Postmodernism and Christian Theology (Part 10, Disc 1)

By Dallas Willard

Speaker 1:

...Patch tears away from the garment and a worse tear is made Neither is new wine, you hear this but listen anew, neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is the skins burst and the wine spills and the skins are destroyed. But new wine but into fresh wine skins and so both are preserved. The uh discipleship to Jesus uh is this new wine and the old forms of discipleship that were bound in first century Judaism whether was being a disciple of the prophet, this uh this message really that is so powerful that the disciple of the prophet uh John the Baptist or the disciple of the Pharisees and their rigorous interpretive grit that they put on the Old Testament.

[inaudible] such as fasting nor their teaching whether it's uh prophet or an understanding the old testament. So what I would encourage you to do is to think of it that way is that we have wine skins all around us. We have the wine skins of modernism, the wine skins of postmodernism we have the wine skins of our own traditions our own backgrounds but the important thing for us to be able to to be carriers of this new wine that Jesus brought because that ultimately is what we need to be giving and that's what I would encourage you to be thinking as you look at the paper you will be developing how can we bring uh how can we in a sense be creators of new wine skins that will carry this wine from the master.

How can we in turn [inaudible] I love to think of my students in that way and those in a sense as new wine skins, new traditions, new forms and there will be forms [inaudible] it's not
inappropriate there will be appropriate forms [inaudible]e new master. So be thinking along those lines of of how your paper can be something fresh and new and again as scholars we are adding to the body of knowledge. We are uh we are we're trying to think creatively in a new way and I'm just absolutely thrilled we've had the opportunity to be together this last week and to be wrestling with some deep issues uh when all of us well for some of us it's a few more than others when I was an undergrad student I doubt that I would have made it through this week. So it's a thrill you know I've often said it's a shame that education is wasted on the young. It's just a joy for us to be in a situation like this where we appreciate it far more than any of our students could appreciate it. So be thinking along those sides in this afternoon Dallas will take some thoughts from your questions from us. Before I turn it over to him let me begin with prayer. The. Father it is indeed a privilege to be your followers. How wonderful a privilege it was for those who followed John the Baptist as a prophet and How wonderful a privilege for those who were followers of the Pharisees Those who were so committed to rigorous interpretation and application of your word. Your word. But Father we have. The real privilege now being followers of Jesus Christ. Each of those disciples should have rightly turned to Jesus instead they were fixed in their own mindsets. So I pray that we understand clearly what it means and what it means to have a truly Christian worldview. Pray that as we now face really. Winding down of our Time together these next two days I pray that. We are thinking now toward how we can be um facilitators. Facilitators developing truly Christian worldview. in our students. So thank you again for our time I pray that you give grace. strength to Dallas to be able to get through these last two days and you would give him clarity of though an expression so that we can Understand clearly. his passion for communicating this material to us. Thank you for your time in Jesus' name, amen.
Dallas Willard:

Thank you Mike for those very provocative and illuminating words. I really. Think that a major part of what faces us in dealing with the material of this seminar is. To position ourselves. In God's timing and God's world. And to ask a question that goes with this passage. What is God doing now. Where is the field of action that God is focusing on now? I really think it's illuminating to think of the emergence of. Modernism and then postmodernism in connection with the events of. The first chapters of The Book of Acts. I think it's very easy to imagine that the church as it came up. To the 16th and 17th centuries as being like the disciples sitting in Jerusalem. Trying to make it somehow work as a Jewish thing. And then the impact of modernism on the institutional church. Of course centuries long project like the persecution that fell. On the church. That was supposed to be carrying the message to Judea Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And. When you look at as if you've been reading your divergences Alan you notice how in Chapter 2 and following in some measure he tries to interpret the debt which the scientific revolution owed to Christian faith.

And I hope you might take that pretty seriously. Nevertheless. That movement has not left us sitting still and we've been in a battle with it. And in fact Biola owes its existence to that battle. You understand what I'm saying. If it weren't for that battle. The whole sequence of schools that we now know as Christian colleges and universities simply wouldn't exist. But then curiously it is possible for the Christian to move into the modern house and try to sit down there. And so then one can think of postmodernity as giving us a kick in the britches. That says move on. Move on. And among other things that would mean that we think differently. About what we have come to identify as the way it is done. And I think in particular that what we see is the Movement within modernity to divide religion from knowledge. That is basically how. Religion
accommodated to modernism. You let us live in the house and we won't challenge you. And that has in the 19th and 20th centuries become a way of life. And you see it most plainly in two places the disconnect between. The critical of the Christian Knowledge tradition and many people are irritated when I use that language. Because they think no no that's not knowledge. What do you mean. Knowledge tradition. They said well I mean the Apostles Creed is a statement of knowledge.

