible had been right all along about human nature, and the Holocaust should have been a sort of Copernican revolution for

ethics. Needless to say, it was not, and this kingdom would not allow its 'good' name to be besmirched.

Communism

As already stated, Marxism was idealistic about human nature when it comes to the proletariat. The revolution that formed in the Soviet Union in the 1920's had its roots in this. It became extremely prevalent globally as people grasped at an atheistic, ideological hope. It was misplaced, and in the Soviet Union, it has been estimated that Lenin, and then Stalin, presided over a vicious purge, resulting in the deaths of ten million people.

In China Mao Tse-tung engaged in a gigantic piece of social engineering. He essentially outlawed religion, many thousands of people being put to death. It would eventually cost the lives of millions.

In Cambodia Pol Pot unleashed his 'revenge upon religion' in the 'killing fields' and implemented the 'new values' of his heroes in the USSR. One fifth of the country's population were slaughtered.

The legacy of the attempt to implement Marxism - an optimistic, ideological, political atheism - couldn't be clearer. Christ said "Ye shall know them by their fruits", the evil fruits of Marxism should be clear from any basic reading of history. It reminds us of Proverbs 14.12 *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."*

The following two things in modern history lay in front of the movements of the diabolical forces behind them. That 'great red dragon' was still furiously pursuing the 'woman'. However the attempts to stamp out religious (especially Christian) thought would prove futile.

The Fascism of the 1930's forced many thinkers to flee the continent to Britain and the US. This resulted in left- wing liberal politics, reacting against the totalitarian oppression they had

experienced. The Cold War that followed World War II cast its shadow over the moral philosophy of the second half of the 20th century.

Existentialism continued

In France, at this time, existentialism was made fashionable by the novelists Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus. This was part of a literary culture and fundamental to the direction that philosophy would take on the continent of Europe. Jean-Paul Sartre especially became something of an atheistic 'high priest' to the young students in France. Starting with the presupposition that there is no God (therefore, unlike a designed tool, we're not made for a purpose), he then reasons that we must subjectively make our own purpose, because our "existence precedes essence". Once again, this was an argument, based on a wilful desire for human autonomy from an unknown God, rather than a neutral, dispassionate examination.

Unlike Christ, Satre, the great 'high priest' of existentialism, wasn't 'pure' in consistency, and he failed his disciples, like all mere men who are set up as icons. He preached individual, human autonomy, but was rather partial to Marxism, which smothered the individual in the interests of the state. When he signed the Algerian Manifesto he was considered an 'apostate' and lost his leadership of the *avant garde*. However these existentialists were fundamental in the direction continental philosophy was to take. The tantalising promise of 'freedom' was too beguiling to be cast aside.

Contemporary Philosophy 1950-Present

In the closing decades of the 20th century, there were technological advancements, especially in communications like radio, television and cinema. Television particularly increased the power of the mass media and fed and shaped popular culture. The anti-establishment ideas from art, youth culture and music, drove social and political change. That old foe, the 'harlot Babylon' rose again to seduce the nations. From the 1960's onwards, the old order was being challenged in the US and in Europe.

The Permissive Society

A permissive society is a society in which social norms become increasingly liberal, especially with regard to sexual freedom. "Permissiveness" claims to recognize each individual's 'right' (this right is assumed rather than proved) to form their own system of values, and their own ideas about the categories of good and evil. It allows one to assert that morality is, in essence, a relative concept. This usually accompanies a change in what is considered deviant. While typically preserving the rule "do not harm others", a permissive society would have few other moral or legal codes.

This was exactly what was happening in the social and sexual revolution of the 1960s. Various things collided into a sort of 'perfect storm'. The development of the contraceptive pill, the legalisation of abortion, and the great increase in the influence of TV, pop culture, music, movies, advertising etc, all came together to shape society. The decline of Biblical standards in evangelical Christianity, stemming from an abandonment of the regulative principle in worship, played no small part. Churches adopted 'hippie' culture, with its music style, and informality came into worship. As well as

this new evangelicalism, the Charismatic movement did untold harm to the Church. These things majored upon the emotions rather than the mind, which is the real 'palace of faith'. Evolutionary ideas gained a popular foothold; Existentialism and eastern philosophical ideas became popular. The result was that people didn't feel the need to be so responsible for their actions (especially sexually), and were driven by their emotions, feelings, bodily passions and desires. Informality and even anarchy was advocated. A 'Counterculture' came in (a push back against the previous moral constraints and authority). There was a 'Sexual revolution' which essentially said "I want to be free to do what I want to do". Promiscuity became acceptable and people lost their shame at sexual sin. Before this most people got married before having children within stable family units. Even in non Christian society, the view was that sex was to be reserved for marriage. Many didn't obey, but it was still seen as 'sinful', because of a historical Christian heritage. Now, however, the new attitude was characterised as "free love" but this was just a semantic substitute for 'unrestrained lust'. Soon the homosexual movement would hijack the civil rights movement to attempt to make their case equivalent - drawing upon false parallels.

So the ethical 'Permissive society' came in, and social norms became increasingly liberal. Practically anything goes in such a climate, just as long as you don't harm anyone. (Emotional, social or spiritual harms are just ignored). This was 'freedom' in sex, drugs, and general attitudes. (But it was a freedom to enslave yourself. Once again, it was the freedom of playing a game without rules, or jumping out of an aeroplane without a parachute! A fake freedom!). The results of this were multitudes of broken relationships, families, and hearts, because of a pursuit of excess. From this time on the rates of all manner of social ills increased. It was as if a great social experiment was being carried out upon an unsuspecting 'guinea pig' generation. One that could not be stopped and reversed.

With regards to relationships, the deeper a person gets into promiscuity the more shallow their love becomes, and if the pool of love is shallow it evaporates. Love quietly leaves by the back door, while up front no one notices because they think they're having so much fun! Marriage and the traditional family unit were under attack. That old Enemy had switched strategies again. He had attacked the mind, now he would go for the affections.

Hedonism is the philosophy of the permissive generation in the sense of the general devotion to the pursuit of pleasure. Overstimulating the senses by extremes and excess. Such a generation go out for an unforgettable night, that in the end they can't remember because a self-indulgent quest for bodily sensation has robbed them of their mental faculties. These sentient 'tools' once valued by empirical philosophy to gain knowledge, were being misused and deadened. The young had been robbed of a true sense of who they were as people, and left with existential 'angst'. The choice seemed to be nihilism or hedonism. The former was a philosophy stumbled into without much care, the latter was accepted without much thought. The young engaged in a mindless quest for pleasure, excess, extremes, freedom and liberty, and found it harder to be happy because they threw away the rules that enabled people to enjoy the 'wholesome' things in life - as already stated - like following the rules to enjoy a game. But the old 'rules', the standards still preserved in society from the great Christian revivals, were being cast aside. The abandonment of objective ethics left the young without a mooring, and they drifted into an intoxicating whirlwind. They enjoyed putting themselves into a spin, not realising they were like a fly caught, and spinning in a web.

Hedonism

(the philosophy of the permissive society)

 This was a modern iteration of the old Epicurean philosophy, except this time disengaged from the mind. This later hedonism is the philosophy of the thoughtless. People can fall into it without much thought - especially the young. It appeals to the feelings more than the mind, and is enmity to the spirit. It chooses the desires of the flesh above those needs of the soul. Just like Esau desired the "pottage" over his birthright. The hedonist acts (if he realises it or not) as if the greatest goal in life is the pursuit of pleasure. "Please yourself" is a term of semi-derision, and it's not hard to see why. This is a selfish pursuit, whipping up sensuality, feelings, emotions, and lusts by the means of all sorts of 'vehicles' used for the purpose. These are the misuse of things like music, provocative dancing, sexual relations; substances like alcohol and drugs, or even simply food or drink, light and sound; or the shared rush of emotion at large crowded sports or entertainment events. Mass consumerism plays its part. Pleasure seekers are ruled by their feelings, and rely on these 'vehicles' to regulate their mood. Then becoming dependent on them, finding themselves unable to do without. They're held to ransom by what they ran after, locked into the vehicle which will no longer take them where they want to go, and will in the end crash and burn. These things are poor 'medicine' that soon becomes toxic and poisonous. The pleasurable sensations will get weaker the more they are over indulged because of desensitisation, leading to a desire for excess. This amounts to an over-emphasis on imagination, and the fleshly affections of the heart, giving an unbalanced thought life. This leads to a 'see-saw' of feelings, swinging moods from extremes of high and low. By bombarding the senses with worldliness, one misuses them and re-sets them. The world will seem dull, as if a person had just shone a bright light into

their eyes, and then the natural colours of things had bleached out for a while. The person who does this is seeking his/her satisfaction and happiness in all the low things of this physical world, and it cannot ultimately satisfy the soul. Pleasure seeking is dangerously deceitful. It seems to promise much happiness, but it doesn't fulfil its promises - only short term pleasure, long term pain. A spiralling decline into anguish, depression and even suicide can result. As is so often the case, there was no help, or answers from philosophy. The great void of meaning served up by Existentialism, was an philosophical empty plate, and the starving young increasingly developed Nihilistic 'malnutrition'.

Many of that generation purposed to be pleasure seekers. They opened the door to strong temptations and sins, and inflamed the desires that tend to dominate. The body is a good servant, but a bad master. It was a fire, and hedonism fed and fanned it into a blaze that society has found impossible to control. It is still well and truly burning. A culture that had always existed on the fringes of society, in the gin palaces of Victorian times for example, had moved into the mainstream.

The modern quest for freedom, seen in existentialism, was now manifested in a far less intellectual philosophy. Attempts to throw off the 'shackles' of an older morality, only resulted in the forging of chains to self-bind and rods to self-beat, out of a misplaced sense of liberty which is just a liberty to enslave. This new morality said "There's nothing wrong, except telling me I'm wrong".

It has become mythologized that Emperor Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned. Well, from the 1960s onwards, the bands played while this philosophical mindset heaped the hot coals of desire into their laps, and invited the flame of God's anger at broken commandments.

The man who says "I can do whatever I want" will soon find the people, who still live within the boundaries he stepped away from,

have what he needs. Sadly *he* can no longer have it, because he foolishly locked himself out of those boundaries! He has said "Throw off marriage, throw away being chaste, cast away sobriety, break out and use forbidden language and, unabashedly, do forbidden things. We'll call it 'empowerment, and free love". But, as already mentioned, this was just unrestrained lust. Any 'power' was the power to be 'free' to lose deep love, and security, to be more lonely and lost, more rude and crude, and polluted within.

In truth, they threw away something precious in those days because they thought it was restricting them, when all along it was securing them, like a wedding band on the hand. When men say they want freedom from law and order, no one is free to walk the streets!

The permissive society has taught generations "It's always been this way, anything else is abnormal." Whereas, the truth is, we're living in the late 20th century's great social experiment gone wrong, and no one's interested in examining the results. Because the kids, who ushered in this counter culture, and experimented on themselves, are now the rulers and teachers and parents. They're self-blinded, and conscience-calloused, but they're leading the next generation. They're pointing the wrong way with one hand, and with the other, covering the eyes of the young to their own misdeeds and damage.

The old standards were Christian standards. When a society abandons God's ways for 'Babylon's' ways (*"lovers of pleasures more than than lovers of God" 2 Tim 3.4*), the results speak for themselves. The results were bad, but things would get worse.

Postmodernism

At the same time as this social upheaval, a rift was developing between popular and "high" culture. The avant-garde intellectuals seemed to be running at pace downhill on that old wide road, unable and unwilling to stop their wild career. They seemed to press onward without a care for public taste. Philosophy became more elitist as well. The Marxist existentialism of Sartre had less influence after, what seemed like, his betrayal of the 'cause', and then his death.

In the 70's and 80's a movement emerged that was to dominate continental philosophy. This was Structuralism, or more strictly, Post-Structuralism. It came from French philosophy, which was always more language based, following on from the ideas of textual analysis. The central epistemological question had always been "How can we find knowledge and truth". The road that this earthly kingdom of human wisdom had taken, had led further and further from a sure way to know anything at all. Now philosophy seemed to cast doubt on the written word as a stable source of understanding. Post-Structuralism contained the idea of 'deconstructing' texts to show that they contained a plethora of contradictions in meaning, and therefore one couldn't be sure what was ultimately meant by them.

By the God given gift of language His revelation was made possible. So it is no surprise that a kingdom hostile to God would attack language itself. The principal philosophers behind these ideas were Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault and Louis Althusser. Like Sartre, their politics were left wing, and had a great effect on the neo-Marxist 'Critical Theory' movement that was to come. Jacques Lacan, meanwhile, harked back to psychoanalytic viewpoints, and linked his structuralism to that type of analysis.

Their ideas were taken up under the collective term 'Postmodernism', first coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard. It was the final triumph of Satan in the branch of epistemology and ethics. Nietzsche had claimed that philosophy had killed the idea of God, and now, because of the wholesale acceptance of this, philosophy had nowhere to go when it came to fixed absolutes. Any notion of overarching 'meta-narratives', like the Biblical account of history and its metaphysics, was met with incredulity. German 'higher criticism' had been used to attack the authoritative Truth of Scripture, and, although its ideas had been proved false and the Bible vindicated, its claims seemed to stick in the collective memory. The memory of a world anxious to grasp at anything that meant it didn't have to sit underneath Biblical authority held over them.

So the philosophical world was now primed to accept that there can be no single objective Truth or viewpoint. When it came to ethics, the conclusion must be that morality was relative and subjective. When it came to society, it must now be pluralistic.

In Britain and the US this philosophy was treated with suspicion and proud derision; they were less ready to receive such a conclusion. They were slow to realise that philosophy had nowhere else to go when it came to knowledge and morality. This was the inescapable outcome of centuries of travel down the wide road of philosophical human wisdom. A road, chosen for its human autonomy, had to lead to this epistemological and ethical dead end. Literally dead, when it comes to the soul!

In the book of Revelation 16.3 it says "*And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*" The wrath of God against humanity's rebellion towards Him, after many 'trumpet' warnings, would lead to Him leaving people to the consequences of their choice to turn their backs upon Him. The 'sea' of nations in this worldly kingdom would be full of spiritually dead souls.

The general public were ignorant and unaware of these squabbles in philosophy, between the English speaking world and the continent. This was because of that gap that had opened between popular and 'high' culture, and because postmodernism was incomprehensible. It didn't make itself clear because it couldn't - what truth could it give? What the world couldn't understand, or wasn't ready to accept, with the mind, it saw with the eyes. Postmodern, conceptual art began to exhibit these ideas. It was full of playful, knowing references by an intellectual elite. Like the scribblings of a laughing man in an asylum who had sadly lost his reason. Postmodern art said nothing and everything at the same time - "This is all we can say - ... nothing". It was seen as deliberately exclusive, willfully attempting to evade the possibility of mass appreciation. However, the artists and professional academics were just reflecting the ideas of western philosophy which had ultimately run its course, and left humanity empty of ideas. The epistemological outcome was clear- WITHOUT GOD YOU CAN'T KNOW ANYTHING! Philosophy had reached its terrible conclusion, but mainstream society couldn't understand it.

The public, business, and government, weren't ready to accept this and wanted more practical answers from philosophy. So, like a revived zombie, philosophy stumbled back to life in a more political guise once again. People, ever ready to feel proud of themselves, wanted to focus on their own ability to solve ethical questions.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is an umbrella term encapsulating a number of subsets, such as critical race theory, queer theory, post colonialism etc. Frantz Fanon and Henry Odera Oruka examined race and identity in post colonial Africa. In France Simone de Beauvoir's

ideas were built upon by Feminist philosophers such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, who gave it a postmodern take. John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas examined concepts of justice and communication. However, maybe the postmodern ideas of Jaques Derrida and Micheal Foucault have had the most influence. What started in a philosopher's study, once again, would end up in society. Foucault's rewriting of history, his rejection of sexual, and gender norms, and ideas of the 'power plays' of the oppressive, would form the basis of much in this new wave of practical philosophy.

As we have seen, existentialism, and later, postmodernism, have a quest for supposed 'freedom' at their core. Unfortunately, postmodernism ended up with freedom from objective Truth. Postmodernism, as expressed in Critical Theory, shows the outcome of this in social-political consequences. It is very similar to Marxism, but, instead of economic forces oppressing the poor, it is concerned with social, cultural, societal and scientific 'power plays' (taken from Foucault). Those in positions of power are seen to use knowledge detrimentally, often in micro situations, in order to oppress a minority group. The key quest is for freedom, but ironically, it only brings further bondage; with 'Critical Theory' eventually becoming the oppressor. This is where the rejection of objective truth leads. Conversely, the Bible says "The truth will make you free" John 8.32 - that is, *objective Truth*.

These ideas trickled down as terms in the media like - *Social justice/ the Culture wars/ Identity politics/ Woke* etc. Postmodernism has now (in its social-political guise) branched off into something which will no longer tolerate dissent. The rejection of meta-narratives has led to a neo-liberal extreme left movement, which forces people to accept its new 'truth' - that anyone can identify as anything (within CT's favoured groups), and must be accepted and not oppressed. Any inequality is attributed to

exploitation. This, of course, in actuality, is a meta-narrative in itself. Two things are in tension: firstly, that there is no objective truth apart from what one makes for oneself; secondly, in contradiction, there is a truth that mustn't be questioned. This 'truth' is that there must be freedom for the 'oppressed' and marginalised groups. These are the ones oppressed by those in powerful positions, especially with regards to race, gender, sexuality, religion etc. Although Christianity seems to be rather less defended! We should know why by now. This liberal movement seems to defend freedom of speech and religion only if they agree with you.

There is no interest in debate, in fact, to 'muddy the waters' in confusion, or 'queer the issue' is encouraged. The quest is for freedom to *be*, and *do*, whatever their new 'commandments' allow. Free from the oppression of outwardly imposed definitions. There is no ultimate truth, just the individual's 'lived experience' within the group, and that can't be questioned by anyone outside.

The great danger is that a member of those favourite marginalised groups of Critical Theory (Critical race theory for example), will feel righteous merely by being part of that oppressed group, and the oppressors are the 'sinful' group. This oversimplified view of human nature, essentially concludes that there are 'good' people and 'bad' people. Just like the proletariat and bourgeoisie in Marxism. The oppressed are almost beyond criticism, and will feel any real sin on their part is certainly not as bad as others, and probably has been caused by their oppression. In short, the victim feels vindicated, and justified in their self righteous, virtuous state. This leads to statements such as "I will never apologise for who I am!". This of course is counter to the message of the Christian Gospel, which declares all men unrighteous in state and condition, in need of atonement, and the justification of God.

Cancel culture

From the 50's to the early 90's youth culture was fed a diet of curated mass media and entertainment with certain restraints from TV and radio. This, although becoming progressively worse morally, from a Christian perspective, was often mediocre to the young mind craving ever more 'edgy' and increasingly extreme content. They had to go to the world of movies, music and the avant-garde to obtain such 'forbidden fruit'. The teenager often felt that they could have more fun, more extreme conversation and interaction with each other, than was available in the media. In this, the natural adolescent desire for individually (within 'tribal' groups) was satisfied, going as far as outright anarchy. However, with the advent of the internet and smartphones, with which anyone can create content and post it online without any type of meaningful curation, moderation, or censorship, the floodgates were open. The successive generations of teenagers, still with the desire to be different from that which has gone before, but seeing the usual progress of immorality and rebellious behaviour was already adopted wholesale (how does one rebel against rebellion?), have instead lurched away from the excess of the 80's and 90's, in the other direction, and engaged in a kind of self-righteous self-censorship.

As we have seen, driven by the ideas of postmodernism, they adapted it in the social-political sphere, and are engaging in a neo-Marxist influenced push against perceived 'power plays'. Not economic this time, but post-colonial, racial and sexual. One of the outcomes of this is 'cancel culture', where celebrities, public figures and others are ostracised and 'non-platformed', all under the broad banner of 'social justice' - The secular attempt at implementation of a new ethic, which is largely just 'virtue signalling'.

With the postmodern mindset, all is true and nothing is true. The only thing that is forbidden is to claim that there is an objective overarching truth. Therefore, Christianity (which does exactly this) is to be considered the ideology to be opposed and destroyed, by labelling many of its teachings 'hate speech'. Wrong is made right and right wrong.

This Critical Theory, disguised under the term 'social justice', will 'non-platform' in universities, or 'cancel' anyone who disagrees with it, subjecting them to a modern form of the stocks. Of course, many of the victims deserve all they get (for being genuinely racist for example), but many have innocently fallen into the 'woke' culture's language traps, or have taken a legitimate stand of conscience against these new secular 'commandments' (such as asserting the Biblical belief in the fixity of being either male and female according to your biology, or that sexual preference is *not* to be treated in the same way as racial identity). Although there is a rejection of the traditional definition of what an individual's identity can be, there is certainly a clear definition of the moral standards of this new movement. What is right - is to back it without question. What is wrong - is to question or disagree with its central tenets - namely: the freedom of the marginalised group, to be whoever they decide they are, in terms of gender, sexuality, race etc. Self-truth is the only truth, and to question it is to be wrong (even if you are a member of the marginalised group- so the individual is effectively sidelined).

This generation advocates things that bolster this self-righteousness in activism. This is an attempt to keep a complaining conscience at bay. Various causes like 'Clean' eating, Climate change and environmental activism, LGBTQ++ rights, 'Black lives Matter', are all examples of things which can be used to replace the worship and service of God in a secular age.

The Enemy had switched his strategy again. After the 60's permissive society, having used the familiar tactic of tempting,

alluring and advocating immorality and worldliness (until it is suspected by people to be detrimental), he switches, tempting people to self-righteousness and pride. This has amounted to a 'new morality' in recent generations. Having degraded the adherence to the seventh commandment, he would then seek to wage war on the fact that God created them "Male and Female".

So there was a swing from the symbol of '*Babylon'*, on the one hand, to the '*beast from the earth'* (otherwise known as the *'false prophet')* on the other. The false prophet manifested not with false religion this time, but a secular ideology. It's a new 'morality', but an old self-righteousness. Just as intolerant as the Pharisees of old. The cancelling of an individual seems paralleled in the Biblical account of the woman taken in adultery. Satan knows he can get people to do worse things when they think they're justified in their actions - thinking they're doing what is righteous. Critical Theory seeks to justify an individual by being either a member of the oppressed group, or a defender of it. Therefore stones can be easily thrown, and 'eye planks' can be ignored! Why do people seem so bad at being good? Maybe because we are not good?! We now live amongst a young 'graveyard generation' of whitewashed tombs. The history of western philosophy is one of the blind leading the blind, and, in the end, they have both fallen into the grave.

But...God is not dead. It's true the Bible reveals Christ did die, but He is risen. The Truth about this 'focal point' in all history, still gives humanity hope. How can this be known personally, given all we have understood? Giving the answer to this will be our task going forward. The answer lies in God being, not a silent, *passive concept*, but a *speaking*, and *active*, *Quickener*. It has to do with the true, biblical understanding of a humble little word, philosophy never really understood - **faith**.

