

Postmodernism and Christian Theology (Part 1 Disc 1)

By Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

I've been looking forward to the chance to get to know the rest of you the ones I don't know already and to renew fellowship with the people I have known for quite some time. Now. On this sheet here that the material is huge. I understand that what I'm suggesting here is that more or less we would like this evening if you have some time to look over your notes. On part three of Kahuni [sp]. Pull together your thinking questions. That would be good preparation. And then we're more or less try to focus on those passages. So this way we would be able to have special time on all of the books except the Serap book which I'm not excluding from the discussion you can bring it anything in there that you want to discuss you can. But I took that as a very it's a the most introductory secondary source I know of on this material and I don't mean to exclude from discussion is what I'm saying, you're perfectly welcome to bring it discuss and point.

But if we could work on that kind of plan. Then I think we would get over most of the material we need to close the look. The Monday morning on Wittgenstein and Derrida that's the toughest stuff at least for my point of view that's the toughest stuff you had to read. I may do more lecturing on that. Just to try to make sure that I've said to you as clearly as I can what this is all about. Why are they there because they are the thinkers that are regarded as the most fundamental? In this whole. There they are thought to be the most penetrating the most original

and so forth. So. Now I'm not suggesting that you should agree with that. In fact from the point of use of philosophy I have a very deep reservations about both of these people. But from the point of view of a scholar. Who is having to deal with postmodern currents? This is sort of like the deepest level of reference that you will find interesting. For example Thomas Koon, almost everyone knows Thomas Kuhn. At least they know the word paradigm. Something. But the whole outlook is based on Wittgenstein's philosophy but most people who read Kuhn can't recognize it. And so we talk about. The. Book is almost totally original sources. It's a really good selection. So that's why we're spending so much time. Essentially the first two days. This little. Primer to post modernity is a really. Excellent introduction from the viewpoint not just of +content but style. Of what passes for postmodernity. So then we will do Eagleton which is an easy read I think it makes an excellent point and we want to wind up with Diogenes [inaudible].

So just sort of organize your outlook for the next few days around that schedule. I think that will. Probably the best way to handle the material. Now. What I'm most concerned to do in all of the material is to address the issues that concern you. So that's why your questions will be so important, and your participation. One of the things I'm counting on is I know some of the people here. I know that many of these areas you know more about some of these things than I do. I'm really hoping that you're going to be forward in your contributions [inaudible] I've asked Mike to try to Shepherd this and to watch the issues that need to be addressed to help me hear you. Feed in comments and questions and so on as we go along. So that we can generate hopefully a very lively participatory spirit here. And not worry about whether or not. Our questions make a lot of sense or are based on mistaken assumptions or whatever but just feel very free to just say what is on your mind because that's the arena of work that we are engaged

here isn't. These books. It's your work, it's your mind, and it's your thinking. That's where we have to make it. Hopefully for good.

Now this morning to start out I want to just emphasize a few things that uh I'm hopeful will just organize everything for us because post modernity is. A tangled ball of twine. With all sorts of motifs running cultural literary philosophical. And it is quite easy to. Suffer from intellectual clutter with this topic it's much easier than it is a lot of others. I believe that the confusion is not. The confusion the complexity the clutter. Is is appearance and not reality. One of the- it's contributed to by postmodernism themselves. One of the things that you will notice frequently is post-modernist writers who say that you cannot say what postmodernity is. Indeed you have people who will say that it is a part of the postmodernist thesis but you can't say what anything is including postmodernity. Well give us a break you know. And what I'm going to try to convince you and they will say the same thing about modernity and I'm going to try to just make as clear as I can what the essential core of both of these positions is.

And let's just begin by saying what is this all about. What is the whole discussion about? It is about what counts as knowledge. And what knowledge can do. So let's. What counts as knowledge and what knowledge can do? I should say can and cannot. Of course these are related what counts as knowledge and what knowledge can and cannot do. For example right in the modern period you find the brink of a big argument about what knowledge can and cannot do. Do you remember your readings? Remember that Rousseau and Edmund Burke. Both. Get on a high horse about this, and Rousseau is dead convinced that moral guidance of life has to come from sentiments or passions. In that regard very like David Hume and some others. That. They identify knowledge basically with reason and sense perception of the world and then they say Rousseau says. If you try to improve humanity in this way you will simply corrupt them.