But you see we've come to the point now where so the disconnect that prevails in our Christian schools. Illustrate that by just saying that. Of course our teachers are Christians our administrators are Christians. But the content of our courses. Have no significant difference. From how they would be taught anywhere. And the other disconnect is seen in the area of what we call student life. Where and in Christian schools. Then that's where the spiritual action is supposed to be. But how the courses are supposed to be an area of spiritual action is left unclear. In the. So-called secular schools. The division is even more noticeable. As there the campus ministries are marginalized to the absolute far edge. Of student life. You have the academic life you have student life and then you have. Ministries trying to sort of get in here and there in student life. That disconnect is what we're being challenged by postmodernity to deal with. That makes sense to you. Postmodernity is coming along and it's kicking and screaming and it's punching out here and he's hollering about that and the other and it sounds like something that maybe has no center and not much of an edge to it. But it keeps pulling and tugging like the incredible blob that just won't. And there are some people are saying this thing is going to eat us alive and so on whether they're scientists.

Scientists generally that so-called hoax I hope you have a chance to look at it. It's a really funny but very deeply instructive thing. And the scientists have observed that the confrontation
between the scientist and the deconstructionist literary people social people are trying to eliminate them about what they're doing. One of the funniest scenes I've ever seen in academia was a situation where a man from the English department was reading a paper to a group including all. Areas of university. And. He was talking about how scientists know the song of the males. In most species the male sings. The female bird does not sing. And the language that was used was that the female's vocal. Chords atrophied. And the literary person was taking this as a clear indication of sexism. To refer to this as atrophy. It's like the. Decide decision for example to describe blind people as auditorially challenged that has actually happened. Because they didn't want to say they were deficient in any way so they challenged with reference to their hearing to make it do what needs to be done.

And you see this kind of fragmentation and confrontation coming up even without regard to religion and issues of ethics. So. I'm hoping that it might be possible for you to think of this as an occasion to. Respond by moving on. We have to move on. We have to rethink what we're doing as Christ's people in this world. The structures that we have had are not going to do the job. That does not criticize them for the job they have done by the way. You just think of the demographics. And most people in the church leadership has not thought of the demographics. But one block in Manhattan will have 10000 people living in one block. Block after block after block. And that's not Manhattan that's Hong Kong. That's Beijing that's Cairo that's Sao Paulo. That's Manila that's Mexico City. And new. You ask yourself how could you have. A church with those people. Certainly you're not going to do it by getting them in a building.

So what could the structures be. And I suggest that the structures have to be. Employment. Blocks of living quarters professions. Things of that sort. That. Has to be the people who are in those positions. Understanding fully. How. The Gospel. Content Relates to
real life. Now. How can that happen. If the areas of teaching and research in our schools do not show the way. So I'll just say that to encourage you to think How This might. Work for You. Utilize the liberation that has come and is expressed. By postmodernism sometimes a little extreme. Too much. The Eagleton Book I think. Does a good job of locating a lot of the areas where it's too much and hopefully we'll have time to look at those passages today? But that's what I'm hoping you'll do. And I recognize you know that when you start trying to do this it often takes. What. How can one do this. You see we respond to the disconnection in which we've been trained.

And we are apt to go back just to thinking in terms of being a better person being more Christ like being more prayerful uh a greater anointing of the spirit on us always and we should think those things. The question is simply is that all we think or do we try to think in terms of how. Our disciplines. Our areas of knowledge and practice. Require from an intellectual point of view. Supplementation. By the content of Christian teaching. That make sense just as statement. That's what's missing. And when you when you say that in many settings people just sort of throw up their hands and you know. Or if I tried that it would be the end of my professional career. All of that has to be worked through. You can't deny any of that. And you because in order to make that connection you have to probe very deeply far beyond what is normally taught in graduate programs. I mean think just think to take an. Extreme case if you wish of doing this with mathematics. Actually it's not as difficult as one might think but when you start thinking about it how could.