CHAPTER 2

EPISTEMOLOGY

(Knowledge)

Knowledge and truth part ways

 Reformed Christian theology teaches that humanity has essentially lost three great things with regard to God. They are; knowledge, righteousness and holiness. They are to be found again in the person of Jesus Christ, and can be seen in His three great offices; that of, Prophet, King and Priest. Prophetic revelation is at the heart of Christian epistemology. The epistemology of the modern age of philosophy had no such authority. Instead human ingenuity would have to suffice, but was found wanting. The long held definition of knowledge given by philosophy has been that of 'justified true belief'. However this has been called into question by the suggestion of so-called 'Gettier cases'. These are where a person may have a justified true belief, but still fail to know it, because the reasons for that belief, although justified and 'true' from that person's point of view, turn out to be false.

Internalism and externalism
    After this, a debate arose as to whether justification is solely determined by factors that are internal to a person (internalism), or whether additional factors are necessary which are external to a

person (externalism). For internalism the entire justification for belief lies within oneself. Descartes thought he could be sure he existed in this way, but this has been shown to be flawed reasoning. Therefore the problem is that, if internalism is so, the failed philosophy of Descartes and the conclusions of Kant have shown that we don't have direct access to all the conditions that justify our beliefs. Thus the internalist may believe things he has no warrant for. The outside world may exist (as Kant proved) but we can't really know what it's like. Therefore a warrant for our beliefs cannot be acquired. That is the case if we don't have a rationale from faith in God (from outside of us) giving us reliable senses and uniformity of nature. These, philosophy doesn't have, so the rational basis for knowing anything is true was in deep trouble. The rational basis for knowledge would be further separated from truth with the dawn of an age which had long since been knocking upon modernism's door.

Postmodernism

Pontius Pilate's statement "What is truth?" in reply to Christ, would seem to have a contemporary ring about it when we consider where philosophy has found itself. Knowledge has increasingly found itself disconnected from questions of truth. Pragmatism and existentialism seemed to initially push upon this door. Once again Francis Sheaffer had recognised the way things would go, in his book 'The God who is there' in the late 60's.

Nowhere is this disconnect between knowledge and truth more apparent than in our technological, internet age. Perhaps the first to recognise this, from a secular perspective, and the first to popularise the term 'Postmodernism' (giving a definition of it as "incredulity towards meta-narratives") was Jean-Francous Lyotard (although Ludwig Wittgenstein had previously written about "language games" which was influential on Lyotard). The modern age had finally given way to the postmodern age.

Overarching frameworks, or *worldviews*, which attempt to sum up all knowledge and human history into one 'Truth', are what may be described as a 'meta-narrative'. We may assume this is a reasonable thing to do, but without an authority for such a 'Truth' we can see that it was inevitable that such 'meta-narratives' would eventually be treated with incredulity. With philosophy's long held rejection of faith in revelation, Christianity would seem to be the 'arch villain' in postmodern thought. However, philosophies such as Marxism, or even the story of humanity's progress towards deeper knowledge and social justice brought about by science, don't escape. Scepticism towards our ability to gain real knowledge, is at the heart of this, combined with massive technological change. The computer age has commodified knowledge, with knowledge being bought and sold on huge databases, moved from one place to another. Commodities are bought and sold, and knowledge has become just another commodity. Therefore it has become merchandise, in Lyotard's view.

The two concerning implications, for him, that result from this, are:- Firstly, that knowledge has become something rather separate from the development of the inner human mind, and has become something external, and therefore it lacks transformative power; Secondly, as I have mentioned, truth and knowledge have suffered an alarming disconnect. The ends served by knowledge are more important than the truth it contains. In a postmodern age, the question is increasingly, with regards to knowledge, not "is it true?", but "will it sell?!" The danger for Lyotard is that private corporations then become the 'gatekeepers' for access to certain types of knowledge. When algorithms and artificial intelligence further erode Truth and the ability for individual thought (Because people over rely upon it, and fail to think for themselves. And because a collective internet database endlessly regurgitates, reformulates and flattens

human information), it isn't hard to see the concerning problems that are arising.

A rather bigger concern would materialise, than that thought of by Lyotard, though. For when objective truth is sidelined, it opens the door to a 'free for all' in the 'marketplace' of humanity itself. Notably, this is what it says in the Bible, referring to the fall of the worldly city Babylon; "*And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones,...and slaves, and souls of men.*" Rev 18.11-13.

Reinventing Man

Rooted in Kant and Merleau Ponty's phenomenology, Michel Foucault came up with the idea that 'Man'- as we see him in modernity- is an invention of recent date (the 19th century). For him, this poses a problem because this invention is not really how we should see things. He became interested in how power works institutionally. Especially with regards to knowledge. He looked at history, and proposed how epistemic systems of thought have become controlling and therefore not legitimate. In other words, knowledge wields oppressive power. In Foucault's mind, knowledge itself had become the problem, the problem of 'epistemic violence'.

Existentialism's quest for freedom had led to what would become postmodern thinking. Foucault was foundational to this. He was of the fold of Structuralism - the doctrine that structure is more important than function. We can see him as a post-structuralist. Where the structuralists saw structure and order, the post-structuralists wanted to break it down. Greatly admired by Jean-Paul Sartre, he attempted a reframing of history in order to

free oneself from the constraints of society (which he saw as the bourgeoisie, capitalist state), including law courts, doctors, prisons or psychiatrists. In fact it was an attempt to *remove* the frame. This was inspired by a view of Nietzsche's;- that looking at past history for its own sake wasn't profitable unless it is used to find ideas and lessons that can help us in the present. The way Foucault repeatedly does this, is to look at various subjects and reframe them in order to show how the contemporary way of doing things (and, as he saw it, a wrong reading of history) has resulted in an oppressive system which restricts individuals. His goal was to explain things in terms of how power works, and then to change it in the direction of, what he envisioned as, a Marxist anarchist utopia. He would have done well to remember how attempts to do this in the past had ended - such as the 'cultural revolution' of Chairman Mao. With regards to epistemology Foucault saw knowledge as a social construct used to keep the privileged in positions of power, and that all truth claims must be questioned. In this, subjectivity ruled again.

His philosophical, historical revisionism was based upon a loose and inaccurate reading to suit his own purposes. As mentioned, he had a strong proclivity towards Marxism, and developed it into more than a power struggle between rich and poor, but into many other political and social areas also. For example, he criticises what he called the 'biopower' oppression by medical science, for creating a view of individuals as *objects* for study rather than *people*. Therefore he seeks to free the individual from medical science which objectified people and oppressed them in the process. He does this with the subject of 'madness', with the justice system, and with regards to sexual matters.

To Foucault, the view was wrong that modern scientific ways of dealing with mental illness was progress. For him, mental illness was dealt with far better in the time of the Renaissance without 'medicalising' and attempting to 'cure' them in an institution. The

'mad', for example, were just seen as different, not crazy, and displayed a sort of 'wisdom' for showing the limits of reason! Medicine, more broadly, he saw as dehumanising people by sinister doctors and their 'medical gaze'.

The justice system was treated by him in a similar way. He said that it has regressed into a *seemingly* more humane system, which actually doesn't encourage healthy open rebellion and protest in a society, and so it is really more primitive now than earlier days. It had been possible, in past history, to encourage rebellion by exhibiting more openly cruel punishment, thus giving rise to sympathy for those undergoing it. Now it all happens behind closed doors, and therefore people can't observe. Because people can't see it, this doesn't allow for resistance to state power and revolution.

He does the same thing with sex, saying that, far from being liberated in sexual matters, society had medicalised it, handing it over to science. He was nostalgic towards ancient errotic art which focused on how to increase the pleasure of sex rather than merely labelling it, as modernity does. One wonders if he was walking around with his eyes closed; for western society then, and certainly now, couldn't be open to such a charge! It seems that traditional Christian sexual values are his real target.

This rereading of history is calculated to break any boundaries that society may have laid down around the 'marginalised group', who may wish to live outside of accepted norms, and thus liberate them. He encouraged people to break with the smug and optimistic view that things like modern education, the media, or communication systems, are better now than in the past. He wanted people to see that many modern things (those he disliked) were done better in the past. This, he explains, is usually because they were more liberal before, or that they encouraged 'healthy' rebellion.

His work says more about his own inner state than shedding light upon society and humanity as a whole. He sought liberty and

acceptance to pursue his own licentious lifestyle. He had attempted suicide whilst a young adult because of his homosexually and interrest in extreme sadomasochism. This played havoc with his God given conscience and brought him into his first contact with psychiatrists. His upbringing was extremely privileged. His father was an eminent surgeon and was representative of all Michel hated about the French bourgeoisie. This gave him intellectual discomfort, and, along with a troubled early private life, this no doubt, played an important role in his ideas. The personal life of any philosopher must play this role, to a greater or lesser extent. This is why the autonomous route philosophy had taken was drastically flawed, because it cannot fully separate itself from the subject.

Foucault's philosophy will resonate with those who have a propensity in favour of rebellion against orthodoxy. It is often said, tritely, that one man's rebel is another's freedom fighter. From a Christian standpoint, Foucault was fighting on the wrong side. His cause was merely a false liberty that ensnares. The Bible clearly states that this rebellion is, in fact, what we all incline towards naturally (Romans 1.18-32). Which explains why Foucault's thinking has become extremely influential. What people are really trying to relieve themselves of is the demands of the moral law of God, which is sensed by an uncomfortable and complaining conscience. However, the law and the conscience are not put there by God to our detriment, but for our ultimate good (this will be addressed more fully in chapter four). Reframing history to suit our desires, or ease our discomfort in the present, isn't the way to go about addressing our troubled relationship with the moral law of God and our sense of it. A right reading of history can only come from objectivity, and objectivity can only come from God. This is why the Bible not only contains teaching, but history, and God's view of it. As we read it, it will frame our thinking in the correct way in order to understand ourselves, the natural world, society, God and how He works.

Foucault is called a postmodern philosopher because of his rejection of the way modern Enlightenment thinking viewed 'truth'. To Enlightenment thinkers, truth was something 'out there' that could be objectively discovered by reason and empiricism. But, as we have seen, this notion had been gradually eroded and called into question. Foucault suggests that instead of thinking in the old way about truth - that it is 'that which corresponds to reality', that we should think in terms of "regimes of truth", which change according to the episteme of different times and cultures. Crucially, he came to the conclusion that I have been pointing out as being inescapable without God;- that there can be no fundamental principles by which to discover truth, and only a "local", subjective knowledge is left. In this, he wasn't denying that true reality existed, he just doubted people's ability to get at it, because they couldn't transcend their cultural biases enough. This laid the foundation for the postmodern knowledge principle. This further laid the foundation for Critical Theory today, and from this we can see what really underpins that ideology. His criticism of science was ominous, considering where Critical Theory has taken things, and it was indeed remarkably prescient of Shaeffer to foresee how science couldn't survive the epistemological wasteland left by philosophy up until that point when he says - *"Because men have lost the objective basis for certainty of knowledge in the areas in which they are working, more and more we are going to find them manipulating science according to their own sociological or political desires rather than standing upon concrete objectivity."*

If you look at all sides, you see nothing!

As we have just seen with Foucault, the life experiences of any given philosopher are hard to ignore when they seem to inform their

philosophical ideas. For Jacques Derrida this was no different. Growing up as an Algerian Jew, seeing himself being at the lowest of an intersection between Judaism, Islam and Christianity, he experienced the conflict between them, and felt bigotry and exclusion. Like Foucault, he was a neo-Marxist. Except that instead of economic class struggles, he widened Marxist ideas to that of culture and people in general, and the power imbalances between them.

He is probably most famous for putting forward the idea of 'Deconstruction' - A form of thinking which seeks to dismantle one's unwarranted, or excessive, loyalty to any idea, and then to examine the truth of what might reside in the contrary view.

For the 'Structuralist', the communication of truth is just as important as the truth it supposedly communicates. This begs the question; Is the structure of language, in all its forms, up to the task? Does the foundational structure of 'meta-languages' (like logic and semiotics) enable us to establish Truth? The post structuralism of Derrida (that would develop into 'postmodernism') denies they can, or in other words - Po-Mo says No!

When Derrida looked at language, he saw that the whole meaning can never be completely present in the text. Language always remains somewhat ambiguous, and needs more language to clarify it in an infinite regression. Even using words in speech (which Socrates and Plato favoured, considering writing inferior to discourse), the fact that the speaker is present should not be assumed to give us a clearer idea of the thoughts inside their head. We can be tempted to think meaning is clearer with "presence", but this is just a sort of illusion. In 1967 the structuralist Roland Barthes proclaimed "the death of the author" meaning readers create their own meanings. There could be an almost limitless number of interpretations. Like when one listens to poetry or music lyrics, and places upon them one's own interpretation. Or when one looks at a

face and wonders what the person is thinking. Barthes said, with semiotics, anything can be decoded. However his complex coding proved unworkable.

So in this view there is nothing you can truly 'get at' outside of the text, speech or wider communication. There is always a meaning that is inaccessible. The idea of how to gain knowledge, and truth itself, is therefore called into question, considering that all language can be deconstructed. That is, we can expose puzzles, impasses, and contradictions contained within it - what Derrida called "aporias".

This does seem to expose the limits of language. In essence, what he is saying, when he says "There is nothing outside of the text" is that limited communication is all we have (including metalanguages). We can assume it conveys a self-contained meaning, but it doesn't, because of things that might be said later by the author, and because of words in relation to other unused words (What he calls, respectively, "differance" and "difference"). Therefore, a gap exists between real meaning and the metaphor of semiotic signs. There is nothing outside of the text, which includes semiotic extended discourse and interpretation. Any meaning is relative, and provisional, it is never exhaustive. This is a similar problem with language that Hume discovered with science, and the provisional nature of inductive logic. For example I may say "I like cats", and you may assume I like cats, but then I may go on to say "cooked in a bowl for my breakfast, but only the ones that bark!". This completely changes any knowledge you thought you had about how I like cats, or even what I conceive a cat to be. Then more additions may change the meaning again. Therefore knowledge is deferred. The layers of language could be peeled back in this way, like an onion, to leave nothing!

We also bring our own ideas, prejudices, experiences etc to the text. Therefore Derrida, like Barthes before, said "to observe is to

interact". Like in quantum physics, the observer affects the experiment. So the idea of the impartial observer of strict structuralism, or science, is false. There is no such thing. Martin Heidegger was an influence upon Derrida in this. As we have repeatedly seen, philosophical epistemology was bound by subjectivity and profound limitations.

Derrida's proposition was to apply this idea in a wider way, by saying that almost all our thinking is rife with an unjustified prioritising of one thing over another. For example speech over writing, words over pictures, sight over touch, men over women etc. His point is that, in thinking like this, one fails to see the merits of what has been treated as of lesser importance. The neglected and opposed counterparts, are worthy of our love and attention. Some of the binary terms he 'deconstructed' include; reason vs passion, masculinity vs femininity, profit vs generosity, high culture vs low culture. In doing this, Derrida was proposing that it gives understanding of the underlying conflicts beneath these terms, and thus can enable us to live more intelligently. We can then see that both sides have merit, even if both were not wholly true.

It is obviously good to see both sides of any debate, but the glaring flaw in this idea is known as the middle ground fallacy, or the false compromise fallacy. This fallacy says that the truth of any conflict of ideas resides in a middle ground between opposed views. But why should that necessarily be the case? It may actually be the case that one view is completely right, while another is completely wrong. A compromise between the two may lead to a sort of disastrous, watered down 'group think'. Of course, if absolute truth is inaccessible, as philosophy had found it to be, then all views must be treated with equal merit because no objective truth can be established. What Derrida did establish, especially with language, was that there are almost an infinite number of ways to look at something.

He did talk about how equality has been favoured over inequality, and how sometimes unequal relationships like, for example, parents with children, or teachers with pupils, can be preferable. He didn't want to remove all hierarchies. However it's not hard to see how the postmodern notion of relative truth finds its foundation in his thinking. If all 'truths' can be deconstructed, then all 'truths' must be equally respected, especially the underplayed ones. The problem is, the victim of this 'levelling of the playing field' is any claim to objective Truth. A level playing field is good, but if everyone plays by their own rules, then the overall game is impossible to play! There are always two sides to an argument, but that doesn't mean that there is truth in both, or in none. It may be that one is absolutely erroneous, while the other is absolutely correct.

For Derrida, our trouble lies in the desire to find tidy solutions to our problems. For him, this is crudely simplistic thinking, and not the way to see wisdom, which doesn't reside in a fixity of position. To see this is mature, positive and even glamorous! In other words, confusion and doubt in life are evidence of a grown-up mind. This is indeed the only conclusion to come to if we shut out any objective revelation. How else may one have access to clear truth in a pluralistic society? Derrida saw this confusion as a beautiful kaleidoscope, but the Biblical view is that this is more like a broken mirror.

As with much of the ideas of philosophy, taken from a Christian perspective, the thinking isn't without some merit. Therefore I have in this book been very careful not to take a stubbornly opposed view to all the ideas of Western philosophy. There is much to agree with. For example, in Derrida's problem with 'Logocentrism'; that is, the mere use of logic and reason being assumed to give us access to truth over and above, say, music or art (and, of course, I would say 'faith'). He stood opposed to adherence to the idea that clear definitions and reasoned language are the best way to

communicate. Important things we feel through other means cannot be expressed in spoken or written language. He was correct in his observation, for example, that a prioritising of the concept of IQ and academia, when looking at intelligence, tells us little about other meritorious aspects of a person. Things such as emotional, social, creative, or even comedic capacity and intelligence. The fact he recognised this imbalance, and sought to correct it, is to be commended. The biblical teaching (1 Cor 12) of different 'gifts' given to all the different individuals within the church, and how they work together as a body, should be an antidote to what Derrida saw as lopsided intellectual arrogance. Some of the most obvious descriptive words that the Bible uses for intelligence (wisdom, prudence, understanding, cunning) are used, not of an academic, but of the artist and artificer Hiram, who built Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7.14, 2 Chron 2.14).

Who would disagree that it is good to always consider the other point of view? That is indeed what I am attempting in this whole book! Much of what I have been saying about the arrogant, and over optimistic reliance on reason, is expressed by Derrida. He correctly realises there is a limit to what logic and reason with language can access in terms of truth. He holds out hope in art etc. His outrage at the arrogance of the claims of reason don't seem eccentric when we look at the shameful atrocities committed by rationalist western culture in World War two. Systematic "rational" extermination by the Nazis, the use of scientific rationalism to produce the atomic bomb etc. We shall consider this more fully in the chapter on Ethics.

Having said this, what Derrida is missing is that the crucial thing, that is beyond reason, is biblical 'faith', and this is the real conduit to access legitimate knowledge. It is by this faith that God has enabled us to understand His revelation. God has chosen language to convey His revelation, and the faith He gives is the way the

inadequacies of language, and its epistemological limits, may be overcome. Once again I stress that this faith is not a blind belief without evidence, but a God given recognition, enlightening the mind as one reads the truth.

As Francis Schaeffer again points out in his book 'He is there and he is not silent' (In the chapter - *The Epistemological Necessity: The Answer*); human beings are verbal communicators. If the triune, communicating God, created us that way, then it's not surprising that He has also given us a way to give and receive knowledge by language. Not *exhaustively*, but nonetheless *a way*. Even a way that He Himself has used, by written or direct speech. If we attempt to understand reality without God, in the philosophical, autonomous way I have been describing thus far, then there is no way to trust our language or wider communication, or any meta-language that underpins them. We cannot truly communicate Truth at all. Of course, a natural contradiction arises because people do not function like this, even if they reject God. As Schaeffer puts it:

"In reality, how do we find language operates in the world? Surely we find it is like this: Though we do bring our own backgrounds to language, which gives the words a special cast out of our own backgrounds, yet there is also, with reasonable care, enough overlapping on the basis of the external world and the human experience to ensure that we can communicate even though we fall short of exhaustive meaning of the same word - our words overlap, even while they do not fit completely. And that is the way we all operate in the area of language." So, there is no need to go to the extremes of claiming full understanding or, contrariwise, no understanding at all!

The doctrine of the 'perspicuity of scripture' addresses much of what I have just said when it comes to reformed Christianity. This explains that the Bible is clear enough to be understood by anyone, especially those parts necessary for salvation. This being said, it is

only deeply understood spiritually, by the believer with the illumination of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2.14), and the doctrine doesn't mean to say that there is no need for interpretation. With regard to the unsanctified person, they don't receive or recognise the things of God. The understanding is utterly inept to receive the rays of divine light; it is prejudiced against them. This is because of the corruption of nature by the fall, and through the confirmation of this disorder by customary sin. The light shines but they don't comprehend it.

There is the real problem of 'differance' to address though, when it comes to the Scriptures infallibility. Could we have this deconstructive problem with the Bible? What if other writings of the apostle Paul were discovered? Surely it would change the meaning of what he said before? The answer is - no, the doctrine of plenary inspiration, and a complete canon discounts this (we are prohibited at the end of the first book of Moses and the last book of Revelation from adding or subtracting any words from the scriptures). Also the fact that through faith (as we have defined it thus far) God Himself is present in the Holy Spirit as the true believer reads His word. Therefore enabling the Christian to gain a true understanding of what they are reading.

'Differance' and 'Difference' is a problem with *human* writing, but there's a crucial sense in which the Scriptures are above this; the inward gift of faith is given by God in order to be able to recognise the Truth of it, and its meaning, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. In this sense the Bible isn't a 'dead' text, but a 'living' book. Without this, people are indeed at the mercy of their own subjective interpretations.

Once again, philosophy's autonomous refusal to include God in its reasoning makes it impossible to find an epistemological footing. With Christianity the provisional problem is solved by the complete canon of Scripture, and the charge not to add or take away. In the post-modern world there's 'nothing outside of the text' (that is - all

practices of interpretation which include, but are not limited to, language), but when it comes to God's word, it is sufficient because the Author truly informs and represents it to us. The conclusion of philosophy is that everyone is an unreliable narrator. This is not true of God. The Bible even includes its own rules of interpretation. In this case 'presence' really makes a difference! Therefore the Author isn't dead (as Roland Barthes put it), but resurrected, in more ways than one! He has completed and closed the scriptures as a canon. No additions are permitted to change its meaning. It is not an exhaustive truth, but Truth nevertheless.

Indeed, when it comes to Semiotics and plurality of meaning, I could make reference to how the Bible doesn't restrict itself to one form of language. It uses extensive symbols, metaphor, poetry, parables, miracles, and 'types' within its language, but with a unified message. It also contains surface and underlying layers of meaning in various places. The accusation of people such as Mikhail Bakhtin that novels are not independent unitary creations but culturally influenced by a specific time, cannot apply to the Bible. This is because it was written over a period in excess of 1600 yrs, by over 40 different writers, from fishermen to kings, spanning very different cultures, and yet agrees with itself as if written by One Mind. The issue of different perspectives is used to advantage in the obvious case of the four gospels, for example. Where we have the same period of time looked at from different perspectives, in order to focus on different aspects. Far from obscuring the truth, or giving a multiplicity of truths, these all work in harmony in order to strengthen the Truth. The Bible does this in other parts also.