Now Burke is different. What Burke says is tradition. That moral guidance comes through tradition, not through moral guidance or knowledge. These are these are attempts to limit what knowledge can be done. So those are some of your literature says you know like the postmodernist themes do not emerge in the last 20 years they've been there all along. Modernity has always had dissenters but as you come into the postmodern period. This becomes very pressing. And there is an interplay here. What counts as knowledge if you think of knowledge as for example scientific knowledge then the standard Heideggerian critique is put in words like Auschwitz and Hiroshima? Those two words Auschwitz Hiroshima stand in the post-modernist writers as a comment about what knowledge can and cannot do. It can do awful things. It cannot prevent awful things. Knowledge is interpreted in terms of scientific knowledge that expresses itself in technology and you wind up with that with people studying the efficiency of burning bodies in gas ovens. So this is really what this whole discussion is about. Pleased by the way you interrupt me if I look like I'm lecturing don't worry about it, interrupt me as I go as I go when you want to.

Now then I want to come immediately to you. And of course to me today because this same issue comes down to. Our work today. Think a moment about the role of knowledge or knowledge claims in human life. Knowledge is understood to be. The basis of responsible action. Who has a right to act? The one who knows right? This is the connection between ethics and epistemology which many people don't quite get articulated. But for example all of you went through a process of qualification to be in your present position didn't you. Was designed to certify that you had knowledge of this your profession. Is. Not. That true. Now you used to be interested in character and you still are at Biola. But you cannot in my position at USC you can no longer raise questions of character. As a basis of qualification. To Profess a field and the

reason for that is because in the larger academic world. There is no such thing as accepted moral knowledge.

So you can see now this is this is a very important point. Knowledge is the basis of responsible action. But now it does not extend to the moral life itself. [inaudible question] One. That. Was. Far. More. Dubious. Well there is a kind of loose connection here between the credentials and having the knowledge. One could have the credentials. And one can have the knowledge and not have. Situation. Where you need to act. And you have the knowledge, but you don't have the credentials. Would you be responsible in acting especially if it were an important? Or very significant situation that would make a great difference would you not be irresponsible not to act. [inaudible comment] Right. Right. Because the people observing we live in a credential society. And in fact one of the ironies of our culture is that in many areas we constantly fall back through the courts on what is accepted in the professional context as the procedure. So we wind up shifting the burden of this off to the courts to decide and course who do the courts call in experts. This is very interesting.

So your point I believe is very well taken. I think all of us would prefer to have a knowledgeable person. Working on any matter that affects us. And we would feel misguided if someone didn't know and yet went ahead. Perhaps mistreated if they didn't know and they went ahead and acted. Now you of course in your fields um if it were turned out that you were not knowledgeable. In your field and yet you proceeded to do the things that are required in your field. Probably this would be thought by you and others as irresponsible. The credential question is important because it tries to answer the epistemological question how do you know. That the person has knowledge. And as long as you keep a certain looseness there and understand that culturally especially in a culture where there is a vast population and you cannot know. Like if

you need your teeth fixed how do you know your dentist can fix your teeth. Credentialing right. And likewise if you need to study education or communications or something your field is in. How would you know that your teacher or someone who's writing in the field knows anything about it credentials.

So the credentialing. Now this is actually a part of the postmodern problematic, because one of the things you'll see in the postmodern writings is that there is there is nothing more to ask once you know the credentials. Credentials are all there is to it so the issue of getting the credentials is [inaudible] This is one of the very crucial points about and I'll come to that talk about it more in a moment about the take on. Post-modern take on postmodern culture. John were you gonna say something.

John:

I'm just wondering if you could clarify, separating virtue from knowledge fills me with dread. I was wondering if you could comment on the relationship, and it seems to me Burke would have been made safe, Although he had some religious problems as well would be made safe against some of what would seem obviously wrong with this point of view like his belief that there was a traditional belief type connection between virtue and real knowledge.