A knowledge of mathematics be improved by putting the putting it in theistic context and Christian thinking. It. May I give you that is a question I ask you right now. Just just something to think. With as you work on you. How. Might. Mathematics be improved. As a body of
knowledge. If it were set in the context. Of the theistic. At least I think if you have learned what we need to learn from the postmodernist tendencies you at least ought to be able to say at this point why not. Why shouldn't it be. Because to have laid down the cross of ridged, as I put up here wrongly developed modern thinking to have laid that down at least is to open that question why not. Now. Actually. Add one more question to that. How has it been done in the past. And Has it been done. And the first step we need to do in our own fields is to go back and read old books. That attempted it and see how it was done. You. You may be surprised to know that nearly every field if you go back you will find the writings which simply assume. That this could be done. Had to be done. And that you didn't really understand the subject matter unless you understood its place within Christian theistic teaching.

So. Those two questions. Might help you as you think about what you want to do with your papers. Not necessarily that you would try to answer those questions but perhaps some subpart. Some subpart just the research of looking to see what has been done. Might be interesting. In your field. Now psychology is an interesting area. You go back and look at that. Franz Brentano with a book called psychology from an empirical point of view which in 19th century was one of the most famous writings. Thought. That. The Immortality of the soul. Was an essential part of psychology? That psychology that did not deal with that issue. Was not an adequate psychology. That's an interesting thought isn't it. Of course New Age has developed a whole thing called transpersonal psychology. Which involves past lives and things of that sort. And see they think outside they're already thinking outside. Of. The modern. Paradigm. A little perhaps too far outside but that's a matter of argument isn't it that's a matter of argument and empirical evidence. And. So we should. But most of our fields have heavy heavy debts.
To. Christian teaching in the past and then what we see in the last century is the desperate often irrational attempt to divorce the fields. And that's a sociological process. We all. have to Understand that this happened we are part of it. The divorcing of the academic enterprise from the church. And the religious outlook. That's a sociological reality that is something that has gone on within the last century or so. And it has left marks on our fields. It is not an accident that a lot of the stuff that we have to deal with in our fields is there. It's a historical consequence. And. It doesn't make a lot of sense sometimes. June has given me another wonderful question here. I am deeply disturbed by what is happening in our public school system. The loss of a common culture. Through classic literature shared value system anything goes even the point of the rainbow curriculum and so on.

So you see. This has really Lovely analytic language about this experience that you have in this content and I'm starting to sympathize with it. Certainly sympathize with what you have there is a historically developed system. And his history brings about things which would never be chosen. If you were just to sit down and think about it. That. There it is. And how'd it get there. That's why it's important to look at that second question. And. Ask yourself how do we get from there to here. And look at it historically. Important not just to solidify ourselves as Christians but to bring knowledge to our fields. Our fields require self-understand. That's the nature. Of intellectual work. And self-understanding requires a knowledge of our history. So there's just a lot of things here that. One can tie into. And I'm so increasingly convinced as a result of. Various conferences and things that happened recently that I've been involved in we that we have to start thinking of a movement of people. This simply cannot be done. By. Individuals here and there well there will always be individuals who stand out. [inaudible] Still.
It has to be a group of people. Who are prepared to know one another. At least in the sense of self awareness. And of course. What an ideal place here. But you have to put forth the effort.

You have to choose and of course it has been encouraged. the fact that this seminar is occurring means that there is an awareness on the part of the administration of the need uh but the administration can only go so far. It's the choices of individuals. That requires this kind of framework of understanding to make the choices because you know all choice eliminates other options. And that's the nature of choice. So if you choose to do something seriously with this that means that there will be other things you cannot do. So it's a quite a challenge and I hope your thinking and your papers over the coming months or so as you write [inaudible]. I think I want to. I'm going to try to address these more questions that come in but I think I'm going to do that now. Do that. Because I want to finish up. What I was unable to finish last time. I feel like really.