Another vital point to make is the importance of Christ being the ultimate prophet, the Logos, or 'the Word made flesh'. Christ not only spoke, but actually wrote with His finger (John 8.6-8) - the finger of God. Drawing attention to the fact that He can give the Authoritative Word Divine. Aligning Himself, not only, with instances

in the Old Testament when the very finger of God writes objective judgements (Ex 31.18, Dan 5.5), but with language itself. Only in recognition of Him can Logocentrism be a guarantee of Truth. Goya painted a picture entitled *'the sleep of reason produces monsters'* as a warning against abandoning enlightenment optimism in reason. But to Derrida, the waking nightmare was the failure of language or logic to bridge the gap between ourselves, and what language presents to us as ourselves. The truth couldn't be shown. Once again, the inadequacies of the autonomous route has led philosophy inevitably into that famous plague of darkness, epistemologically.

 Structuralism seemed to give an epistemological foundation, but its shortcomings were soon realised by people such as Derrida. It gave a surface structure but couldn't go deeper into the 'soul' of a person. It also claimed its authority on timeless and universal structures forming a self contained system based on binary oppositions. However the elements of the 'signifiers' carry meaning only in relation to each other. This is purely arbitrary, based solely on convention, if we read reality as a closed system without God. They must be both provisional and relative, never self-contained and objective.

 The human disappears in these language games. What happens to the famous Cartesian proof of self-identity- "I think therefore I am"? The "I" must be subject to use not meaning, and therefore becomes a language fiction. Jacques Lacan thought the idea of self is a creation of language, an illusion that comes about when we start to speak. Structuralism cannot explain what motivates the 'language using' subject - the individual. It has no answer as to how personal thought got into the system of language in the first place. In many ways this book is an attempt to show how a person can return to consciousness after drowning in this philosophical mire. I think this drowning is what is being described in Revelation 16.3

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea."

The postmodern disillusionment of thought when it comes to language is merely a result of the inadequacies of reason. Just like Hume exposed much of empiricism as mere convention, Derrida exposed rationalism in the same way. In many ways postmodern thought is a vindication of Christianity's claim that faith, not scientific rationalism, is *the* only way to find objective truth. Unfortunately, instead of humbling people, rebellious humanity seems to have concluded that Truth cannot be known if the alternative is to seek Truth through faith in God.

Po-Mo = No know.

The escalation of doubt concerning the existence of self, objective truth, and language's ability to convey meaning, has led to what has been called the 'postmodern condition'. Modern philosophy began with Descartes and his attempt to discover a realisable truth, and, even though he had to sacrifice a lot of reality in the process, he claimed to have found it in the empirical foundation of cognition itself. Unfortunately, for philosophy, we have seen that the foundation collapsed under philosophical scrutiny.

Philosophy had always existed and expressed itself through language, but now the very foundation (that language can convey significant meaning) was proving to be an illusion. The persistence of three big realisations, and their inescapable conclusion, were emerging as a crisis for scientific rationalism which could only lead back to scepticism on all sides. The first was that thought itself could no longer be guaranteed as possessed by the individual. What exactly is the Cartesian "I" after all? The second was that the

language we think in cannot be linked in a meaningful way to the outside world. The third was that language is always changing, with its autonomous shifting signs. Where does this leave philosophy, logic and science? Nowhere.

The 'writing had been on the wall' ever since the beginning of Philosophical thought. The problem being first the existence of the wall, then the meaning of writing itself! The ancient Athenian philosopher Cratylus had reached this scepticism many decades before, refusing to speak because he considered words and their meanings unstable. Much later, Nietzsche insisted that language could not be equal to reality and could only serve as a metaphor for it. Knowledge for him was that which was most strongly imposed upon everyone else.

The postmodern scepticism is not a weird idea of philosophy, but an inevitable outcome of the determined path philosophy had chosen. This blindfold, resulting from the restrictive determination to only use rationality and empiricism, had led philosophy to fall into a pit. A pit impossible to climb out of. The blind philosophers find themselves at the bottom, asking themselves questions of which the reply is always "I don't know", or "We can't be sure."

After Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein initially had faith in logic and the formal structure of language. His central idea was based upon both language and the world being formally structured, and the fact that this can be broken down into its component parts. He said language is made of certain assertions about things:- that is, propositions that may be true or false. He also said that the world is made up of facts:- that is, things being in a certain way. These two things work together in the same way a model or a picture is an assertion, or proposition of the thing they depict. Therefore for him, any proposition of language that doesn't picture real world facts are meaningless language games - such as the phrase "killing is bad". To him language was an exchange of pictures that the mind models

for us. Furthermore people engage in different language 'games' (or different ways we use language for various purposes) which need to be recognised in order to make sense of what is meant.

The glaring question is; Why should this structured logical language be ordered as it is? Why should language relate to the world like pictures on a map relate to the reality it pictures? Who or what gave it such structured order? If fallible people had invented it, the call for more precision in language might just mean more precise errors, and ultimately must be discounted. Certainly, Wittgenstein discounted any ethical or religious discussions as meaningless because the things talked about were beyond the limits of the world. That is, the concepts and values, to him, weren't picturing actual things, therefore they were beyond the limits of language. Of course, he was seen as a champion of the sciences in this. He thought that language consisted solely of propositions, but later he became his own critic, questioning his once firmly held belief. He thought that the point of philosophy is to help the fly out of the bottle, but I'm not sure his picture correctly relates to the facts. Philosophy has led into a pit, not out of a bottle! It is interesting to note that he seemed to have become somewhat religious during his war years (although not in any conventional sense). Apparently he carried Tolstoy's 'Gospel in Brief' almost everywhere he could, and could virtually quote it from memory.

The contention of Wittgenstein that language isn't sufficient to convey human expression, is somewhat mirrored in the thoughts of Augustine with regards to God Himself. He argues that although God is what we need, God's nature evades human expression. Like an image of the divine reduces Him, so words can trivialize Him. Who would argue that the Transcendent can be truly captured, contained, and adequately expressed by words. However this should not mean that words cannot be used as a starting point, or the beginning of our understanding, but certainly not the end. He

suggested using the Latin word 'Deus' as a 'launch pad' into the realm of the inexpressible. "When that sound reaches" your ears," he wrote, "think of a nature supreme in excellence and eternal in existence." This Christian meditation upon God is far from the Eastern form of emptying the mind, but filling it with the sublime thoughts of God. God has made us in His image, and He is the Logos - the Word. We didn't make language, in many ways language has made us.

Derrida and Ferdinand de Saussure further pulled language off of its structured tower. As we have seen, Derrida showed that although we use language to think and communicate, we can have no certainty that it relates to any reality outside of the text. Our thoughts are trapped within it. Saussure agreed saying "Language's relation to the world is arbitrary, it does not signify reality." In other words, we use it to describe and explain reality, but it bears no real relationship to reality, and is always changing. The firm structure of language had been exposed as a fluid, not a solid! Its relationship to the Truth had to be seen as doubtful. Of course science and logic fall with language, and as I have already mentioned, the provisionality of science means one cannot firmly believe in the fixity of "laws". Add to this that the idea of the 'objective observer' has been put into doubt by Einstein's theory of relativity, Bohr's quantum mechanics, and Heisenberg's Uncertainty principle. All of which place the observer as central to scientific knowledge.

Social and political history do not escape application of the 'postmodern condition'. Foundations fail, once more, in doubting the idea that Enlightenment reason and science have produced progress in a rationally ordered society. The 20th century has seen Fascism, the collapse of Communism, and free market Capitalist greed with almost mafia style economies, and environmental disasters. All this causes scepticism and a sense that there must be something wrong with so-called 'objective reason'.

If language was an illusory picture then Goya could be seen to preempt, and lament, truth's demise by painting a real picture. In the same way he addresses the danger of abandoning reason in the painting 'the sleep of reason' he painted another entitled 'Truth has died'. The collapse of language as a vehicle to convey truth would not have happened without a stubborn refusal to accept divinely revealed truth. The Bible clearly explains that, like reason, language is God given and therefore, coming from the source of truth, has a basis for being a largely reliable way to convey meaning (it doesn't follow that because there are some misunderstandings, then there is no understanding at all). This is true even though God curbed humanity's hubris at Babel's tower by making a multiplicity of languages thereafter to divide this proud earthly kingdom. At Pentecost we see in many ways a reversal of this in the Kingdom of God.

We have already seen that Foucault laid the foundation for the post-modern knowledge principle. That objective knowledge was inaccessible and knowledge must therefore be local to the 'knower'. The idea of truth, as an assertion that corresponds to reality, was especially rejected in favour of other theories of truth. The 'coherence' theory- that truth is that which makes logical sense to everyone, was also rejected, along with a more pragmatic idea of truth as something that just works for us. The only theories of truth left were 'constructivist'' (social relativity), and 'consensus' (the majority view- if we all agree). Even these are practically rejected by Postmodernism, but 'Critical Theory' would revive these last two for its own ends.

Where does the postmodern condition leave epistemology? Well, Postmodernism *claims* knowledge on the one hand, in order to *deny* knowledge on the other. It claims to know that the structure is unstable, and therefore, anything built upon it cannot be trusted as objective truth. One wonders why the initial foundational claim is

sound? Or to put it another way; can you really know that you can't know? Is all this not just the sandy foundation talked of by Christ in the gospel of Matthew?

The caricature of Postmodernism is that it says "All truth is relative… except this one!" Which is obviously something of a contradiction. Of course the argument of Postmodernism is a great deal more 'slippery' than that. We can actually agree with the conclusion that objective truth cannot be found by philosophy alone, without God. In actual fact, what Postmodernism is really saying is that we can't have access to know whether something is or isn't true. It is not denying that there may well actually be a Truth. The *claim* to Truth is the issue, not the existence of it. It challenges the idea that people have any access to a neutral vantage point with which to observe the 'truth' of reality objectively. Postmodernism takes issue with all objective truth *claims*, and is incredulous towards all meta-narratives based upon them. It is, of course, about 'authority', or what philosophy calls 'warrant'. I needn't reiterate where the Christian gets his/her warrant, suffice to say we have one, and philosophy's *own conclusion* is that they have none. If epistemological certainty was philosophy's goal, it has palpably failed. The problem is that since the optimism of the Enlightenment, philosophy has managed to move the goalposts, then remove them altogether! The conclusion of decades of philosophical enquiry is inescapable, namely, without God, objective knowledge is impossible to find. There is simply nowhere else to go, other than God and His divinely revealed, self contained, and self authenticating words. As the apostle Peter put it when Jesus asked him;

"Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter could recognise the truth. He could 'see' it was true when he heard the words. This is the 'faith' I have been pointing to. A God given realisation, a divine insight, based on evidence. Just not the type of evidence that Enlightenment philosophy would readily accept, but evidence all the same. The evidence of personal testimony from a trustworthy source, and the inner sense to recognise it as such. It is faith because it isn't based upon sight, or any physical sense, and goes beyond even reason itself. But it isn't irrational, or blind. It's most reasonable to trust in someone who you clearly perceive to be there. That perception, when it comes to God, is the gift of faith.

A Critical lens

Introduction
The failure of philosophy to find a firm foundation for objective truth has had far reaching consequences. Crucially, when it comes to 'self'. If one is 'free' from the 'constraints' of objective identification, then a person can identify as anything they want, because the truth about such things is merely relative. This is exactly what has happened, especially in the area of gender and sexual matters. The problem with this, as we have already seen, is that Truth is not actually a constraint, and to be free from it brings many troubles into one's personal life and into society. What has started in the philosopher's study has filtered down into the universities, then out into the general public, and then, of course, to the politicians (who crave the votes of the general public), and to industry (who want their money). If 'truth' is 'that which corresponds to reality', then whose 'reality' are we talking about? Science and logic can no longer rescue Truth, as both are now treated with suspicion and scepticism. This is because of such philosophers as Foucault and Derrida, and because without God there is no intellectual basis on

which to ultimately place trust in such things. Postmodernism is the death of objective truth, but a social movement has asserted that the one 'truth' of postmodernism (that no meta-narrative must rule any other) is to be defended at all costs as if it is objective. This is a consequence of the tension between humanity's desire for some sort of foundational truth of its own making, and humanity's own obvious epistemological limits without God.

 In the realm behind all of this is the work of a master puppeteer, pulling the strings in a subtle strategy. Satan lures society and individuals into a further unholy decline. In chapter one I have already attempted to show that this is the driving force behind such thinking whether the philosophers know it or not. I am not talking about conspiracy theories and secret societies here. I'm merely pointing out that there is a demonic agenda at play upon people's minds, and if one steps back and traces the outcomes of the stages in philosophical thought, then we can see it seems to conform to a strategy designed to resist conformity to the standards of God in Christianity. This leaves the individual devoid of Truth and any real sense of self. Of course this is exactly what the Bible describes as going on behind the scenes (Revelation 12.3-9). It is particularly pernicious because it shuts down debate. If subjectivity rules, how can one particular group even comment on the 'lived experience' of another? They can't, and must therefore be silenced.

Marx and Freud

   This socio-political movement can be collectively brought under the term 'Critical Theory'. The philosophy of such men as Hegel and Marx was influential in this 'zombie -like' revival of deceased 'Truth'. In a crudely, over-simplistic way it frames culture, and society in general, in a neo-Marxist framework (after traditional Marxist ideas had failed politically, and its predictions failed to materialise). Critical Theory constantly seeks to interpret things by looking for power

imbalances. This is obviously influenced heavily by Foucault, but Postmodernism in general has been adopted by various movements to help further a socio-political programme. Critical theory is applied by academia in a sort of 'magpie' way, being picked up and mixed in, and applied, to promote whatever the agenda may be. The humanities, social sciences, and science itself are all subject to various theoretical models with which to view them in a critical way. Inherited from Marxism is the notion that the point of philosophy isn't merely to understand the world, but to change it.

 It is important to understand how the re-reading of history taught by Michel Foucault influenced people like the left-wing literary critic Raymond Williams, who came from the tradition of the Frankfurt School. He coined the term 'cultural materialism', which seeks to analyse culture based upon the ideas of critical theory; that is, they widen the class based analysis of traditional Marxism to their favourite marginalised groups. Especially looking at how dominant forces in society use culturally important texts to validate certain values over others, in order to instil these upon the cultural imagination of that society. It is not hard to see how this may be applied to criticism of Christianity and the Bible. This is a particular form of western, academic, neo-Marxism which crudely assumes that everything that happens in the 'superstructure' (such as the arts) of a society is the reflection of the hidden underlying 'infrastructure' (socio-political ideology) of society. Therefore Critical Theory looks at everything through this particular 'lens'. This creates 'heroes' and 'villains' of certain groups, just like Marxism assumes the working class are always good and Capitalists are always evil.

  Once again, I must accept that this cannot be dismissed out of hand, seen from a Christian perspective. Capitalism has in many ways been used by what the Bible calls 'the World' or 'Babylon' to seduce society. People are exploited in many ways. However the much deeper 'infrastructure' isn't fundamentally man-made, but that

pernicious 'old kingdom' (that we looked at in chapter 1) that has been around from the beginning. There are underlying dark spiritual forces at work ('doctrines of demons' as the Bible calls them), and they are just as active in exploiting Marxist ideas, as they are Capitalist ones.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis was also a big influence on how critical theory developed. He emphasised the unconscious 'drives' which lie beneath our conscious, surface actions. He said that these can be repressed, but not forever, and the repressed force beneath can surface. This is similar to Marx, in that he saw an unconscious element in the economic infrastructure of society. The return of that which is repressed was, for him, revolutionary! The link to critical theory is the idea of an underlying subtext to human activity, and this idea is applied to all manner of cultural phenomena. The Frankfurt school especially married psychoanalysis to Marxism. They analysed the text like Freud would a patient, to look for the underlying 'textual unconscious'.

Structuralism and Semiotics

As I've already touched upon, Structuralism was another major factor in the development of postmodernism and its application in the form of critical theory. It had its origin in the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose key idea was that language is structured into a system of rules such as the arbitrary relationship between the signifier (such as C-A-T) and the signified (such as the concept of a Cat). He predicted the development of 'Semiology' - the wider study of these signifiers, or signs.

Jacques Lacan then came up with the idea that the unconscious is like a language. This idea he termed 'structural psychoanalysis', and was obviously influenced by Freud, but also avant-garde Surrealism, with its dreamlike imagery, which embraced symbolic

realms. This was a further rejection of 'realist' styles of art and thinking.

This is where Roland Barthes comes in. He was a cultural semiologist, and saw structuralism as not limited to just literature and art, but to any number of 'sign worlds' such as fashion, advertising, media, sport or graphic design. He attempted to find an underlying structure, or language in these things, like a sort of coded 'grammar'. Barthes worked out a complex method for analysing the 'narratives' of these things. Like the anthropologist Levi Strauss, he saw a common structure shared by these narratives. He looked for patterns, units, and rules to understand cultural phenomena. His assumption, like Freud before, was that of an *unconscious* underlying structure that determines the overall form of things. When he talks about the 'death of the Author' he means that readers, to a greater or lesser extent, are as much creators of narratives as authors are. He viewed authors as just being channels through which language speaks. In his view, 'Readerly' texts are ones that the author is trying to impose a particular reading upon the reader. Whereas he preferred 'Writerly' texts, in which the reader participates in the creation of the meaning, like in experimental writing, poetry, and song lyrics.

I have already talked about the 'death of Man' as a living soul. Here we see Him dying as the 'subject'. Barthes saw as an illusion the Enlightenment notion of 'Man' as the centre of the cultural process, a creature able to dominate or subdue his environment through his reason. This of course is in direct conflict with the Bible's account of creation, where Man is endowed with reason and charged to keep the garden and have dominion over creation (Gen 1.26). Barthes sees us as controlled by systems, and as having limited control over our destiny. Therefore he calls for a reconsideration of the concept of the 'self-realised' or 'self-expressed' individual. We're, in essence, just parts in a larger

faceless and mindless system, which can be recognised and deciphered by semiotical studies. Once again I'm careful not to condemn the philosopher's ideas out of hand. Much of what Barthes noticed, is akin to what Christians might recognise as the 'seduction' of the 'worldly' system which the book of Revelation calls Babylon, and how it (like a great city, or an alluring prostitute) uses various means (like the media, advertising, the entertainment industry, and popular culture) to beguile an unsuspecting generation. In light of this, it is interesting that French sociologist Jean Baudrillard encourages the undermining of what he sees as oppressive systems with what he terms "seduction" and "beguiling".

Some post-structuralists developed Barthes' idea further. Julia Kristeva, for example, who mixed Marxism, psychoanalysis and Feminism in a complex way. The basic idea being an unspoken unconscious precedes any future meaning, and this 'unconscious force' can disrupt adult life with its ideas, such as "essential woman" or gender as a category. She saw structural systems as a 'mosaic'. The novelist Umberto Eco saw them more like a 'labyrinth' with no "correct" way to journey through. This is a paradoxical type of epistemology, which sees life and knowledge as structured, but not prescriptive. It exalts the subjective individual , but the 'self' is destroyed!

Louis Althusser taught 'structural Marxism' - that ideologies are used by authorities to exercise power by ideas. The ruling elite use ideologies to serve their cause, but these ideologies are always contradictory, flawed and dangerous. The ideology imprisons those ruled by it, and therefore they remain captive. But he taught that if we realise and identify this fact, then we can escape the conditioning, manipulation and subjection that dominates us. This is no less than a call to a kind of marxist revolution once again.

These ideas were applied to literary criticism, as I have mentioned earlier. To apply this to Jane Eyre is one thing, but to apply it to the

Bible is quite another. If the Bible is God's revealed objective truth, then to do the former would be like taking apart a picture on the wall of a house. To do the latter would be like dismantling the house's foundations!

Post-structuralism

Structuralism went too far and cried "It's a sign!" wherever it looked! Structuralism failed because it saw everything as being part of a carefully ordered sign system, and in the end the human desire to break free won out again. This time, free from any kind of tidy categories. A new generation desiring to be free from order and structure, asserted that the world wasn't ordered into neat systems, not by philosophy, and certainly not by God. Self rule and self classification is the desire, and if that means an incoherent mess of a personal kingdom, then so be it. In the end the person may say "At least it's my kingdom, and I'll be ruler and nobody else!" The Bible explains that this only ends in the person being like their *real manipulator* - Satan. They become the 'king' of their own dung heap, or the 'Lord of the flies'! Which is the idea behind this ruler's name - 'Beelzebub' (Matt 10.25).

As we have seen earlier, Derrida embodies this 'messy' thinking. He objected to Structuralism's dependence on binary oppositions, and sought to break these down. For example, the binary opposition of Man over woman. His deconstruction aimed to destabilise such binaries and any dominance within them. Here lies the root of the idea of the dominance of the 'Patriarchy' taken up by radical Feminism, or the idea of 'Heterosexual' people over 'Homosexual' people. But if you want to destabilise binary oppositions and still retain your own preferred group, don't be surprised if it all comes crashing down like a house of cards. A supposed dominance may be pulled down, but fundamental categories will disintegrate as well. In the beginning the Bible tells us that God made them male and

female (Gen 1.27, 5.2), but if you don't stand on this truth then you'll soon find you don't stand at all. The radical feminist may succeed in her own autonomy, but Critical Theory will, in the end, pull apart her standard idea of womanhood altogether.

We have also already seen how Michel Foucault did his best to loosen the rigidity of any cultural structures that he saw as constraining and exercising oppressive control and power over marginalised groups within social systems. He rolls back any advance made by Reformation humanism and the use of our reason. He seeks to revise history by saying that all things change over time, including "man", who is not made in the image of God, with a certain unalienable "human essence". This idea of Foucault's is yet another way that modern 'Man' has 'died' in recent times.

It is vital to understand that a dislike of authority is the driving force at the heart of Critical Theory. Especially the Modern idea that reason can dominate the world around us and guarantee material progress. Modernity has been swallowed by post-modernity. However, the traditional narrative favoured by today's militant Atheists is largely still based upon old Enlightenment assumptions that science and reason can provide objective truth, progress, and knowledge, without God. This is a disingenuous attempt to control their narrative and frame the argument as 'science and reason, against faith and superstition'. When, in actuality, it is the abandonment of belief in the God of the Bible that has led to the scepticism of reason in the post-modern project.

Lyotard's work 'The Postmodern Condition' could be considered the new 'bible' of Critical Theory, in that it attacks grand narratives. These he saw as not posing a problem until these narratives grow larger and are taken up by totalitarian authorities, and take precedence over the "little" narratives. These small narratives he saw as needing no more foundational justification than that they are

a basic human construction. We can see the links between Lyotard's ideas and those of
Barthes (the death of the author), Derrida ('reading' things in any number of different ways), Foucault (hegemonic power plays), and others.