Dallas Willard:

Well I think Burke did suppose there was a connection between virtue and real knowledge, my reading of Burke as I read conservatism historically, not the political

movement but historically is in fact an epistemology of historical knowledge. Now what it basically said is that people can't just sit around and think up moral truth. Moral truth emerges incrementally through the process of history. And I think Burke supposed that what emerged as virtues through the process of history was something that counted as moral knowledge. I think he did have a tie between between them. He was concerned primarily with political and moral and social issues. And in that area I think he saw them as validated in the same way. So for example in his discussion of the rights of kings and the rights of men. So he just obviously regards the stuff that had recently come up about the rights of man. As a bunch of intellectual fluff fluff. You know come up and he jumps on Richard Price who's carrying on about. The rights of man and so on. Obviously he thinks this guy doesn't know how you get to know things about virtue and society.

Now let me just address you. First mentioned concern share. The disconnection between knowledge and virtue. And I often will. I have often said in professional contexts, for example medical doctors. Would you rather have a colleague uh who is a good person but perhaps did not have the highest recognition in his or her field or perhaps the one who has the highest recognition but questionable character. They will always say. The one. With the highest recognition if they have to choose. And that as I see it a part of our modern configuration. Now of course there goes into that. A widespread sense. That you can't. Know if a person has good character. That goes back to this issue of what counts as Knowledge.

Speaker 3:

Just hitting off from that uh a question would you say that uh a university like Biola uh who is concerned about credentialing would include as a package faith and knowledge as opposed to USC which would just look at the knowledge as the whole picture.

Dallas Willard:

Yes they do that now. But now do you understand what a difficult position that leaves them unless faith counts as knowledge. They're left in a position of. Hooking a little something here right. Oh when you have what 30 units of Bible now. Now. You had that for. Ever. And you are alone. So what is it that some people say well that's not knowledge that's historical appreciation or something like that that you put on your students so now. An issue that this is really my sense of what I'm doing here is that this is really this brings us to the real heart question for people such as you and I. Our work, I mean are we just hanging some historical accretion on our students at considerable expense to their parents. Or are we providing knowledge. And for example you also teach something about ethical character here. Is that knowledge or is that something else, see.

See this is one of the areas where the sort of postmodernist note can sound. And by the way I don't postmodernism as if it were all bad. I need to say that. Many. People do. I don't. This is one of the areas where a postmodernist approach can be Very helpful if you can say well look we don't allow you who are outside of our circle we don't know allow you to define what knowledge is. We can tell you what knowledge is we and my diatribes in various quarters I try to make that point. We have made us as Christian educators think have allowed secularists to define what counts as knowledge. Now one of the things that is helpful from postmodern and

postmodernism. I will talk a little more about this all liberation. You will not find postmodernists who are not responding to some kind of oppression. Real or perceived. And in that regard postmodernism as always salvationist. And when you read Leotard, Derrida, and others [inaudible]. They always use salvation. See I think there's actually a nice. Let me just read of the paragraphs or if you don't have this with you just note the paragraph spanning pages 8 and 9 in this uh Primer. This is nice [inaudible]. Now he starts off that postmodernists point. Which isn't just postmodernist as I've said in some of my publications the basic points about conscious of the. Postmodern they are firmly in place in American Philosophy for over 75 years before the word postmodernism comes out. Practicism Basically it makes all of the points and positivism. Very. Close.

Any case let me just read this paragraph priming your postmodern awareness is just prefacing just a preference to enable you to see how we are reality making and how the clash of different reality frames generate different responses. It is the multiplying of meanings and values about everything that leads the nativists and the modernists to distraction. The more of the distraction the greater the need to impose requires solutions effective answers and sweet endings designed by rational minds. And now he states his concern in writing his book. If I didn't think that this gap between our world breaking out in all directions and our grasp of this as chaos, Postmodernist postmodern chaos if I didn't think it wasn't leading us to strong leaders. With quick fixes totalitarianism both left and right ordained by a deity, I wouldn't be priming you toward a postmodern awareness. The next sentence gives his aim. We have to shift our understandings, our perceptions into a postmodern frame of realizing a real real and begin to connect with the new understanding, a new way of making reality. A part of that is addresses elements that are in the Christian tradition of the. Vaguely gnostic sort of tendency in Christian

history that comes up to today in a lot of stuff that is called Spirituality see the postmodernist steps in and says yes well that's that's knowledge too. And it can help you deal with the terrible things that are coming through our culture that threaten our life and require us to repress it. So you see this this issue of. What knowledge can do the basis of responsible action for the postmodernist says we must redefine what knowledge is because otherwise we can't deal with our very real problems. Someone was going to say yes Dan.