The main thing the systematically I have to give to you. Is this discussion of the two types. Of understanding of consciousness the representational and the apperceptional. I want to go back and talk about summarize that again. But I need to finish the master argument. With Derrida. And that's where we quite last time, then I want to give just a brief criticism of the master argument Wittgenstein and the master argument Derrida. We have said that the issue for Derrida is identity. [inaudible] The attack on identity as old. and it emerges from classical thought. From very simple premises that are contained in these ideas about what [inaudible] amounts to. That it is settled in favor of identity. Plato and Aristotle are the primary bearers of that settlement in favor of identity. But then under empiricism. The arguments that favored identity are pushed aside. And especially all of this comes to fruition fruition in Hume. Who. Really does wind up exactly where Derrida does by denying that all of the common identities that we assert of person of property and so on. Are Real. And it's in Hume that you get the idea
that these are projections or constructs or posits and Kant agrees with Hume about that except for these unpleasant things. The thing in itself and the ego in itself which he simply can't deal with nevertheless says we have to have.

But the point here is simply that by the time we get to Hume and Kant. All identities are constructed. Different ways for Hume is mere psychological habits that construct it. For Kant it's a transcendental synthesizer that does it. Then you get all kinds of varieties in the 19th century they are increasingly socialized. First through history and Hegel and Marx and then by the time you get in the 20th century the weight of history is shifted to language as a cultural phenomenon. So then language becomes the great. Producer of identities. Does all that make sense to you, sort of. Now then here's what Derrida, He applies the same thing to language. That had been applied to everything else. And of course that shoots the works. Because then. You really don't have anything to constitute the identities. By the way if you want to see where this winds up in Quasi-theological terms look at Don Cubists most recent book after. God. After God. Don Cubit and you see beautifully laid out how this all comes to a head as he will say world producing language and language producing world. And together they are producing the self. When I used to do work in carpentry as a point of humor. Some of the carpenters would fall in the system to get get the Skyhooks. Because they needed something to hang a ladder from where they had nothing to hang the ladder from

So they would say go get the Skyhooks. Of course that's what you feel like calling for. At this point but it's driven by a very tough line of argument. So what happens with. Derrida He simply applies to language and that's always in the form of meaning or sense. he just applies to language. [inaudible] Every element of language every conceivable element of language Including what we call phonemes and graphemes you know the level of sounds he applies to
language elements the anti-identify and and that is always anti-essential elements uh arguments. That [inaudible] already been applied to everything else.

Speaker 3:

I'm actually a little confused [inaudible] I feel I understand Derrida's argument [inaudible] of identity but I'm not sure I understand [inaudible] Derrida in other words I understand A and B saying two things with the idea that two people [inaudible] identity that logical [inaudible] I guess I just doesn’t understand the original argument that they [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

Ah, the original argument is simply based on this idea of identity, if a and b are identical then all properties or relations are shared. If there's a property that a has that b doesn't mean they are not identical. So for example you don't need two persons you take the same person at different times. They're not identical why Because one of them has a property the other does a. Minimally one exist now the other existed then. And that actually that argument from time is one that there just uses over and over and over. But Hume had applied that to persons for example. So the big problem of personal identity emerges in empiricism. And it's precisely this. And so like white universals white black square and so on. So they all any occurrence of them there will be something true of one that's not true of the other. The other for example it occurs here or it occurs there. So they're not identical. See this is a very tight argument and Harry Clyde was onto it.
This is what he used [inaudible] so that everybody can't step in the same river twice. Why. Because there is a property that the river at one time has that it doesn't have in the other time and now that's a relentless argument. and what Derrida suddenly he realized well look this is true. See Hume will say shamelessly Oh well you know what is it to have a universal. Well we just revive the same word.

Speaker 4:

Paracelsus on the other hand united the world with a divine Logos. Why not take that route?

Dallas Willard:

That part of Paracelsus is not widely known. So for example is this the same word this. You might say there's only one word the in the English language. But there are two of them. Are they the same. They have different properties. That's true of every occurrence of every word. Derrida just, now you have one other point. For Derrida properties are constituted by means. This is where discussions of presence come out again. Again when I say white. I use the word white I grasp a certain profit. That property is in fact not something I can cleanly grasp. I cut it off and the language we used Last time I do violence to it. I do violence to it by cutting it off and making a whole and whole or totality is the main thing that Derrida means when he speaks of presence. Presence is not just time and space or even consciousness. It's wholeness and total totality.
If you read Eagleton, you'll remember how he's always jumping on totalities and totality is just a way of saying a whole. And wholes do not exist for Derrida apart from terms which constitute them, meanings which constitute them. so white is there is no such thing as white apart from the meaning. That. Picks it out. Now that's true of People there's no such thing as Sam Dash. Or Sam Dasho. Or. Any other individuals for for Derrida There is violence both in names as well as adjectives. So to just know Mike Wilkins used that name. Well. I'm exerting him and making a whole out of him but he has not on this view. [inaudible] And so nothing is whole in its own nature because everything is related to everything else. That's the way the argument goes.