He put forward the idea of postmodern science, such as Einstein's relativity and the counter intuitive discoveries of quantum mechanics, which challenge our ordinary experience, as well as our concept of logic. This included other hypotheses such as 'Chaos Theory', which permits randomness and determinism to exist in the same system simultaneously. These seemed to fit postmodern thinking. This has led to a post-modern society, which embraces relativism, and holds an attitude that is sceptical of science and reason. It adopts this attitude in order to undermine their authority and power. This goes so far as to attack the cherished authority of Marxism and Freudianism, not least because these ideological narratives have largely failed in their implementation. However they are retained in spirit.

A Theory for Everything

Critical Theory's epistemology
The fingerprints of Foucault are all over Critical Theory, and no more so than in his epistemology. In 'The Order of Things' he argues for a subjective way of thinking about truth, which changes over time and according to different cultures. He suggests we think in terms of these changing "regimes of truth" rather than seeing truth objectively. Therefore when trying to counter the ideas and consequences of Critical Theory with one of its adherents, by debating about truth, one might assume you both agree on the definition of 'truth' as objective and universal. But this would be a grave mistake, and you will find yourself arguing at cross purposes.

Foucault rejected any fundamental principles by which truth may be determined, and therefore for him knowledge must be "localised" to the knower, rather than "universal". Feelings matter more than truth.

Postmodernism applied to identity politics

The shift from Postmodernism to Critical Theory lies in its application, especially to identity. It began to be used politically and culturally by scholars interested in all sorts of aspects of identity, such as gender, race, sexuality, class, religion, immigration status, physical or mental ability, and body size. It essentially asserts that the group you belong to is more important than the individual that you are.

The fundamental contradiction in epistemological thinking here, is that emerging fields of study relied heavily upon the truth model of 'social constructivism'. This attempts to explain why various subjective identities, based upon 'lived experience' are oppressed and marginalised, but it assumes these social constructions are real.

Critical Theory wrestles itself back to some sort of ethical firm ground, from postmodern scepticism, by finding their 'ground' in 'oppression'. This is similar to how the arch sceptic Descartes found his ground in 'thought'. We could caricature this as saying "I experience oppression therefore I am!" The more strict application of postmodern epistemology (and ethics) have been ignored in favour of one assumed truth, that is forced upon all, and no dissent is tolerated. Namely, that any supposed dominating oppression of a marginalised group is wrong, and that this truth cannot be questioned. This leads to what has been called the tolerance paradox. This says that too much tolerance can lead to tolerance disappearing, because for a tolerant society to survive it must not tolerate intolerance. However if you become intolerant of intolerance, this becomes a paradox.

Once again Marx's influence is seen in that he assumed the neutral moral nature of humanity in applying his ideas. Whereas the Biblical teaching about humanity is that they have a sinful nature, biased towards selfishness and all manner of moral corruption. Therefore their ability to rightly apply their moral knowledge is greatly marred. The proponents of Critical Theory assume the application of their thinking can be done neutrally without becoming the very thing they claim to be against - a dominating authoritative power. This is gravely naive when it comes to understanding human nature. It is the very reason democracy has been successful, and authoritarianism has failed. Because democracy goes some way to mitigate the corruption of human nature.

Critical Theory's socially constructed knowledge and power hierarchies are accepted with absolute certainty in an objective way. Therefore Critical Theory suffers from a sort of 'Jekyll and Hyde' philosophical personality. Marginalised groupings only have subjective 'known-knowns', but it is taken for granted that the overall epistemology should be somehow Known by all. These methodologies come under the banner of "Social justice scholarship" with subgroups like "feminist epistemology," "critical race epistemology," "postcolonial epistemology," and "queer epistemology," together with the study of broader "epistemic injustice," "epistemic oppression," "epistemic exploitation," and "epistemic violence." The idea is that all members of these identity groups have different 'knowledges' based upon their shared lived experiences, but the one universal epistemology of Critical Theory is the reality of systemic oppression.

The key here is that within Critical Theory it is asserted that we must abandon forever 'neutral' knowledge, because it is unobtainable, and nothing is therefore 'value free'. It is held that knowledge which is true for everyone, regardless of their identity is unobtainable because knowledge is inseparable from cultural

values. It sees current knowledge as predominantly white and Western, and no matter how reliably produced, this is interpreted as injustice. Because of the philosophical 'triumph' of radical scepticism, a multiplicity of 'ways of knowing' and identity based 'standpoints' are preferred to a belief that complete rigour comes from good methodology and evidence. It is considered unimportant that this is unlikely to work, because it is seen as more just. It is not necessarily concerned with what is, but with what ought to be in their view.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of analysing the aspects of socio-political identity by way of a framework looking at how they all combine in a hegemonic way, with any number of marginalised identities interacting with others. Its many iterations are therefore complex, but there is nothing complex about the overall idea of intersectionality, or the theories upon which it is built. It really is very simple. Over and over again, the same thing is done - power imbalances, bigotry, and biases that it assumes must be present, are sought out and then focused upon. 'Prejudice' is the single topic, focus, and interpretation, as understood under the dynamics of power by Critical Theory. This informs everything else, and is placed above all other things, including religion. In this mindset all incongruous outcomes can have only one explanation - prejudicial bigotry. In any given situation, the question is to merely identify how it is manifested. The assumption is that, in every situation, prejudice (as recognised by CT) is present, and evidence must be found to show it. Intersectionality is thus a practice which flattens all nuance and complexity, in order to promote identity politics in accordance with its vision. In doing this it incentivises victimhood.

Post-Colonialism

Edward Said was instrumental in the development of post-colonialism as a major area of the application of Critical Theory's ideas. He explored how the Middle East had been viewed by Western culture, and constructed in such a way as to seem 'exotic' and 'mysterious' - an 'other' upon which the West could look from its own perspective. This, of course, was a fantasy, a fiction of its own making, where it is perceived normal Western morality and rationality no longer apply. In this way of looking, the West saw something to fear, but also an opportunity to indulge decadent desires.

This treated the East as inferior and, in a condescending attitude, served to 'infantilize' a whole group of people. This, according to the application of Critical Theory, is done for control over the East, to exercise power, to dominate, restructure and impose authority over another culture. In short, this is no less than colonial subjection.

Said drew from the pioneer work in this area of Frantz Fanon who explored how black people might adopt the ideas of their colonisers. In doing so, the oppressed may come to regard their own culture negatively, crucially, including their own "blackness".

As already mentioned, the main idea is rather simple and without nuance. The overwhelmingly positive Christian missionary movement (by such men as William Carey) is completely swallowed up in the undeniably negative aspects of colonialism, and treated as one in the same thing. Derrida's ideas about 'logocentrism' have been applied to the post-colonial debate;- for example, to the oppressed Indian peasantry, who are seen as doubly oppressed both by colonialism and by the Indian ruling classes.

Because in the postmodern view no-one may have objective knowledge about another's experience, any sense that one culture may help another with knowledge, is seen as intolerable arrogance. But if one man freely receives a candle in a cave, is it monstrous,

and arrogant, for him to bring it over to his friend in a dark corner, because he has first found the light? Was Andrew arrogant to introduce his brother Simon Peter to Christ? The claim of Christianity is the opposite of arrogance, it is a humble acceptance that all men need the light of God's revelation. The only difference the converted Christian sees is that he was once lost and has been found, prior to those he meets who may still be in the condition he once was. This isn't an air of superiority, but an acknowledgment of his/her own previous ignorance and foolishness.

Once again, the key is that this knowledge hasn't come from subjective human 'logocentrism', but from Divine enlightening. If this possibility is denied then, of all people, those who hold to Critical Theory are in the dark. No nuance can be seen, no detail picked out. For example, no acknowledgement of the massive influence of Christianity in the abolishing of the slave trade, except to blindly deny that it was Christianity that was the driver. Even though the personal testimony of men such as William Wilberforce and William Knibb is that their zeal for the abolitionist movement came from their Christian worldview and their deep personal faith in Christianity. The charge is often brought that the Bible advocates slavery (and I don't deny that the Bible has been wrongly used to justify the slavery of people - notably African Americans). This charge is false; all the Bible does is give practical teaching in an age where slavery was ubiquitous. And it should be noted that this was a type of slavery not usually based upon racial stigma. It was Aristotle who believed that some people, who were born natural slaves, were suited to slavery by nature. He thought that they were like domestic animals, and it was actually good for them to be used as a tool. Aristotle's opinion was undoubtedly bad, but the thing that resulted in racism becoming much worse in society was Darwin's theory of evolution.

The command not to murder is the head of a family of sins, including the taking away of someone's liberty. In Exodus 12.16

Moses expands the murder sins to include kidnap or slave-trading *"And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."* It also says in Exodus 22.21 *"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."* In Deuteronomy 24.7 it says *"If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you."* This is a clear prohibition of slavery, but, as Christ explained to the self-righteous Pharisees, (when they questioned Him about divorce Mark 10.5-9), God bears with the practical situation that human societies find themselves in, because of their sin, and suffers certain things that ideally He has prohibited in His perfect law. Therefore the charge that the Bible is pro slavery isn't correct. One of the examples God uses to picture a great sin against an individual is that of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery. So it can hardly be a charge levelled against the Bible that it condones slavery. The abolition of slavery was something hard fought for, and it was Christians who fought and won the battle, precisely because the Bible teaches all people are created equal. Most importantly, the Bible uses the picture of slavery to illustrate the bondage of an ungodly life, and the freedom from it in a spiritual emancipation.

It turns out that the overwhelming history of indigenous people groups has been the dispossessing of one by another, the wiping out of entire tribes with brutal violence, and the enslaving of one another. This is a far cry from the over romanticism that characterizes post-colonialism, and the fictitious idea that, prior to the white-man coming, there existed some kind of utopia. The Bible has always stated that no-one is righteous, and the further people groups are from the truths of Scripture, the more this is apparent.

In the view of Critical Theory, divinely revealed truth, recognised by faith, has long since been abandoned. Therefore, imposing power

from a meta-narrative (which in its view is impossible to verify) is the great 'sin'. So, as in other areas, Christianity is the arch villain, and the target to bring down. Western European power is characterised as Christian, and villainized as having dominated other cultures by subordinating their language, culture, and religion. Ironically, what philosophy had previously accused Christianity of (irrationality, superstition, and primitivity) they now accuse the Christian West of opposing in other Eastern cultures. This is because it is the West's adoption of Christianity after the Reformation that restored humanity's reason. It was the Enlightenment that wrongly made an idol of it. Applying the post-modern knowledge principle, this reason is now regarded as oppressive by Critical Theory. And post-colonialism adds an activist element to redressing what it sees as injustice. By 'decolonising' and seeking 'research justice' it seeks to devalue white Western ways of knowing, in order to promote Eastern ones. Thus equalising the perceived power imbalance; even though Christianity originated in the Middle East, not the European West.

Feminism
As with Post-Colonialism, postmodern Critical Theory has been applied to Feminism. Like a blunt tool, it has lumped Christianity in with all the ills of Mankind against women. No nuance is seen. The fact is ignored that it is the Bible that first taught that women are equal to men, under God (Gal 3.28), and Christianity that treated them as such. Furthermore it encouraged them to service in the church and education, in a society that saw women as second class citizens. The Bible gives prominence to women just as well as men, and treats them as equal, but crucially, made with different bodies and roles (Due to the order of creation, and 'headship' in marriage). It was Moses (by God's command) who first gave inheritance rights to women. Many narratives in the Bible have women at the centre

as 'heroines'. The tendency for Christianity to attract the downtrodden and marginalized (the poor, the sick, the slaves and the women) is what caused the stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, in his dislike of the Church, to say "They have gathered together from the lowest dregs of people, a number of ignorant men, and credulous women, always ready to believe anything, and have formed a rabble of impious conspirators." These were considered the 'leftovers' in society, but it is Christianity that had something to say to them.

Crucially, nowhere in the Bible does it teach that gender is different from biological sex.

The concept of sex (biological characteristics) and gender (social and cultural roles, norms, and identities) was first decoupled in academic and medical contexts in the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. The distinction was popularized and entered broader societal discourse through the influence of the feminist movement in the 1970s.

The Bible, conversely, declares itself as revealed authoritative Truth. It doesn't rely on a social constructivist theory of truth. The Christian worldview understands equality, but also a clearly defined difference. Not a difference in the Derridean sense, but in the common sense. Feminism claims to know the same, but, without fixed reference points, it was always bound to fall to postmodernism's disintegration of categorical truths. The traditional view of man and woman have become victims of that which claims to champion the victim.

Man's oppression and dominance over women, and the unique female experience were subjects already well explored by Feminism and are tailor made for the application of postmodern Critical Theory. The challenge to male domination in areas such as the arts and literature were obvious and legitimate. Different 'waves' of Feminism have come and gone. The so-called 'second wave'

adopted a more militant stance against 'patriarchy' than its predecessor, and interpreted almost everything through that lens. Even Marx and Freud don't escape, and they have become increasingly unhappy bedfellows with Feminism.

Theorists such as Elaine Showwalker, Kate Millett, Sandra Gilbert and Suzan Guber have championed women's literature, bringing it in from the margins. Criticism is made of any male teaching that seems to subordinate women or represent them in derogatory ways, as well as the practice of men writing about women at all. It is asserted that women should write about women. Ironically this is heavily influenced by the man Jaques Derrida and his idea of "difference" - how each individual can define things and interpret their own experience differently from another. The march of Critical Theory was always bound to challenge the exact definition of 'women' and favour self-definition. The old feminism was happy to remain within 'biological essentialism' - the view that biological influences precede cultural ones. But social constructivist views of truth cannot hold to such moorings, and a blurring of categories becomes inevitable. Simone de Beauvoir combined Marxism and the subjectivity of Existentialism to make the point that Man has been defined as a human being, but women as a female, and there is actually no biological necessity for becoming what a woman is expected to be. There is a fluidity in what it means to become a woman. Writers such as Germaine Greer agreed, especially writing against women constructing their bodies as objects of male desire (something Christianity has taught for centuries).

However the post-modern influence has moved feminism to post-feminism, and away from a culture of victimhood to one of freedom to choose whatever lifestyle suits. The previous Feminism came to be seen as authoritarian! This new group of Theorists applied postmodern principles which meant accepting identity oppression as "real" and changed the character of feminism. If a

biological man identifies as a woman, then that must be "real". This "third wave" approach was seen as more sophisticated, and focused on race, gender and sexuality through the concept of intersectionality. Crucially they saw gender as culturally constructed, not biological, and an experience that was real and must be acknowledged in this way. Identity is the focus, and one may identify with a particular gender, based upon a social construct rather than a biological factor. The same goes for sexuality. It is the Foucauldian postmodern knowledge principle that has brought this about. Knowledge is contained within a particular standpoint, and that depends on one's membership of a particular group, and these can all intersect. Therefore objective truth about biological fixity of gender is unobtainable. Knowledge is linked to power, and any such fixity would make legitimate dominance of one identity group over another. The group of biological men who identify as women would become marginalised and oppressed, for example.

Needless to say, Christianity has divine revelation when it comes to Truth and divine command, when it comes to morality, and that includes sexual matters. It has objective morality and a revealed reality- Gen 1.27 *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* And again, the Lord reminds the Pharisees Matt 19.4 *"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female"* immediately going on to talk of a *man* and his wife. No hint of a suggestion is made that the biological sex of man and woman can be separated from the gender terms 'male' and 'female'. God created two human genders: male and female. Satan's perversion is to introduce a separate gender spectrum.

The Bible is the champion of equality, because it sees all people made equal in God's image, with immortal souls. We are now equally 'fallen' sinners - both men and women. However, much of

the reaction of Feminism against oppression has come from the specific sinful behaviour of men against women in many ways. A certain type of misogynistic attitude by men has become known as 'toxic masculinity'. Needless to say, the Bible has never advocated such an attitude, in fact many Godly men in Scripture exhibit what might be seen as feminine traits from a 'toxically' male perspective. Gentle, respectful, non-violent, feelingfull, ready to weep with those who weep etc. This doesn't mean that men should be effeminate. *In general* men are made physically stronger than women. Because of this men clearly have a greater capacity to protect and defend, while women generally have keener emotions more suited to child rearing for example. These are complimentary, and the generalisation doesn't mean men can't have tender emotions, or that women can't protect or defend. The clear will of God is that of different roles for men and women in Christian marriage, and the church, suited to their strengths. This is not an example of dominance or superiority, but of clear objectively defined order with leadership. Something that is nowhere to be seen in Critical Theory.

Queer theory
  What is normal? This is the essential question posed by queer theory. The definition of the word 'queer' lies in its relation to categories which are allegedly 'normal'. Therefore 'queer' is a range of behaviours, practices and issues; and transgression in them, via visible difference from the norm, is celebrated. To 'muddy the waters' or in this context 'queer the issue' is seen as a positive thing, such is the 'progress' of Derridean thinking. Gender and sexuality identity are majored upon in much of this. 'Queerness' is especially defined in relation to those ideas, discourses and narratives which perpetuate that heterosexuality is the normal and thus the preferred, default mode when it comes to sexual matters. As we have seen with Feminism, categories become blurred, then disappear

altogether. Thus we aren't surprised to learn that queer theory is opposed to categories of biological sex, gender, sexual orientation etc. In alignment with the social constructivist theory of truth; all these are seen as constructed by society.

Once again Foucault is the central queer theorist, and argues, along with those who draw from him, that 'sexuality' and 'madness' are things constructed by medical science. In this view, medical science dominates the discourse, and labels people as "normal" and "abnormal". In doing this, it categorises and excludes those seen as abnormal from having a meaningful voice in society. People like Judith Butler have put the argument that there is no 'centre' or real essence to personal identity. This approach has been applied to disability studies and has come to dominate it, and significantly confuse it.

Critical race theory

This development in Critical Theory charts a similar course to Feminism. Initially seeking to establish a black 'canon' of writing. Henry Lois Gates Jr is notable. His 'black criticism' drew from the post-structuralists. Applying postmodernist ideas to 'race' means that the member of a marginalised racial group has a unique voice and narrative whose knowledge must be regarded as authoritative, in the sense that it is "authentic". Therefore there can be no disputing this particular reading of the situation, whatever the member of the group interprets as racist is racist by default. This ignores the danger of misuse by the unscrupulous, encourages confirmation bias, and leaves no way of testing or falsifying theories built upon it in scholarship.

You may think that this is like fighting fire with fire, and sounds racist itself. But this is denied because white people exist in a white dominant society, and an unavoidable moral failure is imprinted upon their character.

It is claimed racism is embedded and the white person cannot escape from it. The psychologist Patricia Bidol-Padva popularised the notion that racism is defined as "prejudice plus institutional power". She posited that because black people are structurally disempowered, they cannot be racist. Therefore it is said that white people are inherently racist. Only white people can be racist because critical race theory has redefined racism in this way. Any attempt to ignore racism (that is said to dominate society) by being 'colour blind', just perpetuates the privilege of white people. As we saw with feminism, the issue arises that racial identity is subject to the same postmodern treatment as all other kinds; telling us that, just like all other identities, there is no essential "black" identity either. This leads, for example, to the bizarre cases of people who are clearly white identifying as black. The influence of Marx again cannot be ignored. He considered religion to be a sedative used by the oppressors for compliance. Critical race theory sees things in a similar way. Christianity is considered the white man's religion (because the Europeans brought it to Africa), used as a sort of cultural opioid to keep the black man oppressed. This is regardless of the fact Christianity originated in the middle east. Furthermore, Christianity has often been the cause of social mobility, not restriction, especially with the influence of the protestant work ethic.

The spectre of evolutionary thought looms large when it comes to this subject. Racism existed long before Darwin, but the influence of his teaching seemed to give a 'scientific' plausibility for it. Instead of the Christian worldview, that all are equal, made by God from the first man - Adam, evolution taught that various 'races' were at different evolutionary distances from the apes. The idea that black people were at the bottom and white at the top was almost universally believed by the atheists of the nineteenth century. Darwin argued that natural selection would eventually eliminate what he called 'the savage races' in favour of 'the civilised races of

men'. Darwin's most powerful advocate Thomas Huxley thought that *"No rational man…believes that the average negro is the equal, still less the superior, of the white man."* Herbert Spencer, who coined the phrase 'the survival of the fittest', developed his Darwinian socialism, and said 'superior races' would properly rule 'inferior' ones, and that the strong were under no obligation to help the weak. It is no secret that the abhorrent practice of Eugenics came from all this thinking.

While modern evolutionary thought has rejected this, it is still inescapable that the idea of different 'races' (the word being used to differentiate more than just outward physical traits, but to describe different types of human in some way) has persisted in contemporary thought and still fuels racism. It is only the Biblical teaching when it comes to origins that counters such views, giving humanity its special dignity and unity. The biblical account of origins is in direct conflict with the theory of evolution. Modern genetics has shown us that there is only one race, the human race, and it is easy for one couple to produce a wide number of skin shade variabilities in just one generation. It makes sense that both Adam and Eve would have placed within them a combination of genes able to produce all other skin tones with different amounts of the universal skin pigment melanin. It is the isolation of gene pools, within different cultures in different locations, that produces the variations we see today. This is just as the Bible teaches, that *"He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts 17.26*. If people realised how closely we're all really related, dating back thousands not millions of years, and that we're made equal under God, would there be nearly so much racism?

The single 'commandments' of 'PM' and 'CT'.

The current social justice movement has no epistemological foundation except the social constructivist theory of truth

(knowledge comes by a group effort, therefore it's not objective, but subject to the 'shifting sands' of historical human opinion). So they seek to use this to their advantage. They decide they need at least one moral standard to feel proud of themselves for upholding better than others, and one they could self-righteously criticise people endlessly for breaking (this is calculated to free oneself from all constraints, especially an objective law of God). The one rule of Postmodernism is that 'thou shalt not have any meta-narratives', no superior worldview to rule others, all must be equal. In effect saying "don't tell me how to live my life!" Standing on its coat-tails is Critical Theory's one commandment "Thou shalt not oppress the marginalised group". To be a 'victim' within such a group is tantamount to original innocence, and to defend their 'rights' tantamount to virtue.

Why no meta-narratives? Because the one thing they realised they knew in a postmodern age, is that they didn't know! In fact they concluded no one could know. Therefore no one could speak with authority, and pluralism reigns supreme. One wonders why they speak with authority on any point then! But they do, in effect saying "All I know is, you shouldn't oppress people." Two questions immediately spring to mind: Firstly- Is that what a Christian meta-narrative does? And secondly- How exactly do you *know* this moral requirement in a post-modern world? It seems that they demand their own version of justice, with a sort of postmodern 'sleight of hand', in an attempt to escape God's justice.   What they were wilfully ignorant of, is that God doesn't refuse to speak.The problem is we don't listen. And if God speaks, *He* can speak with true knowledge and authority to humanity, and He expects them to accept it as such. It is not finite and limited people putting forward the Christian meta-narrative, it is the infinite God. We agree that no mere man can stand 'outside' of his/her experience and pronounce

Truth from a neutral standpoint, *but God can*, and in turn we can believe His revealed Truth.

When it comes to the desire to equalise and level out all uneven power imbalances, it must be noted that it is postmodern 'moral relativism' that rules critical theory. Therefore there can be no overarching judgement made about the morality of the position of a particular marginalised group. Just a blind, blanket application of equity. I'll pick this up in the chapter on Ethics. Suffice to say, if you *do* have a foundation for objective morality, then this will set you at loggerheads with groups that hold contrary standards. Therefore the assumption to equalise all positions, regardless of their relationship with the objective moral law of God, will obviously not always be the right thing for the Christian to do, who lives by that law. So Christianity must necessarily stand in opposition to the thrust of Critical Theory, namely, that of treating in a supposedly neutral way the moral and epistemological tenets of all groups (except those groups that oppose CT!).

When it comes to the afflicting and burdensome hegemonic tendency of humanity, the Bible has always been against the oppressive dominance of one over another. This is recognised in many passages, for example Ecclesiastes 4.1

"So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter."

In this we can see that Christianity actually steals a march on Critical Theory. The crucial difference is that it has an objective foundation to judge both knowledge and morality when considering such things. Not a mindless application, 'across the board', without any judgement of whether the tenets of a certain group are moral. They are legitimised purely because of their status as oppressed, just as Marx does with the proletariat. No moral judgement is

allowed. As already noted, Christianity stands against oppression, but also against failure to call out immorality - as revealed by God. This brings us to the subject of my next chapter.

I will leave PM and CT with a final thought. If we lived in a world where everything was crooked, how could you know what was straight, without a fixed reference point? One would need to be given a true spirit level. The Bible is like that spirit level, a spiritual level. In fact, we could say, the Holy Spirit level! Only by looking to this can objective Truth be known.

As Postmodernism's terrible conclusion seems to manifest in society, unable to discern what is real, with such things as deep fake videos and AI chat bots, humanity will find it increasingly impossible to know what is true. The only hope is to find that immutable reference point. The Bible itself talks about how it is that very thing. In the book of James it gives a helpful comparison, saying:

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." James 1.16-18

The Bible is a good and perfect gift, which is given as 'special revelation' from the God who made ("Father of") the sun and stars, which, it is suggested, are fixed in place in relation to us (as opposed to moving around us - the Bible had never taught that!). The God, who made the mighty sun, doesn't change, and gives us the mighty Word. He is the fixed position from which all objective knowledge and morality can find their bearings, just like we revolve around the sun, or navigate by the stars. Light is a symbol of knowledge. We can trust God and His word not to vary or change. We therefore can have fixed absolute Truth, especially in salvation. We can know what is correct and what is error ("do not err"). He

resurrects us to spiritual and eventually physical life (offering of "firstfruits" raised up) in Christ by the Gospel contained in the Scriptures.

Conclusion - Faith

Romans 1.21 says *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."*

This verse states clearly that there is a knowledge of God in all men. Not perfect knowledge, for how can the finite grasp the infinite? But knowledge of God, in a measure, just the same. Reformed Christian theology calls this the *'cognitio Dei insita'* the ingrafted or implanted knowledge of God. This doesn't consist of a truly innate knowledge that is present at birth (The derived knowledge is called by reformed theology the '*notitia Dei insita'* and is purely derived from the reason and the conscience, contrary to the teaching of the Socinians who taught man's soul is originally a *tabula rasa)*, but is more about the *constitution* of the human mind and conscience. It could be called an *instinct* for God. It is acquired spontaneously under the influence of that specific sense that is implanted in man as a result of him being made in the image of God. This is not a type of knowledge that is acquired by laborious reasoning and logical argumentation. Constituted as He is, man acquires this of necessity, which distinguishes it from knowledge that is conditioned by a man's will.

A distinction is made between this 'innate' knowledge of God, and a knowledge that is acquired of God. This second type does not arise spontaneously in the mind, it arises from the conscious and sustained pursuit of knowledge. It comes from perception, reflection

and then reasoning and argumentation. From this can be known some basic things. By viewing creation (Rom 1.20), inside and outside of ourselves, and by using our God given reason (Rom 1.19) and conscience (Rom 2.15), we can know: that God is; that He must be worshipped; that we must live good lives; that the soul is immortal; that there is reward or punishment, for virtue or wickedness, respectively. This is called the *'religio naturalis'*. However, this knowledge is not adequate. Only by a deeper knowledge in the revelation of God - in the Scriptures (special revelation), can this religious knowledge become what it ought to be. This is called *'religio revelata'*.

While this is the case, the question is; how do we bridge the gap between a natural knowledge, and this deeper knowledge, in light of the inadequacies of reason on its own? How do we first perceive and recognise the truth of what we read in the Scriptures? How do we look for greater understanding of that which we 'know' about the existence of God, gained in the 'cognitio Dei insita' and the 'religio naturalis'. The answer, which I have been at pains to show throughout the chapter, is FAITH. Not just any faith, but a faith which reformed theology calls justifying, or saving faith (we shall speak more of this in the Chapter dedicated to it).

Philosophy speaks of believing and knowing as very far apart. However, they use the word 'faith' in the weak sense: that of merely a belief or opinion with a lack of proper evidence. This, as I have already said, is not the sense with which we use it when we speak of the way we can discern the truth of God's revelation. Immediate insight and intuition are a fundamental type of knowledge, and occupy an important place in science and wider human life. There is not a single endeavour or aspect of life in which we can get along without it. This is the type of knowledge Biblical faith is, but the difference from the mere earthly sort is its divine origin (we could call it an 'illumination'), for it is said to be gifted by God in Ephesians

2.8 *"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."* That is why in reformed theology we call it a 'grace'.

Imagine, if you will, a very clever person. He knows everything there is to know about a certain type of colour. He's an expert in it, he's read all the books. But he's been blind from birth. Then imagine a small child, she doesn't even know how to read or write yet, but she can see. Imagine they both are standing in front of that colour. The child knows something much more fundamental about that colour than the 'expert' in it does. This is similar to a philosophical thought experiment called 'Mary's room', and challenges physicalism by suggesting that there is some fundamental knowledge that cannot be gained by purely physical science, but only by conscious experience. There is a quality about some things, like experiencing colour, that transcends their physical description. This 'sight' is analogous to Biblical faith. We are initially like the blind man. Therefore faith does not arise spontaneously in human nature. In fact it grates against natural human pride. God is the object of this faith, but crucially, He is the Author of it also. It is worked in a person when God's revelation gives birth to a response. This faith carries its own certainty with it, resting not upon itself, but upon the recognition of the testimony and promises of God. This is more certain to the person than any of his/her own reasoning or scientific proof could ever be. That's why the invisible blessings of salvation, for example, become so certain for the person with this type of faith. The *objectivity* of this *subjective* experience lies in the ground upon which it rests. What is this ground? What is the means by which this conviction comes from God, respecting the truth of His revelation? The theologian John Calvin rejected the idea that it can be the Church. The answer reformed theologians point to is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. One may ask, "What is meant by that?" This testimony of the Holy Spirit simply means that He directly intervenes

by working in the heart of a person by removing the blindness of sin in unbelief. In this way the person, who previously had no 'eyes' to see the character of the Word of God, can now clearly see the marks of its divine nature. In this sense the Scriptures become self-evident. The person is immediately certain of its divine origin, just as much as one might recognise the face and voice of his/her own father.

This is the firm foundational, objective certainty of Christian epistemology. Truly justified belief, that counts as real knowledge. As we have seen in this chapter, this is something philosophy hasn't managed to find. This is no dry formalism, but, as Calvin puts it (1, v, 9): *"It is to be noted that we are to be invited to the knowledge of God; not a knowledge which, satisfied by empty speculation, merely flutters in the brain, but knowledge which strikes root in the heart."* The way in which we can sense and feel this knowledge of God in a way which can reach us, is no more clearly apprehended than in the subject of our next chapter - Ethics.

When it comes to epistemology, the place that Western philosophy has arrived at can be summed up in the words of God spoken in Job 38.2 "*Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*" It has shown itself to be foolish, for determining to take the path of human autonomy from God, and then hoping to find a foundation for knowledge. John 1.5, and Romans 1.21,22 aptly speak of such *"And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."*,"*they…became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"*.

I will leave epistemology with Solomon telling us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, and that despising wisdom (that is application of that knowledge) is foolish (Prov 1.7). There is simply no knowing, if it is independent from the One who knows all things in the first place. There are no independent 'brute'

facts that can make any sense to us without God. Our knowledge is derivative from God's. His is primary, unlearned, known all the time, all at once, and noncontingent.

To end on a positive note, with hope - truly, it is the sweet knowledge of Christ that will deliver the soul by applying knowledge of Him in wisdom to seek and find salvation: "*he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?.. honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward,*" Prov 24.12,14. If this Gospel knowledge is mixed with belief, and trust, we have the ingredients of that Biblical faith (working in the mind, heart, and will) that may lay hold on Christ who is our hope - as an anchor fixed in heaven (Heb 6.19).

CHAPTER 3

ETHICS

(Morality)

Falling into a postmodern pit

It is apparent, at this point, that philosophical ethics is in real trouble. Once again (in the same way epistemological certainty floundered) the autonomous human path has led into an abyss. After setting out to trust in human ingenuity, rather than God, what are the conclusions it comes to?:-

- That morality as expressed in language is just emotional noises.
- That the conscious "self", as well as "human nature", doesn't really exist in the way we might assume; so any morality built upon it is baseless.
- That, if belief in a 'transcendent reason' is used alone as a foundation, it tends to produce all kinds of natural evils (even if they are brought about efficiently- as with the Nazis!).

The dawn of this postmodern age is the result of concluding that any moral stability, that would give a firm ground to stand upon, just isn't an option. After all, if we are each experiencing our own different 'truths', and God is disbelieved and disregarded, what else can give a stable foundation? - All must be relative. Language was shown to be a liquid thing, not a solid with stable meanings that can give certainty. It is concluded that the fiction (that language is solid) has been used by the powerful to convince the majority of their own prescriptions, for their own selfish ends. All that is left is increasing ethical scepticism. Postmodern philosophers almost revel in this uncertainty and relativism. It has become a celebration, with people thinking moral abandon is freeing, rather than being analogous to endlessly falling into a bottomless pit! It is like the moral abandon of the people at the foot of Sinai.

This outcome wasn't really new. When Nietzsche mounted a fierce assault on metaphysics, he put his finger on it, realising that every previous moral philosopher thought they were providing a rational foundation for morals, but that morality itself was taken for granted. This was not strictly true, because the Sophist Protagoras had stated (in a rather postmodern way) "Man is the measure of all things" in the 5th Century B.C. By this he meant that people have different relative experiences of things. For example, if three people watch the same football match, from different vantage points (two of them supporting the different teams respectively, and the other a neutral commentator) then all will give a different account of the same game drawn from their own individual recollections, experiences, and biases. Without God to judge things against, moral experience is similar. Not only this, but now the postmodernists would conclude that any moral commentary is just a localised language game.

Of course the Bible does give us examples of multiple viewpoints. For example the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give

four different accounts of the same time period and events; but crucially, just because we have four 'truths' it doesn't negate the fact that there is one overarching truth from which they are all told from. The doctrine of *'verbal plenary inspiration'* explains how this works:- *'Inspired'* means that the Bible was written by human authors; but God prompted and guided them to write exactly what they did, while using their individual personal characteristics. (For example: If God required a poetic personality, He raised up a man like David or Solomon to be an inspired 'penman'. They weren't robotically taken over). *'Verbal'* means that every word is 'God-breathed' (not just the ideas behind the words); and *'Plenary'* means that the Bible is 'Complete or Full' - all parts of the Bible are equally divine and authoritative. Rather than making truth relative, we have an enrichment of the one Truth, given from multiple angles, through different inspired writers, but by One divine Author.

Although many postmodernists seem to revel in the idea of a post-truth age, the actual reality of this in practice would be unliveable. Imagine a world without any concept of universal truth at all (and we're increasingly getting there). The impact on news, politics, justice etc, would be massive. No one could know what was being watched, read, or spoken, was true in an objective way. With the advent of the large language models of AI, able to generate content indistinguishable from actual human text, images, audio, and video, this will increasingly be the case. Not to mention the fact that, although it is an amazing tool, the temptation to be lazy, and let the AI do your homework, will mean many of the next generation won't learn to think properly.

Postmodernism has shattered the Enlightenment's long held belief in the possibility of people using 'reason' to understand objective reality in a way separated from that reality. It is thoroughly sceptical that any such reality even exists. Without this, and any concept of 'human nature', there can be no 'pole star' or 'Archimedean point' to

give us something fixed to build morality from. The concept of a moral 'position' only makes sense relative to something. It is only God who can give such a fixed point to build from. That is why Christ is called the 'CornerStone' - *"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner"*. But philosophy only has *human* truths and ethics, and who can know which of these are the "best". This can obviously lead to terrible consequences. Societies with belief systems, which others find totally repugnant (like widow burning, cannibalism, scalping, or gas chambers to achieve racial purity), cannot be condemned philosophically. If moral values aren't provable, then they are just a fiction, and it is very hard to get agreement between individuals, let alone political parties, governments, and countries. This is why, when we hear politicians attempting to condemn the actions of 'rogue states', they trot out the well worn but vague notion of an attack on our "shared values". No politician of our age can ever talk unquestionably about universal 'Good and Evil', 'Right and Wrong', unless they 'pin their colours to the mast' and ground these things in the Bible.

Although this is the overwhelming situation, some philosophers still hold out against moral relativism without appealing to God (in a similar way to that of Kant). Noam Chomsky argues that morality reflects culture, in its values. Culture itself is something acquired from observations of those around us - our peers. This is a limited data group. From this limited amount of data people make a jump to a moral system based upon it. The more or less data determines how coherent or incoherent one's moral system is. The non-relative aspect of his ethics lies in the fact that this jump is only possible if we have some sort of pre-existing cognitive structures - a lot like we have with language. Universal grammar is a prerequisite for learning language for example. Thus he is arguing for a sort of inbuilt moral 'grammar'. This has been objected to on the grounds it

is not supported by empirical evidence. Here we're really just back to Kant and Hume's dispute.

It seems the weight of philosophical thought now leans towards that of postmodern relativism. This is unsurprising in light of what we have considered in this chapter so far. The road travelled thus far has been away from any distinct universal explanation for ethics, and towards an uncertain future of - truth in everything, and in nothing! This means a necessary variety of positions, and a perceived 'unshackling' from overarching objective rules.

Where does that leave the future? The dehumanising aspect of contemporary culture has led many to blame Capitalism. The individual has been turned into a faceless consumer, ingesting endless new images which 'hypnotise' people into accepting whatever 'truth' is advertised. Life for many people has become endless work in order to facilitate production and consumption. In short, in this view, we have become slaves to the god Mammon. The only moral choice being between products that we end up serving instead of them serving us (This has already been addressed earlier in chapter 2 under the heading - 'A Critical Lens/Marx and Freud').

Critical Theory and Ethics

The realisation of the emptiness that Capitalism can lead to has led many to adopt post-Marxist Critical Theory. Since this has also been dealt with in some depth in the previous chapter, it will be mentioned here in passing with regards to ethics. The unifying idea linking all Critical Theory's thinkers, is that behind much of our "personal morality" are underlying socio-political structures, and therefore little of what we believe is genuinely our own. The term "hegemony" was introduced by Antonio Gramsci. This is the idea of dominance of one authority over another group, especially a political group over a society. It is designed to frame the world in a way that

stresses the role that ideological superstructures can play in caging people in. These can be anything from families, schools, and churches, to the media, global corporations, and governments. Gramsci characterises people as under the impression that their societal world is unchangeable, and this is because Capitalist rulers persuade them that this societal structure naturally makes common sense. Thus vast populations may be controlled, by manufacturing their own oppression willingly. Herbert Marcuse espoused similar ideas, saying that Capitalism makes itself seem indispensable, forcing people to regard themselves as one dimensional, isolated, and having needs that are actually false. Roland Barthes emphasised that society is a social, and ideological, construct, deriving its meaning from complex cultural signs. These men were joined by Michel Foucault, who added knowledge itself to the ideological construct used by the powerful to oppress the weak. He taught that those who hold power only accept "reasonable" thought and behaviour as permissible (dissenters are labelled as irrational or even mad); the powerful convince everyone that their *local* power is actually unquestionably *universal*.

Note, once again, the underlying desire to do whatever one wants, and kick against anything that seems to be a restriction. The fact isn't noticed that the problem itself may be this desire for ethical freedom to embrace alternative morality (or no morality at all). A man may seek freedom from the bounds of society and end up like Diogenes, but as we saw in his case, this is freedom by name only.

The foundational ethical thinking is embarrassingly simple. The marginalised and oppressed group are innocent by virtue of being in that position and part of that group (like Marx demonised the rich and exonerated the poor). The underlying superstructure and those who use it to keep such groups under their control are the evil ones. This may seem a cynical belief, but considered Biblically it is naive when it comes to righting the ills of humanity. It optimistically

assumes that if their socio-political solution is adopted then all will be fine (but all the historical evidence is against this idea).

The new morality is one of 'social justice' and perceived 'identity based grievances'. Critical Theory's ethics tends towards Paganism with a touch of Utilitarianism, which demands no overarching system of rules but making judgements on a 'case-by-case' basis. It is relativistic; the right thing may be different for different situations. It is contextual. Context dictates morality, not the other way round. So there is no real criteria for judgement. This leaves us at the mercy of a judge's individual whims, and relies on a naive Rousseau-like trust in the basic goodness of human nature. At the same time, social justice regards society as deeply prejudiced, assuming that power imbalances exist everywhere all the time, and are utterly unforgivable. The only way to be a virtuous person is, not only to make this assumption, but to assiduously seek out these prejudices and imbalances (which can be hidden behind Liberal egalitarianism) using Theoretical analysis. In many ways it is a reaction against authority. This is against the commandment to honour father and mother (including all legitimate authority), ultimately God.

After the seeming death of absolute morality with postmodernism, CT's social justice provides a revived opportunity for proud self-righteousness. It has emerged from applied postmodernism, and has created a neo-pharisaical generation who disdain their elders, thinking they must right all the wrongs of the past. All they seem to achieve is this breaking of the 'spirit' of the fifth commandment. Notwithstanding, intermixed with the ideology, are many legitimate grievances, for example - the hurtful use of language (something Christianity has always been careful about. Coming, chiefly, from the command not to use the Lord's Name in vain). It is interesting to note that this social justice isn't applied in a neutral way, uniformly across society, but only to Critical Theory's

favoured groups. If a group doesn't share CT's ideological views, then it isn't interested in its defence. Christian people are some of the most persecuted and marginalised people on the planet, but they don't fit CT's agenda. Instead the Christian Church is considered to be one of the powers using ideology to maintain a hold over people, and thus is the enemy. Thankfully it is not Critical Theory that Christians trust in for a defence (especially from Critical Theory itself) but God - "*The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble*" Psalm 9.9*.*

"Here's no mirror to see with"

Instead of finding understanding via the revelatory knowledge given to us by God, philosophy has instead provided a vision to humanity which is infinitely inferior. Admittedly, even with a revealed truth, until the 'veil' is lifted from this life, there are still severe limitations as to what we may understand about the spiritual realm. The Bible describes this in 1 Cor 13.12 *"For now we see through a glass, darkly;"* Nevertheless, the believer may see and gain some significant objective knowledge, especially when it comes to morality and soteriology. Without the 'glass' of Scripture (James uses the term to mean a mirror) little knowledge or moral absolutes can be known at all. Humanity is led into the darkness, huddled together, and told by philosophy to work life out for themselves. This is all we are left with, and is the outlook the American philosopher Richard Rorty gives us when he writes - all that remains ethically is "our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark". You may think that this is a bleak conclusion, and it certainly is compared to the knowledge and 'light' Christianity offers. However Rorty asks us all to happily accept the self imposed philosophical 'blanket of ignorance' that has been placed over us all and over any concept of a 'mirror' to aid understanding. Not only

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this, but to *celebrate* the fact that such a 'mirror' has actually been made to vanish beneath this blanket. Like a magician, dressed as a clown, he calls out to us in the dark, to invent the ethics that best suit our own taste. To do this one must adopt a playful, ironic detachment from beliefs in any large scale concepts of moral utopian truth - even those that come from ourselves. This is because he cannot find a basis for the often cited reason that people give for such a universal morality - that of saying "In my heart of hearts I know [a certain thing] is right or wrong." He asks us to consider what we really mean in uttering such a statement. He also asks us to question the idea of the human soul.

Most people consider that there is such a thing as the fundamental "self" deep down which makes up the essence of "me", and this is somehow connected with truth and reality. With the Scriptures acting as our mirror we may understand such a thing as the human, God breathed, soul. But without it we can only turn away and forget what we really look like, as James says *"he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."* James 1 23,24.

Therefore Rorty (not even bothering to behold his face much) says that as far as such a thing as the soul really exists, it is a thing that we ourselves have put there through our own perceptions. We have pictured ourselves in such a way, not so much as a reflection of reality, but as a self generated portrait which is just a human invention. This is because he regards as a false assumption the idea that the way we experience the world is by receiving raw data directly given to us - like looking in a mirror, or like a camera capturing light. This assumption would then say we gain understanding by applying our reason to the data we have accurately received. However, Rorty concludes that, in actuality, no such raw data is accessible to us. This is because each of us

understands the things we perceive through the way it is tangled up with the habitual use of human language. This divides up the world into ideas and concepts - like the idea of a "cat" for example. We understand things by conceptualising them, and these concepts are learnt through language. Therefore we ourselves are the ones that place this understanding inside of us. We do this by imposing our beliefs about things, onto those very things in the world. We haven't received any data objectively, but our knowledge is a matter of social practice rather than a reflection of what is actually there. Nothing exists for us that we haven't first conceived, given a name (like 'cat'), and placed within. (As I stated earlier, this is exactly what Adam had the true knowledge and ability to do before the Fall). According to Rorty, knowledge is therefore not a matter of facts, but a matter of what society lets us say about things. Our understanding depends upon historical and social context.

To understand why Rorty explains the truth of things in such an existential way, we must understand that he is a Pragmatist. Therefore, as we have already considered, the key thing for him is not so much a matter of the truth being something that best describes how things actually are, but what are the practical implications of accepting a thing as true. He rejects the idea that knowledge is a matter of correctly representing the world like some mental mirror. So, having no true revelatory, truly reflective 'mirror' of Scripture to see things by, he therefore thinks the idea of experience being 'given' to us is a myth. Undoubtedly, as we have already seen, without such a God given understanding, a relative, subjective truth is all that is left. He considers the idea of a universal, objective Truth as some leftover of a bygone age, and all that remains is individual experience - for example: the *physicist's* truth, the *poet's* truth, the *butcher's* truth, *John's* truth, *Ibrahim's* truth, *Jane's* truth etc. He asks why such a universal objective Truth should even exist? For him, in a sort of Nietzschean way, we each

make our own realities, truths, and morality. Of course this is to equate a 'point of view' with 'truth'. But without God that's all truth becomes, and in the area of morality the most disturbing implications become apparent. This is because Rorty thinks "Truth is what your contemporaries allow you to get away with saying" (or Morality, is what you can get away with doing)! For him, philosophical progress doesn't come with more rigour, but with more imagination. In this, one can't help but think at this point that philosophy has broken completely free from any fixed moorings.