Yes, Yvonne

Speaker 5:

I keep coming back to that identical [inaudible] in research identical is usually a [inaudible] uh and I keep going back to a [inaudible] if you have a fuzzy set of characteristics as opposed to [inaudible] so this item is [inaudible] because it has fuzzy not [inaudible] so you can identify duck but not [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

OK now that's exactly the process that I think shows that language does violence because when you say duck. You are saying I will not consider all this. All these differences. It's [inaudible comment]. It means it is a produced identity. That's what his view is that it's a produced identity. And this is not he doesn't originate this is a very old idea Nietzsche talks about it endlessly. But it is sometimes used it is sometimes referred to by the term abstraction.
And abstraction it is treated in much of the past of philosophy as a form of distortion. To abstract you change the nature of something. It's no longer what it was before you abstracted it. So that's where all of this comes from. That's pretty deep stuff to tell you the truth and you really need to know. Your footwork if you're going to deal with it. And I'll say a little something about criticizing in a moment.

Now things like the Heideggerian analysis of human nature the Saracini analysis of human nature as always living in the future and therefore not being here but being there. Famous Sarciān formulae that man is what he is not and is not what he is um Is his version of Heidegger's idea. Dawes. [inaudible] That's rejecting the idea of presence. I am what I am only in a future that attaches to me and makes me what I am. So that fits in with this whole analysis. So uh now um This is the master argument for Derrida it hinges on the idea of identity together with the idea that qualities and individuals are constructed by meanings which are in constant flux. And a part of this is the more popular ideas which you may have heard about.

You never you never get the meaning of a text. There is no such thing as the meaning of a text Now. Christians often will. Be Attracted to this because. They want to give a relational interpretation of faith for example and not a propositional interpretation of faith. And that's I think something that all of you probably know that difference. And the idea that well people can have they say they believe all these propositions because it doesn't mean anything in their lives and what really matters is your relationship with Christ. And usually that goes on to say that the propositional content doesn't really matter. This becomes one point of contention between postmodernist and Objectivist tendencies in Christian faith and practice the idea that propositional content which might constitute knowledge in the modern sense. Is either everything on one side or doesn't amount to anything on the other. So I mean this is the lady coming out of the show
Corpus Christi Corpus Christi. Although the. Treatment of Christ and His disciples as a covey of homosexuals [inaudible] the lady coming up interviewed said I don't know what all the fuss is about. It's all about love isn't that what the Bible is about. It made perfect sense to her. So. This is a real battle. That often emerges around the issue of spiritual life and postmodernism seems to tend more towards nonpropositional form Modernism and objectivity to the proposition forms. And people can really get stuck on that. But the idea here is simply that propositions are constructs. So reconstructionist. Interpretations of the Bible. [gap in recording] You know that the big feminist meeting that they had in Minneapolis some years ago and reconstructing God. you hear this complete. Misses between the various parties because one side is thinking well there's no problem with reconstructing scripture. It was constructed in the first place. That's where.

That's where the real assumptions are and the other side saying no it was not constructive. So we are not at liberty to reconstruct it. So this idea of constructing and reconstructing you see and the Sameness of meaning and then the endlessness of interpretation is taken as creating again the wall of insight which we cannot transcend and get to things as they are because we just just get another interpretation just from one interpretation to the other. So this is all related to these basic arguments. Nancy. [inaudible question] I Think you've got it down cold. That's exactly right. So you put those two together and you are your world. There is no. There is no world except the one that we constitute identities in and those always do violence to what is really there. And the violence then is oppressive. At least serves as a basis for political and social oppression. And then following the ethical motif we have to go back to the metaphysical arguments and show that there is no basis for the oppression in reality other than power. And then managing the identities becomes a crucial element in power. At that point we're supposed
to. Dissolve those identities or at least recognize that they are constructs. Todd. [inaudible question] Oh sorry. OK. This thing here keeps me from seeing you.