Going back to the epistemological foundation of something being true because "I know in my heart of hearts it is wrong", the ethical implications of Rorty's postmodern ideas become disturbingly clear. In his view, this statement unjustifiably assumes there is such a thing called "wrongness", and that the knowledge of such a thing is certain (an *essence* of "wrong" that an *instance* of "wrongness" corresponds to). But absolute knowledge of how things are isn't philosophically possible, and we cannot find any eternal truths about ethics. Therefore any such ideas are just a matter of conversation and social practice, not a transcendent reality. This means that when you are confronted with something that seems to you to be an obvious act of wrongdoing, like taking someone's pet cat and killing it after subjecting it to torture (or doing it to its owner, for that matter), you aren't allowed to conclude that an act of absolute fundamental wrong has been done. That is, if you want to hold a consistent belief, and you have no Biblical foundation for morality. Philosophers like Rorty, in a Socratic way, would force you to question your beliefs and follow those beliefs to their arbitrary logical conclusions. Therefore it is very hard to prove anything is morally blamable. All that Rorty leaves us with is the idea that Ethics is a matter of doing our best, in solidarity with others, to realise a better world. What concepts like "a better world" and "doing our best in solidarity" really mean after leading everyone into ethical

darkness is anyone's guess! He thinks that if we can rely upon each other, then we don't need to rely on anything else. But, as we saw in the previous section ("Evil is Normal"), such a reliance is severely misplaced.

Rorty thinks that one doesn't need a belief, that the violation of an absolute moral law is wrong, in order to uphold human decency. He maintains that, as finite beings, only existing for a short span of time, we can have no such fundamental moral truths, but this doesn't mean that the problems of life cease to matter. This being the case, he says we are thrown into relying upon our own resources. So he appeals to loyalty to others and solidarity with them. But such concepts ring entirely hollow in the light (or the dark!) of what he has more generally espoused about ethics. Holding onto hopes and loyalties, and participating in conversations is all he can counsel people to do. This is rather difficult considering he has removed any objective thing to hold, moral language to speak with, and reason to be loyal!

Rorty tries to sell his idea by claiming it is a sort of epistemological humility not to claim access to some fundamental moral truth. What he fails to grasp is that, before God and in light of conscience, his attitude is a grossly proud and rebellious one. And once again, is a wrestling "free" from the safety of the Divine standards of the Bible, in order to establish those of our own to live by. Judged by the words of Christ, such philosophy is one to die by, not live by. In John 8 Christ was challenged by the Pharisees that what He said wasn't true (because in their mind He didn't have another corroboratory thing, or person, in order validate His words). He responded by saying His testimony *could* be established by the witness of His Father in heaven authenticating Him to them. But since they didn't know the Father by personal conversion, then they couldn't have such a witness, and thus couldn't know. This is what I have been arguing throughout this book. That without the double witness of the

Holy Spirit (proceeding from both Father and Son) attesting to the absolute truth of Christ, we cannot know the Truth, and will be plunged into darkness, and ultimately judged for our sins: - "*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true … my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. -- It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also…Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.*" John 8.12-21.

By this Christ was talking of the cross where only He could atone for sins. These are the profound and serious words of One to trust in, not the playful irony which is all Rorty leaves us with, like a bad joke.

As much as Rorty assumes the value of such things as 'loyalty', he provides no substance for them as virtues - like food without nutrition. But perhaps nowhere else is our sense of morality keener than in matters of the heart. By this I mean loyalty between a couple. Betrayal of one party by another is universally understood to be some sort of negative act - a "wrong" committed. Christianity is clear that this stems from God Himself, to Whom we are to be loyal. The first and seventh commandments are the objective rules that act as headings for the whole family of related sins (and opposite positive virtues that come from them). Of course the Biblical picture of Christ as Husband, and the Church as bride, gives the ultimate standard for loyalty. Perhaps that is why everyone feels a keen

moral sense when it comes to loyalty or betrayal in relationships. This ultimate relationship with Him is what God has revealed to be the thing we're designed for. Despite men like Camus and Sartre claiming that we aren't designed for anything. Even Rorty exhorts us to be loyal to each other, but does so completely without grounds. Without any overarching narrative Rorty doesn't concern himself much with group welfare. Any kind of morality he leaves people with is a poor, private, silenced kind of thing - starved of any real nourishment and dying. Prov 15.14 tells us *"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness"*.

What's to blame?

Who, or what is to blame for the disastrous evils of Modernism? Zygmunt Bauman blames objectivity itself. Plato had dreamt of philosopher kings but the dream had failed - postmodernists now see the problem as being with the idea of finding objective rational ethics itself.

Instead of any grand narrative, now the postmodern world is broken up into groups and individuals, therefore ethical variety rules - like picking 'off the shelf' lifestyles and values. This doesn't seem out of place in the Capitalistic culture we find ourselves in. Things have boiled down to political and moral single issue campaigns, which one may choose as an ideological cause - which then become a personal idol. The ethical landscape is an apathetic 'no man's land' in which absolute right and wrong is unknowable, and any claim to it is seemingly without credibility. Because the one transcendent Truth can't be found by human ingenuity, the attempt to find it, or to proclaim it, is met with incredulity, even offence, disdain, and disgust. The postmodern moral catchphrases resound:- "That's good for you", "Each to their own", and "Do your thing", " Live

and let live", and woe betide anyone who tries to suggest a single Truth for all under God. This is preferred to the acceptance of a Christian worldview. But Christianity certainly wasn't responsible for the evils of Modernism, and aptly predicted, warned against, and provided an explanation for them. We might well ask "why is rejection of Christian Truth preferred?" The answer lies in that natural rebellion to God, outlined in the first few chapters of Paul's epistle to the Romans.

The quest of Modernism's autonomy from God has been shown to have led to disastrous results. Those who have been Modernism's most devout disciples have been Totalitarian States who have revealed themselves to be morally repugnant on so many levels. Was it the very idea of objectivity, and an absolutist attitude, that led to this, or (as I have argued) the rejection of Christian Theism? Many postmodern philosophers, not willing to relinquish their autonomy and accept Christianity, have concluded it is the idea of objectively itself.

The philosophers and intellectuals must take much of the blame. Plato's dream of "philosopher kings" drawn from the academic classes, spawned the idea of an intellectual elite. Kant and others promoted the belief in absolute objectivity through reason. This idea of Modernism was alluring and infectious to our human pride. It reinforced a confidence that these rulers can legislate and govern by reasoned knowledge, quite apart from God, knowing what was best for those under their control. They were wrong.

Therefore faith in such foundational philosophies has failed, but it hasn't led to a return to God. Postmodern philosophers have instead opted for a need for a plurality of beliefs, acknowledging that especially ethical knowledge can't have any foundations. This ethical uncertainty has resulted in moral confusion. Moral 'truths' are local, merely opinionated, choices. This might seem like more

moral freedom, but it is the existentialist 'freedom' to enslave oneself, because of our human propensity to spiritual self sabotage! Any hope of self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-sharpening of moral awareness, ignores the fact that philosophy has removed the monitor, values, and the sharpening stone! Society has become fragmented into a collection of autonomous neo-tribes each with conflicting and changing local moral values. These 'tribes' are made of voluntary members that move in and out of different overlapping sets. These small competing communities *include* individuals based upon self identification; but also *exclude*, becoming necessarily intolerant, despite stressing the need for tolerance. This is because it is a tolerance that celebrates difference, but cannot tolerate "monologistic" certainties such as that asserted by Christianity.

Mitigate human nature

Philosophy would now have to content itself with humbler aims. The modest ethical suggestions of men such as John Rawls concentrate less on overarching meta ethics, but on social and legal agreements in a just society (social contract theory). Rousseau's attempt at a 'social contract' had ended in the French Revolution. Rawls' attempt would be less naive, and more realistic, when it comes to human nature. This is because, like democracy, it would take into account, and try to mitigate, the propensity of humans to be corrupt (just as the Bible had said all along).

He suggests that all people want to further their own interests. In order to do this (to a greater extent than could be accomplished individually) there needs to be co-operation as a society. Working together requires rules, but these must be applied equally to all. However, as we have noted, humans tend towards inequalities, and

are prone to selfishness. This is especially apparent when it comes to social status. Rawls suggests the way to get around this is to choose the principles of justice behind a 'veil of ignorance', so as not to introduce human bias. This idea is expressed by the famous statue of 'Lady Justice' blindfolded and therefore impartial. She carries a set of scales in one hand and a sword in the other, representing equality and punishment. This has become a universal symbol, but it is interesting to note again that it pictures what Christianity has said all along:- That there is such a thing as wrongdoing, that no one is above God's law, it is applied equally to all, and that punishment is just as much a part of Justice as impartiality. In the book of Daniel the fingers of God appear and write on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. Daniel 5.27. "*TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.*" This is an insight into the way God Himself pictures justice as a scale that must be balanced perfectly. A person's moral character and actions on one side, balanced against God's standards and requirements on the other. It is interesting to note that in John 8.6 Jesus stooped down, and wrote with his finger on the ground when He was asked to judge the case of a woman caught in adultery. It could be inferred (from the finger writing) that it is indicating that He is the same Judge here as in Daniel, and that with the authority of God he doesn't condemn her to stoning (which He could have justly done, as the only sinless One present). Some may protest that the scales of justice are thus unbalanced, but, as we have touched upon when we considered 'penal substitutionary atonement', Christ would have taken into consideration His forthcoming work on Calvary in the case of this woman brought to Him. Thus those scales are perfectly balanced because of a righteousness freely given, and a punishment lovingly taken.

Rawls doesn't get his principles of justice from God though. Instead he suggests people can get them from agreement between

us all as rational beings. This just ignores all the trouble that such an idea had already run into since the Enlightenment. The strength of his idea is that it accounts for the fact that people are prone to 'sin'. Maybe it was experiencing World War II and the ruins of Hiroshima that led him to a more realistic and practical philosophy than Rousseau's naive one. The weakness of his ideas lies in the fact that rationality alone had long since failed as an ethical foundation. Nevertheless it was the best governors and politicians had, unless society wanted to apply justice in an purely arbitrary way - such as "If you're right handed, you must stand at the back of the line!" His social contract would prevent people taking into account things such as race, class, creed, power etc. Otherwise people would make up rules suited to their own individual ends. His ideas offer some sort of protection for the poorest and less 'successful' members of society, and, at the same time, allow for people to be free to pursue different goals. This offers no explanation as to *why* this protection must be put in place, it only gives an imperfect solution to that which seems to be a fact of human nature.

"Hold on, let's back up a bit!"

You may think by now that moral philosophy is in something of a mess, and you'd be right. You may also think that it has nowhere left to go for certainty, other than accept what the Bible has declared all along. Moral philosophers like Alasdair Macintyre have indeed sought to return to older ideas, but, rather than relinquish human autonomy, it is to Aristotle, not Christ, that they look to for guidance. This is rather like the response of the people in Christ's parable of Luke 19.14 *"We will not have this man to reign over us"* with regard to Christ Himself.

For MacIntyre, the philosophical ethical landscape is utterly confusing, and there has been some significant erosion of the former certainty that was once found, not in Christianity, but in 'Aristotelian Virtue Theory'. This 'certainty' is because, in his mind, virtue theory focuses more on the people we should be, in a communal society, rather than what we do as private individuals. And this is the thing we should be concentrating upon, rather than a quest for a supposed objectivity - whether Theological, Deontological, or Utilitarian. He sees these approaches as actually peculiarly local, not objective and universal. His claim is that the Athenians had something far more tangible, when considering what made a "good man", in having the virtuous attributes of things like 'strength', 'courage' and 'comradeship'. These virtues came from what they considered were necessary to make a person a successful human being. Such virtues were regarded as essential because they were vital to the survival of small communities. Other virtues were added later as society became more sophisticated - like 'justice', 'self-control', 'wisdom' etc. Thus concrete progress is made, because such virtues are rooted in the historical difference they make to a society, and so may be regarded as factual realities. In this rather pragmatic way he hopes to circumvent the trouble moral philosophy has found itself in.

When it comes to ethics he recognises that It seems for many people that two main philosophical ideas are battling each other, but both are losing in the resulting war. Deontology is accused of being too rigid and 'cold', and Utilitarianism of being unworkable. Some people resort to Platonism, others opt for an unsympathetic analytical, or theoretical approach, but generally most are in a state of confusion.

Macintyre is seeking to repair some of the erosion (and fill the emptiness) that sceptics like Hume and Ayer have caused. He

attempts the redeposition by asserting the ideas of Aristotle have more moral substance than philosophy had previously recognised.

However, the damage seems unrepairable, and these attempts to shore-up things remain as unsuccessful as Chomsky's. Does Macintyre really succeed in shoring up the ethical ground, or just return us to an old house that is falling into the sea along with everything else? The sandy foundation is exposed by the lack of explanation as to why concepts such as 'sympathy' or 'courage' should be preferable if no societal benefit actually results. He vaguely suggests that, with his approach, people will be encouraged to adopt behaviour that becomes instinctively, and habitually, virtuous by tradition. After being ignored by approaches such as 'emotivism', is the solution as simple as reasserting the notion of community and communal values? Were the evils of Communism, or the foolish naivety of Romanticism devoid of such approaches, and did they work? What exactly are these underlying virtues that will produce 'moral behaviour'? He doesn't really spell them out, but optimistically suggests that "the wisdom of the ages" (whatever that is?!) will tell us what these human dispositions should be. Is this really more tangible, and workable, than Kant's rationalisation of wrongdoing as being mere mistakes in logic, or Bentham's pseudo-scientific calculations?

Postmodernism offers little help when it comes to this search for virtues from the 'wisdom of the ages'. If it is only to the history of humanity that we are to look, then which cultures are we to glean them from? Different cultures insist upon different 'virtues'. It would be like the start of a rather bad joke - "A Marxist, a Muslim fundamentalist, a Rabbi, and an Atheist, all walked in a bar…!" However, if it is to the landscape of history that we are to look back upon, even a tertiary look will show the moral difference between countries with a truly Christian heritage, and those of another religion, ideology, or atheistic heritage.

Unfortunately Nietzsche and Foucault have demonstrated that people are adept at reading history in whatever way suits them, rather than being interested in an objectively accurate version of what has gone before. The insistence upon rejection of grand narratives (such as the Bible) and making them a basis for ethics, means that people (who by necessity have to live in groups) are left with the need for codes of behaviour and rules, but have absolutely no foundation for them at all! Aristotle never thought ethics was a branch of metaphysics, for him it was merely political. And politics has never historically been an area known for its ability to find harmonious agreement amongst humanity!

What are the rules? Deontology's morality is coldly logical - but where do logical laws come from? And don't we sense morality to be something more serious than an error in maths? Utilitarianism's happiness calculations throw up scenarios that are clearly wrong to our human sensibilities. If the majority decide that killing everyone in a small group brings about the most 'good', and makes the majority happy, then that's moral! The early seeds of this can be traced back to the Enlightenment. Spinoza had declared that good and evil are nothing but judgments in the mind, and that "virtue" is merely each individual's sustained, rational pursuit of their own well-being. Spinoza espoused an ethical philosophy that was widely, but falsely, decried as atheistic and hedonistic, but we can see why people thought this.

Divine command theory has long been rejected by philosophy because it is seen as just arbitrary rules either made up by God (the gods), or separate from Him (them):- Are they good because the gods command them, or do the gods command them because they are good? - This was Socrates' problem.

So, the question seems to remain, how do we know what the virtues are- every religion says something different?! The solution isn't to return to vague Aristotelian pragmatism, but to Christian

Divine command as it relates to a moral law 'written' upon our hearts; we, being made in the image of God, from Whose Being and character all moral concepts originate. As I have already stated, the Christian God is not separate from His moral attributes - therefore they *aren't* arbitrary. We can know them by a God given faith. (How this can be warranted knowledge, I have outlined at the end of the chapter on epistemology). Now, once you recognise its truth, moral standards and commands can be known. Issues can be solved with the use of the direct prohibition, exhortation, or use of indirect principles gleaned from an all sufficient and authoritative Bible. The Bible is clear, giving not just clear commandments and extensive elaboration on each, but also great sin lists and principles to unambiguously guide character and conduct.

Fragmented moral issues

Feminist Ethics

The failure of philosophy to find a universal moral system has generally led to a rather insular approach. This merely deals with single issues and attempts to place some sort of morality upon them, like an unsteady man perched upon single issue stilts.

One of the more broader approaches is to suggest that moral issues would be seen much better from a woman's perspective because, prior to this, philosophy has been male dominated. It is suggested that women have a fundamentally different moral sensibility than men. For example, the fact that they experience childbirth, and practice childcare, might mean that they would be more reluctant to accept the horrors of war, or place a higher value upon social care and cooperation. If the world was run according to these standards, would everything be better?

The problem with this is that it is certainly not clear that women approach moral issues in a predictably different way than men. The Bible certainly unites men and women under the same human sinful nature, without any moral difference in quantity or quality. There are certainly general differences between the sexes, but these merely amount to a propensity to different sins. Neither men or women have a superior capacity for virtue over the other. There are certainly many examples of wicked men in Scripture, but one of the greatest enemies of God's people was Jezebel, and can we also forget Eve?

Issues

The second table of God's moral law deals more specifically with our duty towards our fellow humans. These acts of righteousness or unrighteousness, in omission or commission, are clearly extremely serious to our moral Creator God. I'll consider some of these below, by way of example.

Sexual matters

Homosexually

If the authority of Scripture is rejected, the idea that homosexually is morally wrong becomes nonsensical (much like everything else!). If it is argued that it is against 'nature' then it is very difficult to really define what such a statement means. However, if we stand upon the authority of Scripture we can understand that humans are made in God's image and are indeed designed for a purpose - both body and soul. Therefore the commandments contained in the moral law (in the headings of the 10 commandments and expanded upon in the rest of Scripture) are not arbitrary rules, but given by the One who designed and made us, both body and soul. Therefore the command not to commit adultery is the chief of a whole 'family' of sexual sins. It may not be clear from a materialistic, evolutionary,

worldview why sexual matters are moral matters, but from a Biblical worldview we can find clarity. Homosexually therefore is clearly prohibited by God because it is against His design for the marriage union between one man and one woman - made equal, but different (Gen 2.24. Lev 18.22). It is unnatural, not in a vague sense, but in a teleological sense that it goes against what God has intended and designed. A design put there for good reason. Therefore it is clearly something damaging, not only to family union, and society, but to individual conscience, leading to much inner unease and pain (Rom 1.27b), not to mention physical harm. It causes the dominion of lasciviousness to rule over a person. Without such an understanding, the notion that homosexually is wrong will seem arbitrary, bigoted, and prejudiced. This is pulled together under the pejorative term 'homophobic'.

At the heart of this issue is the very nature of what homosexually actually is. Is it an intrinsic state, or an acquired behaviour? The tactic of those seeking to justify homosexually has been to shift the issue from one concerned with ethics, to that of Ontology. The objection then moves from a challenge of what is right or wrong, to that of who a person fundamentally is by birth. Therefore the foundation is changed to a question of civil rights rather than that of sexual morality. To question homosexually on those grounds would then seem to be unreasonably prejudiced and bigoted. A further tactic is to use positive language about something that (according to Scripture) is wrong. Positive words such as 'love', 'inclusive' etc. These can be used, for example, to ask "how can love be wrong?" The obvious rebuttal is that people can love wrong things. The Bible calls them "vile affections". Brotherly love is encouraged in the Bible, but homosexually is a detrimental lust. Homosexually is fundamentally different from heterosexuality. It is not the same thing just between people of the same sex. There is certainly no moral equivalence. Generally speaking, homosexuality is primarily driven,

and characterised by, base sexual appetites. The practice of promiscuity is far more prevalent amongst homosexuals than amongst heterosexuals, and homosexual culture is characterised by sexual things. Thus the virtue of loyalty is vastly undermined. Promiscuity promises satisfaction, but results in short lived pleasure at the expense of long term happiness. It leads to excess and extremes, and a person becoming a victim of their own sexual appetites. But it is a bumpy downhill road, like all such hollow hedonism.

The Bible teaches that homosexually is not a question of Ontology in passages such as

Rom 1.24-27 "*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*"

Sexual matters framed Biblically are a case of God's intended design, not a case of being unduly reserved and prudish. Therefore, to go against this design is not something you are *born as* (other than in the inclination to sin), but something that you *turn to* as a perversion of the right desires and ways of acting. Such desires are described as 'unholy', that is, morally unclean and corrupt. The action is thus unrighteous. This is true of all sexual sins. This is why it is common to hear language connected with sexual matters such as being 'dirty', or feeling 'unclean' after some regretful sexual encounter.

If all this is rejected, then it becomes very difficult to justify why the *desire* for extremes of sexual perversion are wrong. The *action* can clearly be condemned on the grounds of consent, but the *desire* could be argued to be innate. Thus such desire towards bestiality or pedophilia can't be condemned on grounds that it could be innate. If sexual desire is something contained in your genes - something you are born with, and thus cannot help, these desires might be justified, or at the least excused. However, most people would rightly recoil from such things. Viewed Biblically, homosexuality is a perversion of what we *are* naturally, and something that can and should be resisted just as much as adultery. Otherwise God would not charge the homosexual with guilt and hold him/her responsible (Leviticus 8.22, 20.13; Romans 1:26–28; 1 Timothy 1:9–11; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Sexual objectification

Of course, sexual sins aren't just limited to homosexuality. General sexual objectification, for example, may be characterised as the presenting of oneself as a sexual object of desire, and allurement, in order to tempt others to sin (one aspect of the "lust of the flesh"). This is to be sexually suggestive, manipulative, and provocative. This is the degrading of a person as a divine 'image bearer' down to the level of a beast, even to just an object.

The specifics of this, both for men and women, is the tendency towards showing off one's body with perceived enhancements, revealing clothes, and ever greater exposure of the flesh. This attitude, for example, is seen even in the use of makeup and such-like to enhance features, like lips and eyes, for the purpose of seductive behaviour in order to attract attention. The Bible gives examples of people who did this - like Absolom or Jezebel. Both of whom are far from being paradigms of virtue!

The objection to this may run along the lines of - "But I should be able to behave and wear what I want. The sin is the other person's, not mine. I can't help being attractive." The response to this is:- Why should anyone think that it is morally neutral how one dresses regardless of its detrimental effect upon others? Be honest, it is obvious to everyone what the intention is. This objection is deceitful, it claims ignorance about one's intention to allure. There may be sin in another, but that doesn't exonerate the individual presenting themselves in such a way. Two wrongs don't make a right. Of course, many are brazen about it, falsely calling it 'empowerment', but the opposite is true. The individual has become devious and blinded by sinful pride, and it's 'ugly sister' - vanity. Prov 30.20 illustrates the protestations of such individuals against such a charge *"Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness."* Prov 21.4 says *"An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin."* Prov 7.10-14 makes the subtlety and deception clearer still *"And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings".* Again in Isaiah 3:16 *"Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:"*
At its worst, this leads to pornography and prostitution. The tiresome trope in the world (especially in pop music) is that of the young girl (who has just discovered such things), determined to shock, thinking that Christian virtue is just prudishness. She revels in promiscuity and sexual licence. Those truly saved from the damage

of such things roll their eyes - I wonder what Mary Magdalene would think?

The Bible teaches that to be chaste is pure and holy. A person should reserve themselves for their spouse. Not to do so, is a failure to act with fitting modesty. Presenting yourself as a sexual object, is to promote inordinate fleshly pride in oneself, and to induce unclean thoughts and disloyalty in others. It is not only downgrading yourself as a human being, of precious spiritual worth, but it is an act of mental fornication, or adultery of the heart. It is self deceit, as it promises happiness, but doesn't deliver it. Promiscuity ever 'waters-down' the natural affections for an individual, and true love is increasingly hard to find. The mistaken notion of sexual 'liberation' is anything but liberation. It is giving oneself permission to loose the moral safety harness, against the clear warning of God's Word. In the book of Acts we have an account which can be used to illustrate the consequences of such a disastrous course of action. The apostle Paul warns his fellow seafarers that a certain decision to set sail would end in the loss of the ship in a terrible storm - Acts 27.10,11 "*Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*" In the same way, the 'storms' of moral consequence will, and have, come upon us as individuals, and society. We have willfully believed Satan's lie that allowing our own sexual licence will bring happiness and freedom. In the case of the 'ship' of our soul, it will end in the same outcome as the account in Acts - "*And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete,*"

and to have gained this harm and loss." Acts 27.20,21. As a society we have sown the wind, and have reaped the whirlwind.

The tendency for outward adornment and perceived enhancement betrays the individual's view of themselves - just as a mere object, or 'canvas', to draw attention to oneself in a display of vanity. However, often if there's a lot going on on the outside, then there's not a lot going on within. They are like meticulously decorated vases which contain nothing of value. Mere vessels which are empty of virtue, but full of corruption. It is telling that in the Bible the great symbol of worldly corruption is the harlot Babylon. She is adorned outwardly with sumptuous clothing and jewels, has her name written on her forehead, and holds a vessel filled with filthy abominations. To objectify oneself is to be aligned to this great symbol of ungodliness, and to seek to make a fleshly image, while, at the same time, downplaying or denying the inner image of the divine that we possess as a human soul.

Does it matter?
 If a pragmatic approach to ethics is the way to find virtue, then what are the results of rejecting the teaching of the Bible with regard to sexual matters? Can 'the wisdom of the ages' supersede the wisdom of the Scripture? Here, I'll examine ten of the differences between the two approaches, and their outcomes. How does contemporary secular sex education stack up against the Bible?

Firstly, sex education demoralises sexual conduct. Generally, no form of sexual behaviour is deemed as wrong because it doesn't recognise sexual immorality - sexual matters are essentially amoral. All forms of sexual activity are acceptable between consenting adults because sex education is non-judgmental. Therefore things such as promiscuity and homosexualy aren't condemned, and there is no concept of perversion or depravity. Therefore children are not

warned in any way. Not being taught on a general level that any type of sexual behaviour is wrong.

The Bible, conversely, teaches that sexual conduct is based on God's moral law, and subject to it. God's will and design for people (who are all created in His image) is that marriage is the place reserved for sexual activity. Gal 5.9 says that the acts of the sinful nature include sexual immorality, which makes one impure. This is seen again in 1 Thess 4.3-5.

Secondly, because of the conclusions of philosophy, any moralising or preaching is condemned. The thinking is that such things are rarely effective, and young people will decide what they are going to do regardless. Preaching at them or keeping them 'in the dark' makes it less likely they'll make the 'right' decision (whatever that is!).

The Bible, of course, teaches clear morality and proclaims the Gospel. Preaching the Word of God is central to Biblical faith, stating *"how shall they hear without a preacher"* Rom 10.14. The Gospel has power to change the conduct of young lives for good.

Thirdly, sex education promotes the idea of 'informed' choice. It is up to them whether to have sex or not (but they are not informed of any real moral prohibition). All that is taught is that it is hard to make a choice, but in the end it's about what you think is right for you, and that therefore only you can decide. Young people are invited to make up their own mind based upon how they feel, going their own way according to what is right in their own eyes.

The Bible, however, teaches obedience or disobedience to God's law, a law we have all broken. When it comes to salvation and the demands of a perfect God, the choice is always between two paths. This is illustrated by Christ's picture of the wide or the narrow way. In view of our 'fallen' nature, young people are called to deny themselves, in this respect, and follow Christ, who has kept the law perfectly on behalf of all who would put their trust in Him.

Fourthly, promiscuity is regarded as the norm. To be sexually active as a teenager is considered normal. The implication is if everyone is doing it, so should you. It is acceptable to follow the crowd, and merely be prepared with contraception. Sexual activity in teenage years is acceptable before marriage, and cannot be condemned.

Whereas the Bible teaches the strength of restraint, and not to indulge our sexual appetites in weakness - Titus 2.5-6, Titus 2.11,12. Before the permissive society and the teaching of sex education, most teenagers weren't sexually active. Now, a string of sexual encounters precedes and ruins any long term relationships.

Fifthly, sex education blames teenage pregnancy upon ignorance. Unwanted pregnancies are because of a lack of knowledge about contraception, including emergency contraception. The deception is that contraception will protect you from the harms of sexual immorality.

The Bible teaches that sexual sin has consequences (spiritual, emotional, and more obviously, pregnancy, abortion, STD's etc) and that you reap what you sow - 1 Cor 6.13-18. There are appalling results of sexual immorality, but, without a foundation, society cannot fulfil its responsibility to teach the next generation about right and wrong.

Sixthly, sex education teaches that sex can be 'safer'. 'All-in-one' protection is taught in the use of condoms, not the exercise of moral standards.

The Bible teaches the four virtues of modesty, chastity, chivalry, and fidelity. Each applying to an aspect of sexual behaviour, they form a coherent system that sets standards for conduct. These preserve marriage, secure the family, and protect children.

Seventhly, sex education uses explicit images and language. Children can be prematurely exposed to things from which they would naturally recoil with shame. This serves to desensitise from

embarrassment, and to promote shamelessness. Pornographic images in society are normalised, with easy online access. This is polluting and addictive.

The Bible demands purity of mind, eyes, and speech 1 Thess 4.7, Psalm 119.9. This is a mark of Christian conduct (Col 3.8, Matt 5.29), an attitude of mind that seeks after sexual purity is at its heart.

Eighthly, sex education focuses on talking about physical sex and contraception. But the Bible instructs parents to teach about God's moral law (Deut 6.6-7, Prov 6.22-24, Phil 4.8), and about His grace and mercy, and that it is *"...a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."* Eph 5.12

Ninthly, sex education is hostile to, or just ignores, marriage. It teaches that cohabitation and marriage are morally equivalent. Many governments teach that there are strong and supportive relationships outside of marriage. As long as a relationship is mutually stable it will provide the building blocks of community and society. Generally, as a matter of policy, the terms 'marriage', 'husband' or 'wife' aren't mentioned.

The Bible teaches that marriage is ordained by God as the most fundamental human relationship Gen 2.24. Its purpose is to facilitate a lifelong, secure, personal and intimate relationship between a man and woman; and to produce, care for, and bring up children well. In Matt 19.6 it is endorsed by Christ. Marriage is the foundation of a good society.

Tenthly, sex education condones, and encourages homosexual relations. Your 'sexuality' is determined by your feelings, and can be hard to determine. You may be attracted to men and/or women, and this isn't a problem. Your body is yours to share with whoever you choose. Sexual licence and freedom are paramount.

But, as I have already covered, the Bible condemns homosexuality as wrong - Rom 1.27, 1 Cor 6.9-11.

To conclude this matter, in Hos 4.11 it says that the breach of the seventh commandment (and all its associations) is, above all others, the sin which "takes away the heart". No other sin leaves deeper scars upon the soul. Lot, Solomon, and David are all Biblical examples of how it can cause even the mighty to stumble and fall. The Devil, as the 'unclean Spirit', particularly rejoices in it, causing people to smile at it in the 'smooth' guise of entertainment and passion. But in Heb 13.4 it is the sin that God particularly abhors, and will judge. It is to be resisted, mortified, prayed against, not given into. It is germinated in the hotbed of the imagination, so the Bible warns the Christian to guard their thoughts, and there will be so much less to fear about his/her deeds.

The question that must be addressed by society is - has it benefited from the results of secular philosophy in this area? Is society better off - 'cleaner', when it comes to these things, with its rejection of Christian morality? Are there less family breakdowns, less troubled relationships, less disturbing sexual conduct, less young people with troubled minds and consciences, than when society had a strong Christian ethic? If a pragmatic approach to virtue is preferable, what should we conclude?

Abortion

Another obvious example of a clear unambiguous standard of God (understood to be such by the illuminating gift of faith) is that of the commandment not to commit murder. This is the prohibition of all unlawful killing of human beings. Like all the moral law, in light of the fact that this comes from God (who is omniscient, and all wise), all laborious arguments, for or against, made by the finite human mind should be rendered needless. Nevertheless, the fact we possess the power of a God-given reason means that God provides, not only the command, but the ability to know why it is commanded.

All life is precious in God's sight, as He is the Author and Sustainer of it. Human life is especially so, because Man was made in God's own image. The fact that we live in a 'fallen' world means that sometimes the preservation of one human life means the taking of another. Righteous war, or the preservation of the life of the mother during childbirth, are examples. This is lawful, but not to be done lightly. (The direct command to take someone's life in a judicial way was only reserved for a specific time and people in history, directly told to do so by God Himself).

However, from this sixth command, we can see that there can never be any other justification for the taking of a human being's life. Therefore abortion is undoubtedly a form of murder. It goes against every human instinct; but the degradation of what philosophy regards as a person, and the materialistic, atheistic, assumptions of our age, mean that many see it, not as murder, but only as a sad thing to have to do. The march of philosophical thinking with regards to ethics have trampled over even the most fundamental demands of God. These are no longer respected or sacrosanct. We have already considered (in chapter 1) how society's legalisation of abortion is one of the things that gave impetus to the permissive society. Because people have made themselves their own lawgiver and lord, the 'old benighted' commands have been torn up, and the rewriting of them to suit ourselves is thought acceptable.

Justifications for taking the unborn's life (Even those such as - "It would be the product of incest, or rape") usually amount to excuses that would never be acceptable justifications in a court of law when applied to the born. Further arguments amount to tortured reasoning drawn from imagined situations where one person's right to life is pitted against another's. These almost always commit a false analogy with that of abortion, in a sort of moral 'sleight of hand'. The misleading nature of the pro-abortion argument is seen in the language used in connection with such things as the 'morning after

pill' and abortion under the umbrella term 'women's health'. In what way do these things help a woman to be physically healthy? Surely pregnancy is a natural, not an unhealthy thing? But 'women's health', or 'family planning', sounds positive.

In a plain reading of the situation, the obvious facts are clear. The question of when someone becomes a human being is paramount. Even if science is used to determine this, rather than God's Word, the facts are clear; the unborn are distinct, living, and whole human beings from conception. This can be empirically observed better than ever before with 'hi res' images, 3d scans, and ultrasounds. Regardless of development, or size, human life starts at conception. A foetus is not a seed like an acorn is to an oak tree, or ingredients for a cake (as some glibly assert). There is no other acceptable moment of human existence than that of conception. The action of cell division starts a process which at no other point thereafter can anyone declare it is the moment when this group of cells becomes a human being. Therefore the destruction of this life from any point thereafter is no different from the killing of a newborn baby. The only difference is size, development, environment, and degree of dependency. But it is universally accepted that there is no difference, for example, between the human worth or value of a disabled, poor, illiterate eight year old girl in Mali, and that of a rich, fifty year old, male biology professor in Germany. The size, development, environment, or level of dependency makes no difference to how 'human' they are. Why then should there be any difference between a larger, more developed newborn, and the unborn? The only difference being that of existing *within*, and dependent on, the barrier of skin and tissue of their mother, or *outside* of it? A newborn child is still dependent after being born. The oft repeated chant of "my body my choice" ignores the obvious fact that the unborn *is not your body* (it is merely within it, having different DNA), and jumps to an unwarranted conclusion. No-one

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has ownership of, and some sort of moral choice over, another individual's life, even one that resides within your body.

This subject may be psychologically complex, but it is certainly not morally complex. How you feel cannot be used to justify what you do. Even if it could be proved that there is a question over whether a foetus is human or not (which it can't), why wouldn't society err on the side of precaution, and preserve life? The answer is, as with all other issues we've covered,- the desire for autonomy from God, assuming this will give 'freedom'. This results from the fact that we are sinners by nature and by choice.

The Bible teaches that all human life is precious, being made in God's image. Psalm 139.13 states that we were *hedged*, or *defended*, in our mother's womb. Phi 2.3 says we are to *do nothing out of selfish ambition, and to esteem others better than ourselves*. The practice of abortion goes directly against this. Abortion dehumanizes the most vulnerable, and voiceless, members of society. To value oneself above others is the root of hatred, bullying, sexism, racism, and all other manner of injustice in the world. Things that most people would stand against. It has often been noted that the midwives in Exodus 1.17 refused to kill the male Hebrew babies, as the king had asked, because "*the midwives feared God*". This verse stands in judgement upon all those who seek to do the same in the womb.

It is no surprise that the rise in abortion has gone alongside the decline in traditional Christian marriage. Without a stable unit to bring a child into the world, the tendency is for a new life to be 'unwanted'. The want for casual sex without boundaries, and the choice to engage in such, has resulted in people demanding a further choice - to kill the precious life that can result. It is ironic to note that Nietzsche thought that Christians had devalued life itself, by looking to an afterlife, but it is secularism that is the driving force

in the death of the unborn, assisted suicide, and euthanasia (which I will look at next).

Ethics is a part of Axiology - the study of values. When it comes to the value of human life, one may ask "What's the most valuable thing to come out of a diamond mine?" The answer is - A miner! This precious value is there from conception.

Euthanasia

Closely associated to abortion is the subject of Euthanasia. This sanitised sounding word is used to describe what some would describe as 'mercy killing', and others as tantamount to 'murder-on-demand'. In 1992 Dr Nigel Cox gave a large dose of heroin to a woman suffering from intense arthritic pain, but this seemed to worsen the pain she experienced. Finally he gave a lethal injection of potassium chloride. He was convicted of murder, the Judge telling him what he had done was a total betrayal of his unequivocal duty as a physician. From a Christian point of view, whether or not our culture sanctions such a thing is secondary to whether God Himself counts the killing as lawful or not. From a philosophical point of view a Kantian might apply a hard rule that suicide is wrong. A Utilitarian might try to apply some pleasure/pain sums. Virtue theory might vaguely ask "what would a 'good' man do?" Kant placed high value on autonomy, but, in something of a contradiction, thought suicide was wrong because it would destroy our understanding of the intrinsic value of human life (Although some Deontologists would argue a logical basis for euthanasia). The Utilitarians stressed the importance of individual autonomy over one's life. This assumes that a person 'owns' their life, and is free to give it up. The Bible simply doesn't endorse this, revealing that our lives are God's to give or take. Virtue theorists suggest that euthanasia just isn't "solvable" with such ethical "systems" as those of Kantians and Utilitarians. The question of what a good person

should do, is their way forward. We have already considered the relative nature of this. Judging everything upon the individual situation and merits sounds reasonable, but in practice is extremely difficult without a moral system to provide a foundation for decisions. 'Values' must be laid out in advance, and naturally, together, become a form of system - the actions taken within clear guidelines. How those guidelines are arrived at merely lands us back to the same problem, and amounts to what we find in the book of Judges 21.25 - everyone doing "what is right in their own eyes". The problem is humans see things differently, so any universal values are nothing more than 'shifting sands'.

 As I have said repeatedly, the history of philosophical thought has been driven largely by the desire for human autonomy from God. From the beginning of all life this desire has been disastrous. Adam took matters into his own hands as our representative, and death was the result. Nevertheless, we are still in the hands of God. He is the giver and the taker of life. He doesn't permit us to wrestle that right from Him and take it for ourselves, anymore than that first fruit from the tree. By the will of God's precept, our life is a span of His choosing, and having brought death in, we have no right to 'double-down' on our crime. The Bible simply doesn't condone the taking of one's life, or asking another to do it for us. In Proverbs 31.8,9 it says we are to defend the "*speechless…who are appointed to die" (*NKJV)*,* not to kill them. It also repeatedly tells us to protect the vulnerable like the orphan, or the widow. As already mentioned with abortion, God forbids murder (Exodus 20.13) - that is unlawful killing. The *law* in that definition is none other than God's, not society's. It is inescapable that Euthanasia is the destruction of another person's life, and assisted dying is assisted *suicide*, otherwise called *self-murder*. It is a form of murder, even if it is thought to end their suffering. In fact, this is a key point. It is *assumed* that it will end their suffering, but this ignores the Biblical

reality of hell. The Bible teaches that we are separated from God and in need of an atonement. This life is the only time we have to be reconciled to God. Therefore to take any action to cut this short, for the unreconciled person, is ushering that person into eternal suffering! In Ecclesiastes 9.4,5 it says *"For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward".* This isn't saying that the souls of the dead are unaware, but that with respect to their physical senses, and ability to call upon God in this life, they can no longer do so. Therefore taking the authority to act autonomously as human beings with regard to life and death is more than a grave matter.

The preciousness of life, and inherent value of a person, stems from God. He gave life, and it is His image that human beings bear exclusively. A reflection (or image) of something is, in itself, different from the actual thing; but equally, the reflection is exactly the same. In the same way human beings share 'reflected', or 'communicable', qualities with God. We are different in that we aren't infinite, eternal, or immutable; but things such as:- being, personhood, and the capacity for wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, reason and creativity, are the same characteristics as God's. However we must realise that the image is not the actual, in the same way that a reflection of a face, is not a real face, but the image of a face. Although we are image bearers, we are at the same time, finite, temporal, and changeable. An image can also be marred, and this is certainly true of humanity. Since the entry of sin into this world, we are marred by it, and to one degree or another the suffering that results from this 'fall' is part of all our lives. This fact in no way negates the value of a person, anymore than the existence of death negates the preciousness of life. In fact the sharp contrast between the two even serves to bring out life's value, and,

in turn, shows how placing tremendous importance upon these things must be a moral maxim. The erosion of the claim that life is 'sacred', and of the human self as a living soul, has occurred in secular thinking ever since Locke and Hume struggled with what really constitutes a person. Plato and Avicenna's rational arguments weren't enough to hold back the erosion once the understanding of Man created in the image of God was lost. We have already seen how this eventually ended in the sanction of the murder of the "racially impure". I am not suggesting this happens in every instance, but such outcomes don't happen in isolation of ideological justification. Philosophy provided this, whether unintentionally or not.

 The reasons not to sanction Euthanasia are strong even without considering eternal, or ontological, matters. From a mere practical level, we humans are clearly not omniscient. We cannot know crucial information that has bearing upon our life or that of others. We don't know the future, what might happen during an illness, or how the experience might even have unforeseen benefits. Predictions of life expectancy are notoriously unreliable. Therefore euthanasia is an action in ignorance. Circumstances might change, psychological distress abate. A utilitarian doctor would be on very dangerous ground if he/she were just to consider the patient's future happiness, as that would be a very difficult thing to measure. People who were previously suicidal, can come out of that state of mind to be thankful for life. We simply cannot know that this will not happen, and even if it doesn't, we certainly have no right to judge for another what it means to have a life worth living. An unresponsive adult or a handicapped child, for example, are not cases for us to pronounce worthiness to live or die. In short, as with abortion, this simply is a choice we have no right to afford ourselves. We are not omniscient, we don't even know what will happen in the next second. Someone might protest, saying - "But if you could see a man will be torn apart

by lions, surely it's ok to shoot him first?". Well with that rationale it would have been right for someone to shoot Daniel with a bow and arrow when he was in the lion's den!

We, as people, are not only subject to changing emotions, and circumstances, but also can be swayed by the knowledge of how events might affect us in material ways. To put it bluntly, when a person who owns and consumes resources dies, what is left becomes the property of others. The desire to relieve oneself of a burden is also very real in those with the burden of care. One of the practical dangers of Euthanasia is that these facts might give incentive for another person to hasten death by means of abuse of the disabled or terminally ill. It could lead to people being pressured into an assisted death against their will.

Life necessarily involves the care of others. Children, the elderly, the disabled, the ill, and the poor require love and care. These people are least able to defend themselves. Legislation which increases the temptation to 'opt-out' of this care, whether by physician assisted suicide, or euthanasia, may lead to a an increase in this pressure to choose death against the individual's will. A 'right to die' may become a 'duty to die'! Some say this is merely the 'slippery slope' fallacy. However it is only a fallacy if it is *unlikely* to happen. If it is *likely*, it is a strong argument. People who reject the danger of a 'slippery slope' when bringing in legislation to provide assisted dying, should take a look at the history of abortion legislation. In the 1960s abortion became legal in some circumstances. This had severe restrictions when first brought in, but was subsequently weakened to the extent that now it has slid down the aforementioned 'slope' to being available for any circumstance at a relatively late stage. In 2025 the UK brought in a law to decriminalise abortion up to full term. This means that if a mother kills her newborn infant, she risks being sent to jail, but if she takes a pill to poison her unborn child at full term, she will face

no sanctions. Therefore, the fact that this 'slippery slope' has happened with abortion, means the likelihood of a very similar legislation having unintended consequences is *likely*, and the argument is not fallacious.

Few think that permanent coma patients should be kept artificially alive on machinery. The key word here is artificial. This is very different from actively intervening to take life from someone who would otherwise survive without such an intervention. Another objection is that if euthanasia was normalised, people would naturally feel unease, and a lack of trust in doctors who they knew had killed patients previously (even out of some misguided sense of kindness).

Much of the secular thinking behind this issue is, of course, driven by the assumption that we are nothing more than animals, and no more important. In this way of thinking, euthanizing would be the same as putting down a pet. It would just clear the 'field of life' for the young and healthy. But if the assumption that we're just animals is wrong then such a thing is unacceptable. The Bible's account of creation is consistent with what we see in the physical world, and doesn't validate evolutionary assumptions. Our universe seems specifically structured to allow for human life (the 'Anthropic Principle'). The focus upon 'death with dignity' should be upon good palliative care, not treating human beings as if we're at the vets! Removal of *suffering* is not the same as removal of the *sufferer*! Good medical care involves thinking about all kinds of pain - emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual.