Speaker 6:

I. Just. Goes back to my question about Natoli and using the language of whereas we see it this way were in reality it is this way an I wonder if that language is taken away from us in postmodernism.

Dallas Willard:

That is what postmodernism that is what postmodernism as I interpret it intends to take away from us.

Speaker 6:

So now you're using your language to analyze Postmodernism.

Dallas Willard:

Yes, my language is the only one I can use. And of course if the post-modernist is right I am captured by my language and therefore can't do justice to his position. That's one of the things that's built into postmodernism which I regard as a handicap if my view is right then both he and I can transcend our language and actually come to discuss things if we're patient. And
willing to learn. Because my view is one according to which our consciousness and language does not inherently build a wall of separation around us. And even apart from the question of whether or not my view is right. I think it has the advantage of making possible a discussion. Eagleton traverses some of these points here where he thinks that there's a good point which I tried to make by saying the substance of my consciousness is in fact different from everyone else's. And remarkably different from people of radically different social groups and so on.

So. But the substance of my conscience so far consciousness so far from standing in the way of my awareness of the world. Is precisely what makes it possible for me to be aware of the world. And since I adopt that position I don't even have Natoli's issue of whether or not there really is something out there that we just can't grasp which we're discussing today I don't even have that problem. My problem is simply how to work with the realities of my consciousness and language and find out how I can know. The World. Better. And. Of course the postmodernist is not committed to rejecting the idea of knowing it better and though there are things in his view that suggest this is difficult [inaudible] Todd.

Speaker 7:

Well I was just going to ask, I want to turn this discussion toward question of the self and I have found that these certain narrative theorists make a certain amount of sense [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:
See Narrative theories of the self are not inconsistent with the idea of the self as the real identity. I think if you take them in that way they are very helpful.

Speaker 7:

But those are those narratives of the self. [inaudible] They posit the best way to talk about a self is through the ongoing notion of the self that you are constructing that comes from your identity so if I have this notion of myself from the past I have e a notion of myself from the present a notion of myself from the future part of [inaudible] story of who I am I select certain instances and if I go to a therapist for instance you know they may say well Todd you've been using this story of yourself a as victim but let's use this story [inaudible] I think it'd be very helpful using the same facts. And the way we have a self is by our ongoing identity, my identity as a Christian [inaudible] this seems to me to be a construction of the self-one that is not fabricated but is a construction from my life and they're saying that this is uh I mean the best way of describing the self. Tell me how that might be inconsistent with the self.

Dallas Willard:

It isn't consistent in just the way you describe it. Here's a bit but let me point out that when you say when you speak about constructing the identity of the self. That may mean and I think it does mean I think in the context you're referring to it Coming to think about myself in a certain way. Answering the question Who I am. By locating myself in a story or a group of stories. For example, you told you told me a story the other day a about your daughters. And how you cared for them so that obviously is a narrative that has a great deal to do with how you think
of yourself. And that means. How your actions make sense. So. Now see that's one sense of identity which has to do with how we think about ourselves. But. Identity in the sense that you are one person. With all of these narratives cannot be constructed that way. That narrative view of the self is actually if it means anything. Parasitical on the idea that this self that is being constructed. Is a version of a self. That has many possible constructions and that's the part. That gets lost.

In Hume is the one that loses itself never really emerges after. In western thought. Attempts of Freud and other to do something with it just don't succeed except with a very narrow context where you try to explain. The issue of the inconsistency with the Christian worldview is in this latter sense which is not constructed. So. It's a reality. That then may. Construct stories [inaudible question]. Well I think that's the continuation of the story. Yes. You have to say well what is the self? [inaudible question]. You have to answer that in terms of first of all categorical terms like is it a substance, is it a thing that has an identity through time. That is where the battle is joined primarily with modern thought. and then Post-modernism actually picks this up and so far from being anti this view they just adopt it.

Like so many things in post-modernism they are just adaptations or adoptions of a view that has already been thoroughly elaborated in modernism. So now the primary issue here is you just a succession of states or are you something that is literally identical through the time of your life and beyond. So the question of identity is is Where are you [inaudible] from. Sure yeah. Yeah. [inaudible question] Yes. So. That's a part of the story and the setting that story frames. But here again you have to ask what was created was it simply a succession of states that could be connected up in various ways depending on how you thought about them. Or was it something that is what it is independently of how you think about it. That is always the question
that you come back to. And here you can take an attitude within postmodernism which says
Well I'm sure there's something there we just don't know anything about it or you know there
really isn't anything there which that's, that's Hume. And most thinkers especially those who look
to Nietzsche adopt the Humeian posture. There really isn't any identity there at all. And certainly
that is what Derrida says. There is no identity. What's the point that really frees you up in your
understanding how you are formed by your society. And one of the irony is that. Eagleton brings
out is postmodern view of the self which is interested in liberty and freedom. Winds up in other
subjection to how the self is conceptualized. By. Society. And that's [inaudible] Strictly speaking
one might take a creationist view itself that says yes the self is indeed [inaudible].

Not a substance but something that exists only. As God conceptualizes it. Now That
would give you a place to stand other than just social process [inaudible]. [inaudible question]
The soul might but again you see those are battles you have to fight. Here. One issue is the body
of many Christians now will say the body is the substance and the soul is merely some aspect of
the body uh that gets you into really deep issues [inaudible]If you believe what Jesus said when
he said God is not dead and dead living you're probably going to want the self to be more than a
body and a soul. You're going to want to be a person with a soul. Which has a body. and then
you would integrate the body into. In some way consistent with your basic Christian teachings
psychology philosophy. This is of course one of the biggest points. In all of this area of
postmodernism. Well let me just say quickly that Nancy has already brought up the main
criticism here to what this amounts to doing is rejecting the idea that there are a special group of
properties that constitute the essence of something. And that as long as these remain the same.

Then you have identity which philosophically we will need further work that you have
identity and identity which constitutes the identity. Of the person or the identity of the marker.
Or anything that counts as a substance substance is something. That endures identity through time, exercises causation [inaudible] unifies properties into one thing. Those are the marks of substance. [inaudible question] Yes. We're out of luck with God if we don't. Had some kind of test case. [inaudible question] see that what the what what we're manifesting here is of course the historical weight of empiricism. Empiricism says anything that is going to be a substance or anything else has to be like this. Now that is just, back to our previous statements. That is that is the outcome. Of Modernism as it historically developed. And the fact that then you're at a loss. To account for nearly everything of interest in human life is what throws us into the agony of 19th and 20th century thought. All sorts of solutions.

To which Derrida is [inaudible]. You ask what is really going on here. Well Derrida comes back to something he calls transcendental historicity. And if you like large words you'll feel better after you hear that. But what does it mean. It just means whatever does the job. Whatever allows the system to work. For Kant it's transcendental ego. For Hegel it's Geist for. Marx it's some sort of material determination of history materialism and interesting about the were Marx rejected the empiricists. What they mean by matter was never what Peter Newton or Locke or any western thinker meant by that they thought it was a rather stupid bourgeoisie form of thought. Empiricism. So. And of course why. Well because if you're stuck with it Empiricism There's almost nothing you can account for. There's almost nothing you can understand. It's like being told. Now. You're told to describe to human life and the life world from all of its dimensions. And you're told don't mention anything that is not sense perceptible. That's like being told now describe music but don't mention any sounds. Now see that I would use that in my classes and immediately I'll have two or three bright students say Oh that's no problem at all.
We just do the mathematics of waves see that's how deep. The idea goes. And if you say to them do you think sound is a wave? Of course and you say well. Don't sounds have properties waves don't have. For example, you can hear. No one has ever yet that I know of heard a wave. So. But this is the absolute problem isn't it. It's but of course this is one reason why theology has such a bad time. In the modern world too. God. Goes. A glimmering. On the Wittgenstein argument let me just say. So what I have say with the Derrida argument is that failure to distinguish between the properties that are essential to anything and the properties that are accidental to anything is what allows the argument to run I believe it's an invalid uh way of taking things. You have to distinguish between what is essential and what is not. Or everything that counts as not just like I illustrate this by.