Euthanasia is driven by a fear of dying and death. But we are more than just a material body, and, interestingly, the modern desire for a sudden unexpected death is something that previous generations would not have generally desired. This is because you'd have no time for preparations for the realm you leave behind, or the one you're entering. The Bible gives examples of dying well, with 'good

deaths', focusing on the fact that death is not the end, but the separation of body and soul - an entrance into eternity. The fall of Man is a reality, and the curse remains, making death a terror. The solution isn't some unlawful physical intervention, but a spiritual redemption. As with abortion the Bible prohibits the unlawful taking of life, as it says in Genesis *"And surely your blood of your lives will I require;... I require the life of man… for in the image of God made he man."* Gen 9.5-6. This is the first command given to Noah after he steps out of the ark into the new earth, after being told to be fruitful and multiply.

The Bible teaches that God is the giver of life, and is the only One that should actively take it. Christ the God-man is the Prince of life. He was the only one who acted lawfully in 'giving up the ghost', in order that resurrection should result. Firstly for Himself, and finally (at the final Judgement) for all who put their trust in His atoning work. This action showed just how much value God places upon the sanctity of human life. Through His perfect life, and sacrificial death, the spiritual 'widow' and 'orphan' can be both married and adopted - cared for in God's family.

Human rights

The idea of intrinsic human rights is often taken as an assumed moral maxim, but is there such a thing as inalienable human rights at all? Probably one of the most famous examples of such an idea is in the American declaration of independence, citing "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". Surely no one could have a quarrel with that? It sounds good, but despite being enshrined in the way we think about ethics (and politics), once again, we find these 'rights' stand on a sandy philosophical foundation. It would seem that the political world is either ignorant, or turns a blind eye to this. The conservative American would object to opposing the founding fathers, and cherish the idea of the right to free speech, liberty, even

to bear arms etc. American liberals claim for themselves even more. In fact to them pretty much everything is a right (if it suits them) - money, college education, health care, abortions etc. Often it degenerates into rights without corresponding responsibilities, and at the expense of everyone else.

However, does the idea of human rights actually provide a good basis for solving ethical issues? For example, with abortion, both sides of the argument will commonly cite human rights as a defence of their position. One will argue that the baby has the right to life, whereas the other side will say the real right is the woman's right to bodily autonomy (or 'reproductive rights', or whatever new phrase they feel is least offensive!) It seems that, from the concept of *'human rights' alone*, neither side has a way to argue that one right deserves more preference over another.

So how should we define 'human rights', and where does the idea come from? A human (or 'natural') right is the idea that, by nature of being human, one should expect certain treatment by others, and by governments. They are inherent principles of what people are allowed to do, or what they are owed, or deserve, because they are human. They are rights granted to us by no other virtue other than the fact we exist. But the idea of human rights did not always exist. Classical Greek has no word for the concept, except the rights afforded by the law. For example, a person has the right to own something because he has paid for it in a legal transaction. The Stoics had something, in their idea of natural law, that seems to be similar, but is actually very different from the idea of human rights as I have just defined it.

Our modern idea of natural rights really starts to take shape in the Enlightenment. Thinkers like John Locke formulated the right to - 'Life, Liberty, and Property', in his second treatise on government. This later made it into the declaration of independence (the

founders changing the last of these into 'the pursuit of happiness'). Locke states:

"The State of Nature has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will consult it, that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions".

As we have seen with other Enlightenment thinkers, Locke here asserts that the Law of Nature is brought to understanding primarily through reason, *not* by metaphysical considerations like studying religious texts. So it is Reason that teaches us, and it teaches that we shouldn't harm each other's life, liberty, or possessions. In order to get to this point he has simply looked at how creatures operate in nature. To be more precise - how humans exist outside governmental rule. We see this in the following quote from Locke:

"A state of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal"

To understand their choices and the reasoning for them, we must understand that Locke and the founding fathers were Enlightenment thinkers. And as we have seen, the main objective was to establish philosophical principles upon reason, logic, and empiricism, not upon metaphysics. This is in contrast with previous old thinkers who primarily cited the Bible or Aristotle as a foundation. So these 'new' thinkers came up with 'natural rights'.

Upon reading the declaration of independence, one might object to the idea that the founders were trying to remove God from the equation. After all doesn't it say

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain

unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"?

"Created equal" and "Endowed by their Creator" sure sounds metaphysical! However, it should be borne in mind that average people at the time were still pretty religious, even though the intellectual world was busy secularising things. So they dressed up what they were doing in religious verbiage. This is not to deny that the founding fathers and Locke were 'Christian', although he certainly wasn't orthodox, and others were merely deists. But the Enlightenment project was in full force, and we can see its influence on these texts.

The problem with dressing up such ideas with terms such as 'endowed by their Creator', is that they didn't check with Him first whether such things were actually true! The fact of the matter is that you will not find the idea of intrinsic, or basic, human rights (in the form expressed in the declaration) anywhere in the Bible. We *do* find *God* having intrinsic rights of course, and giving Man dignity, worth and value above the animals - being made in His image. But no intrinsic, unalienable rights that supposedly logically exist apart from God. Man forfeited any right to the tree of life when he was cast out of the garden of Eden. All general blessings from God upon humanity now are actually an act of undeserved 'common grace'. In Romans 9.20,21 it says:

"Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? -- Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

The word "power" here may be seen as 'the right'. This is in contrast with the human 'vessel', who it is implied has no right to question why it was made a certain way. In Matt 20.15 God also points to His 'rights' - *"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"*

The question may be asked whether our teleology gives us certain rights? If the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him always, as the Westminster Catechism states, then surely we have a right to that in this life? The problem with this is one may glorify *God* in any number of ways, none of which include your life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, free speech etc, But do result in the *chief end* being God's glory and our enjoyment of Him. When asked by his disciples whose sin had caused a man blind from birth to be made that way - his own or his parents? (John 9.3); Christ says it was neither, but the blindness was for the purpose that the works of God may be made manifest. So it may be said this man didn't have an initial right to sight, for his blindness brought glory to God in its healing. A person may well glorify God in being upheld by Him in a life-long ailment. Therefore it would not be correct to say the person has a right to health in this area from a teleological sense.

Of course God gives many commands to people, about how to treat others, morally, and in civil society by virtue of the fact that He sanctions governmental rule e.g *"The labourer is worthy of his reward* [wages].*"* 1 Tim 5.18. This is a God given right that should be enforced by our fellow man (civil rights), and the transgression of it will certainly be enforced by God on judgement day. I am also not saying Christianity had no influence upon the American constitution. Common law is an outgrowth of the Scriptures in many ways. For example: Presumption of innocence; Due process; and a Jury of your peers. These all come from Biblical principles, and are all wrapped up in one, which is you shall not favour justice if you are rich or poor, from Lev 19 (This is right before the famous part - "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself").* This has to do with the administration of justice, and (as I have already mentioned) from where the idea of blind justice comes from in the West. This is also incorporated into the New Testament ideal *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor*

female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" Gal 3.28 This Is the idea of human equality - these are all Biblical ideas, not Enlightenment ideas. But to try to give humans intrinsic rights apart from God, and instead from pure reason by some kind of natural law, is an idea foreign to Scripture. So too is the idea that one may demand a supposed ontological right from God. The moral law prohibits any right people might think they have to sin, and commands certain actions towards our fellow man. But it doesn't automatically endow sinful people with the right to anything from God other than the 'wages' we have earned - namely death. A right isn't really a right unless it is given by someone with authority who is willing to enforce it. The Enlightenment idea of human rights has really conjured up imagined 'rights' for ourselves that don't actually exist. We certainly have no right to take life, and it is in God's providential gift to preserve it, but we actually have no right to demand our next breath from God. To put it another way; what inalienable rights do we deserve in this life by virtue of us existing as humans? The Scriptural answer is - nothing but a just punishment for who we are and the wrong actions we've taken; and because of who we fail to be and the right actions we have failed to take. In light of this, to speak of "my intrinsic, inalienable right" to anything seems presumptuous to say the least.

   It is often asked with regards to the Gospel message "What about people who haven't heard. How can they be condemned?" This presupposes that people have some sort of right to hear the Gospel, but, as already stated, this isn't true. People are guilty because of their sin. Whether or not they've heard the Gospel doesn't mitigate this. God in His mercy does extend the free offer of salvation to multitudes, but this is still an act of free grace, and certainly no right. Some may protest and say that if we are to be judged upon our acceptance of the Gospel or not, then we should have a right to hear it. However the Bible simply doesn't say that we have the right

even to hear the Gospel (although in His grace it will have been preached throughout the world before the final judgment). We are judged by our conformity, or lack of, to God's law (which is summed up in our love of, and devotion to, Him). We cannot claim ignorance of this, because it is 'written' upon our hearts, and attested to by our conscience.

In Revelation 22.14, at the very end of the Bible, a human right *is* spoken of. It is the right to the tree of life. A right lost at the very beginning. This right is dependent upon doing God's commandments. This is only possible by keeping them 'in Christ'. By keeping that Gospel command to believe in Him, receiving a new nature, and being given power to walk in His ways (Eph 2.4-10). Salvation is by grace, not by right.

Crime and punishment

It seems that any true justice in this life will be a hard thing to find autonomously from God. In Ecclesiastes 3.16,17 Solomon states *"And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work."*

The retributivist theory of punishment when enacted by the government is thus imperfect. But the fact it exists at all reflects the retained knowledge of the concept of justice, which comes from God, even in a fallen world. Of course the Bible reveals the ultimate judgement will come at the great assize of Judgement Day. The concept of retribution and punishment is throughout the Bible. Cain talks of his punishment being more than he can bear, and is marked for God (not men) exclusively to take ultimate vengeance upon him

in Divine justice. God clearly states that *"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* Rom 12.19. Notwithstanding, governmental rule *is* ordained of God for order and protection in the world. This early example indicates that God is the only one to perfectly enact an ultimate punishment befitting the crime. We have a similar example in John 8.7. The penal element of the atonement of Christ chiefly shows this (Isaiah 53.5-11, Rom 3.21-26).

 The idea that a punishment equal to a crime is fitting, proper, justly deserved, and therefore required, is deeply ingrained in people. Moral responsibility can only ever make sense if there is something (or Someone) 'concrete' to be responsible to. Philosophy's autonomous determination has stripped anything 'concrete' away, and left us bereft of any such thing. The veiled desire to avoid responsibility to the God of the Bible has led to no real ethical alternative. Teleological ethics, basing its values upon sense experience, cannot bridge the gap between the "is" of experience and the "ought" of value. Any usefulness of a Deontological explanation evaporates because the source of logic without God is an impersonal mystery, and we are beholden to nothing more than mathematical calculation. If mere subjective feeling is the answer, then it is no solution, because why should any one person's feelings command another's beliefs or behaviour? Biblical ethics stands in contrast to all this. If God's moral character gives standards that require the balance of retribution, then humanity (made in His image, as moral) isn't absolved of responsibility, and no amount of assumed autonomy will wrestle us free from it. The requirement of "eye for eye" (Lev 24.19,20) is nothing less than the balancing of the scales of perfect justice. A salvation from such a moral debt and its punishment is not to be found in explaining morality away. We are told by Christ to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's, but unto God what is God's. The problem is, without moral currency it's

impossible! That's why Christ provides it for us in Himself. This is illustrated by the provision of the payment of human taxes by Christ for His disciples from the mouth of a fish in Matthew 17.27. It is also pictured much earlier in the payment required in the 'Trespass Offering' of the old ceremonial law of God, which finds its fulfilment in the penalty paid by Christ upon Calvary.

Morality is actually a religious concept, it's no wonder philosophy can't make any sense of it. The epistemological crisis, accelerated by postmodernism, does nothing to rescue philosophy from the inability to ever discover universal and objective truths. In fact it concludes that the belief (framed within evolutionary thinking) that primates could ever discover such things, especially about themselves, is an odd, dangerous, and arrogant one. It spins the idea that this scepticism is actually positive, and gives healthy suspicion of, not only dogmatic political leaders, but all who claim to point to a revelation from God Himself. It congratulates itself for 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' and destroying ethical certainty! It was the supposed *transcending* of objective morality that led to the holocaust, not the claim to have found it. Philosophical ideas themselves were used as a justification for this. Maybe the attempt to shift the blame reveals culpability is getting a bit too close to home for philosophy itself. Even if a false claim to find an objective morality has previously been used as an excuse for abuse of power, it doesn't mean objectivity shouldn't be searched for, or a legitimate claim to it must be rejected. It is the abuse that is the problem, not the desire to find objectivity. Philosophy seems to have a fine way of rejecting the commands of God in favour of its own ideas. This was Jesus' conclusion of the Pharisees and scribes in Mark 7.9 *"And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition"*.

Secular ethics puts its hope in a future full of ethically autonomous tribes, or open and pluralistic societies. One wonders if it will ever

accept that the heart of the problem is the problem of the human heart, and such baseless optimism is destined to end, as ever, in warring tribes and societies with inner conflict. No amount of giving money to charity will ease a complaining conscience tuned to a God given moral sense. Peter Singer's conclusion (that we are all immoral because, although there is enough wealth in the West to care for everyone, people are still poor in the world because the West doesn't give it away) is a rather obvious conclusion from only a single issue. Did it really take philosophy until 1972 to realise the moral condition of people? Christianity has always had an altruistic outlook (Acts 20.35), but at the same time declares, the moral situation is far worse than a failure to share: "*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*" Rom 3.12. In Mark 10.18 Christ states "*there is none good but one, that is, God*", and Romans 3:23 states *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*

God clearly holds us responsible for not heeding His Word of Scripture Deut 18.19 *"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him"* This can only be the case if we're without excuse in knowing it is God's Word. The reason people claim not to know must therefore be by an act of willful ignorance to our moral sensibilities, and stubborn scepticism with regards to the historical and rational proofs. In making their own rules, and making judgments by them, people are a "l*aw unto themselves", "for their rock is not our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges*" Deut 32.31).

Conclusion - Christ and covenant

Having taken the long tortuous journey through philosophical thought with regards to Ethics, we have arrived at the same place

as the other two branches I have considered - a philosophical 'no-man's land'.

We saw in chapter two how John Locke and David Hume struggled with the notion of self and personhood if one looks in a purely materialistic way at things. This has profound implications for ethics. It is common to hear people say "I was a different person back then". This is usually said to excuse some personal misdemeanour, and usually meant in a non literal sense, to imply a change in attitude and outlook. But when taken literally by serious philosophical thought, the moral implications are profound. Where do the conclusions of Locke and Hume in this area leave ethics? If there weren't any witnesses to our misdeeds, or if any witnesses have forgotten them; and if we can put our past sins out of our minds, and we're literally not the same piece of matter that committed those misdeeds:- then who's to blame? Does the sin even still exist? Philosophy provides no answer, but Biblically we can easily see that it is not *our* mental records, or physical makeup, that count, but God's Being, witness, and records - "*and the books were opened*" Rev 20.12.

The most ancient book in the Bible 'Job' was written when there were no books and little writing. Yet the people were not primitive in moral understanding, but very sophisticated, and understood profound religious concepts. It contains all major Christian doctrines, and Elihu's discourse is as rich in content as the apostle Paul's letters. God still speaks to us through His Word, having revealed His law to the prophets. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham replies to the request of the rich man in hell, to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, by saying "*They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them".* We also have Moses and the prophets in the form of the Scriptures, and we would do well to hear them. At the transfiguration Christ's Divine glory was revealed, and He was witnessed speaking with Moses and Elijah (representing the

Law and the prophets), and God said *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."* His voice speaks to us from the Scriptures, and it is by faith that we can hear it.

We are not only special creations of God but we can have a covenant relationship with Him - a 'deal', a 'treaty', as it were, has been made. An initial covenant of works was broken by us, but kept by Christ for all who would put their trust in Him. Thus we can be reconciled by a new covenant in that Christ fulfils the law for His people, and takes the consequences of it being broken by them. For although we can know what right and wrong are by the law, it cannot save us, other than in Christ keeping it for us (Gal 3.21). The overarching covenant of redemption is between Father and Son. Then the covenant of works is between God and man. This being broken, is kept in a covenant of grace, which fulfils the works in Christ (the God-man) for His people. This covenant of grace is between Christ (as the representative of the redeemed) and God.

The purpose of the moral law of works for us after the fall, is to show us that we fall short and need to stand far off from mount Sinai lest we die, whilst Someone else goes to fulfil them for us (Exodus 19.20. Psalm 24.3). Then we may come close to mount Zion in the Saviour Jesus Christ (He whom Moses prefigured). We may then have the ability to walk in God's law as our guide to living in the right way. We still cannot do this in perfection, but we can, after conversion, at least walk in the footsteps of our perfect Saviour who earned heaven for us. Indeed from the beginning this had been shown. Adam and Eve needed to be clothed, and blood was shed to accomplish this. This pictures the righteousness we need to cover our guilt and shame as those failing to keep the law. Abraham and Isaac both lay as dead while God accepts a sacrifice. Jacob lays asleep, as dead, and dreams of a way from heaven down to earth. His head rests on a rock, and he uses it as a symbol of the foundation for God's house - the Church, pouring oil upon it, like the

Holy Spirit is poured out upon Christ and His life's work. This work of Christ is the foundation for God's people. A life perfectly keeping the moral law like those tablets of stone were safely kept within the ark of the covenant. We can do nothing to earn a Salvation from God, any more than the patriarchs did while lying motionless as the work is done by God. But in Christ we too can know the same God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the same way - by faith. Through this we may know God's grace and life everlasting, for as Christ Himself said with regards to these three Patriarchs *"...the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him*." Luke 20.37,38

Man's faith in his own ingenuity has failed in ethics as in epistemology. The Bible message draws such ire from people because it is uncompromising in its denunciation of their evil. No one likes to be accused, especially if that person has justified themselves. Paul calls it *"The offence of the cross"*. The oft repeated phrase *"did evil in the sight of the Lord"* shows us what morality is. It only makes sense against the backdrop of God observing and judging our being and behaviour. The Bible clearly tells us what right and wrong is - not only with laws, and principles to live by, but great lists of sins and virtues. The relativism of cultural consensus, or the ethics of individual subjectivism, offer no universal standard, and aren't as *'real'* as those who subscribe to them think they are. The ethical *non-realists* are in fact more realistic! Without God there can be no morality of any worth. Only God can give the absolute ethics that makes sense of all that we are and do. People's sense of morality comes from an ethical awareness because we are made in God's image. This can come in the form of fear, for example - praying when in danger. Or in a troubled conscience - admitting to a crime years later, after seemingly getting away with it).

Many of God's intrinsic qualities we understand as moral qualities - and these cannot be separated from Him. This image in people has been spoiled, but the sense of it remains in the heart and conscience. The moral law is prescriptive and contains precepts which align our heart and actions (towards men and God) with God's character. These commands do not in themselves detail all morality, but do encompass the chief 'family heads' of all the different areas of sin (which is defined as the breaking of, or want of conformity, to the law). They are the division into ten of what the Lord expressed in two:- *'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ..soul, and strength'*, and *'Love thy neighbour as thyself'*, and what was first only expressed in one representative command - not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Eve was first tempted she would not have even known what Satan was referring to when he said 'evil'. The desire to "be as gods" is behind philosophy's autonomous project, and the attempt to shut one's eyes to what we saw as evil after the fall. But now philosophy tries to claim ignorance as to what evil actually is!

Good and evil pertain to intrinsic qualities; right and wrong pertain to their outworking. We can say "You are Evil", and "What you did was wrong" because we know it from God's Word. There is a Being outside of our being that has created us in His image. We are estranged from this Being because we have fallen from His characteristic standards by willful betrayal. However, out of love, He has made a way for reconciliation by a vicarious sacrifice. He works the means (faith) by which we can see this and grasp it. It is worked within those He chooses to save from a just punishment by making a just way that they might be forgiven. He does this as a demonstration of His love and mercy. Those He chooses not to save He leaves in that state of betrayal (reprobation and preterition), and thus they are rightly punished as a demonstration of His holiness and justice.

Willful ignorance is no defence, and no amount of philosophical 'cutting and burning' God's word will expunge human responsibility (As the king tried in Jeremiah 36.22,23). Blaming God is no defence either (as I briefly dealt with under 'The problem of evil' in chapter two). The tactic of some militant atheists is to charge God Himself with wrongdoing. This seemingly serves two purposes; it gives an excuse for rejection of Him (and disbelief by trying to force a contradiction), and makes the individual feel morally justified - self-righteous in other words. The error in this tactic is obvious; if God is our Creator then He gives us our sense of morality, therefore it cannot be used against Him as some sort of neutral arbiter. Even if you attempt to glean morality from logic itself, the question is where did the laws of logic come from? Furthermore, the immorality of God argument actually says nothing against His existence, merely that He is immoral. What a person is really saying is that I won't have a God who breaks His own standards to rule over me. Therefore the question is, does He do this? The answer is no, and any attempt to make out that He does so is merely confirmation bias on the part of the person inclined not to believe or worship God. The oft repeated objection that a moral God wouldn't send people to hell, willfully or ignorantly, ignores the question of why a moral God would forgo punishment for the guilty.

It's an old story. The young person with high ideals and a 'clear' view of good and evil, on a moral crusade to right the world's wrongs. They march for the cause with righteous indignation. They're militant because they're 'heroically' standing for what is right, making a difference, changing the world! But all the time something, undetected, is working its way up and out of the silt at the bottom of their hearts. A cancour growing within. By the time they've outgrown their youthful ideals, and played the hypocrite, and lived long enough to become the bad guy, all they spend their time doing is mental acrobatics to try to justify themselves. Trying to

explain why life isn't so simple, and wrongdoing isn't really such a clear thing at all. As Orwell put it in 'Animal farm' - "Four legs good, two legs bad" becomes the opposite. Human hubris and pride breaks its cover and shows itself for what it was all along - the product of a sinful nature.

The words of Isaiah 29.11 seem an apt description of philosophical ethics in this regard:- *"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:"*
But Christ may break that seal if people would submit themselves to His righteousness rather than going about trying to establish their own "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* Rom 10.4.
How might one come to this belief?
"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom 10.17.

To end the chapter, I go back to the beginning. If Adam was the perfect Man (a platonic form if you will), and it was not good for him to be alone because (amongst other reasons) he could neither love nor be loved, then the ultimate expression, and demonstration of this is Christ and His church. That's why this relationship is pictured as a marriage. This is our purpose, and if Socrates was onto anything with his teleological ethics it's that morally we're made to love God and our fellows. This is why Christ summed up the two tables of the moral law in those two commands to love (Mark 12.28-30)

Enmity was put between the woman and the serpent. This is picked up at the end of Scripture in the book of Revelation (12.2-8), picturing a woman, as the Church, preyed upon by a dragon (Satan - the enemy of souls). In Genesis, it is her Seed that will bruise the serpent's head whilst having His own heel bruised. This is the

earliest prophecy of Christ's (the Seed) act of sacrificial, atoning love for His people at Calvary. Thus, love is at the very heart of Christianity.