It is a fact that in the USC library for a long while they have several floors of the library where books were classified by size a six-and-a-half-inch section because that way there's no wasted space. And so I would suggest that suppose you went to the library and asked for a six-and-a-half-inch book. And they go get you a six and half inch book. What would you what could you expect to be in that book. Nothing. There'd be something in it that you'd have no idea what it was. And if they were to say to you on what subject matter. You said what doesn't matter. Six inch. Or perhaps a blue book with a blue back. Or one with dog-eared corners. That's typical of accidental properties. And. The mark of accidental properties is they don't matter. So far as. The overall nature of the object is concerned. So how do we classify books. Well author, subject matter and a few other things. and it's interesting for some strange reason. [inaudible] I suppose that's relative to something. Subject matter. Author. Go to the essence of the book. That's why. We classify it that way.
So. I'm afraid I'm getting too far into the philosophy of it here but let me just say that you do have to justify that distinction between essential and [inaudible] on you if you're going to be thorough you have to go back to people like Locke. This all starts with Locke. And others who have said all properties are equally essential or inessential as the case may be. And so then Locke begins this talk about Essence's being constructed. He's the one who started the idea as he would put it all essences are verbal essences. So that's a that's a major point John Mark Let me just finish up here. Don't forget your thought. On the Wittgenstein argument. You remember that the main point here was that Wittgenstein entered in the way the argument the problematic se itself up for him he couldn't find any way to get from language to the world. Couldn't find any way to get [inaudible]. That's why he winds up saying it all runs from the inside. Correspondents won't do.

Because well really two things we can't figure out what it what [inaudible] Of course. In his first book he tried to do that. But in any case for him if you if you if you can figure out the correspondence would be you could never observe it itself. So that's a crucial point. And I want to just say that the reason where the where the argument back of Wittgenstein breaks down is his assumption made for some reasons that you can never compare your thinking to the world. That's his assumption. And you're speaking to the world. And generally speaking that is true if you try to compare Newtonian physics to the world as contrasted with Einsteinian or Aristotelian physics you won't be able to do that in any direct way. Theology will be the same thing you try to compare Hindu version of ultimate reality with a Christian version. That will be difficult to do. On the other hand, we do constantly compare. Our. Thoughts and our problems. To the world. I felt a little guilty Mike because I was afraid you'd think I was after getting some chocolate doughnuts here but I tried to illustrate by that statement on the question are there chocolate
donuts on the table. If if you if you were not capable. Of comparing that statement. To what it is about. You wouldn't be competent to live. You couldn't get a job at McDonald's and keep it. Basic human competence depends upon our ability in the obvious cases to compare statements and thoughts to what they're about. To see if they match. And that's why you have to say that it can still be an argument simply depends upon assuming a corner of philosophy.

That has no contact with how thought and language actually works. And the reason for that is because assume that Midas Touch Idea the Midas Touch ideas I can't compare my statement to the table and the donuts because when I look at the table of donuts I just get something I've made and I can never get over that on that view. But if you don't accept that view which I hope you won't. Then it is not true that you cannot. Know the type of correspondence that holds between that statement or a belief and what it is about. You can do it and you do it all the time. We do it every day. We do it constantly our children learn to do it. If the word was to get out that you could not do this. You might have a problem holding onto your job. [inaudible question] no that's quite right and as far as how language works. This is you have to say that Wittgenstein as well as Derrida they bring up a lot of things that we need to accept and pay attention to see that. But that's not my point.

My point is that Wittgenstein develops this as a theory. Of how language works that does not establish a contact with language and what is there independently of the language. And you see you don't have to buy that theory to appreciate Wittgenstein. But that theory is the one that causes the problem. And. Now with those criticisms I just want to go back here once more. And say the real issue depends on you being able to appreciate the difference between apperception and representation. And apperception my experiences obviously are different from everyone else's including the cultural aspect including possibly my irrational biases and all kinds of things.
But on the apperception model what I say is these elements in my experience are the only things that make it possible for me to grasp a world. That is not a part of my experience. So what my experience is determines what I can grasp.

But it does not produce what I grasp. That's where we snip the Midas touch thing we're free of that as we should be. Then we can do justice to all of the relativities and we can recognize how they bind us but we can also recognize how they help us. [inaudible question] Yes the all of the relativities that are built into my experience the very last point to make it possible for me to grasp a world. That is not a part of my experience. And. Those relativities include things that might blind me also. Indeed, they do. I mean that's a part of. Of being a human being. I'm in a body. This body was born into a culture a time or place. Now. That will involve perspective. That will be different from other people. But what I'm saying here is. It does not necessarily blind me. It makes it possible for me to grasp a world. That is really there. And that may increasingly be there as I come to understand it. And. So for example such things as growth in knowledge make perfect sense on this model. I am not in growth in knowledge I am coming increasingly- [End]