Dan:

You said that the postmodernist is driven by reaction to what he sees as repression.

Would that also have been true of the modernists?

Dallas Willard:

Oh yes that's tied into this issue about knowledge as the basis for responsible action. See the modernist is a person who says essentially authority and tradition. Cannot serve as a basis of life. It cannot serve as a basis of life. What can we well fundamentally scientific research says that [inaudible] and scientific research and then put into opposition And. Because people missed. The Burkian and Rousseauian point Rousseauian point is actually on the side of revolutionary romanticism. The very political of evils that come with revolution. Revolution becomes a good thing. Why. Because authority and tradition are bad things. Why are they bad? Well because they're ignorant. The constant theme you get hammered over and over. Even today people like Daniel [inaudible] and John Searle. When you when you read it you will see that continuing

missionary theme we are going rid the world of the ignorance that is opposed upon them by religion and metaphysics.

So you see this this idea of responsible action is just right at the heart of the whole discussion. How can we act responsibly only if we know? How can we have knowledge only such in such a way then you do have the other side. The Rousseau and Burke and up to today Heideggerian Derrida side which says no no no you have to get beyond knowledge. There's this there's something more that is needed to achieve liberation but for all of them they have to say well you have to break the hold of knowledge as understood in a certain way. So the whole battle is over what counts as knowledge and how can we be responsible and that's that's the battle that goes on now between the Christian worldview and the secularist worldview There's a battle about responsibility and that's why on both sides you see a huge amount of self-righteous. It's because of the idea that we are touching on the basis of responsible action in life.

So what is the typical evolutionist say about a creationist? Science. They don't make any bones about it do they. Suggest that these people are intellectually and morally irresponsible. It's not just that they're wrong they are bad people. And often come back to the evolutionist in in the same tone. So this first part of the discussion this morning I want us to understand. That this is what it's all about. And that it touches us because we are all practitioners. We profess. Or we administer professing so the field of Biblical studies. I don't know if you saw the PBS thing from Jesus to Christ. No. I and my wife got tired of hearing me yelp as I watched that but my yelps were these people are being intellectually irresponsible. Because they have accepted a framework of explanation. Which can't do the job. And. So they are they wind up saying silly things about how Jesus became Christ. Just silly things. And I was not objecting to where they came out, I was objecting I was objecting to how they had limited the framework of discussion to

start. And so in my view they were irresponsible. In that because they were not dealing with knowledge they were dealing with conjectures within an unquestioned framework. And they shouldn't have done that. David were you going to say something

David:

Something I think with all of this stuff I was thinking of salvationists and oppression and timing of the revolutionary, just the paradigm shifts maybe I'm getting ahead of myself here but where are we going to after postmodernism. What is the liberation from the liberation itself?

Dallas Willard:

Well I I think there's no guarantee that we will get beyond that as a culture especially. Now I'm going to be talking about this I'm going to suggest some ways of getting beyond it at the level of thought but there's no guarantee that culture is going to go that way. And in fact it may well be that from that point of view of a cultural critique postmodernism. Is a final stage. That will not be transcended. The real questions here reach very deep and indeed perhaps especially towards the end of the meetings we might want to come back to that. Can anything be done? It's basically the question. I don't see a great flight cultural flight back to realism. But if we were to develop leaders who were capable of handling the issues in a in a manner that can be effectively communicated. To a culture that possibly has been ruined by mass education and by mass media. Which train you not to think then there might be a future.

David:

Seems like a response assumed ignorance [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

Well I mean this is very hard to forecast. My sense is there is no uh there is no proof that is effectively able to stand against the forces of postmodernism. Now I'm going to discuss in a moment a couple of issues that lie at the core of this because I want us to have them in view and then I think I'm hoping you're going to see how all of this begins to fit together. But this is a very interesting and important question. I at present don't see anything but sinking further into the same sort of thing. That's not to say it couldn't something else couldn't be done. But for me the problem here is leadership. And when you have when you have. A culture that puts Billy Graham and Bill Clinton at the top of their list of most outstanding people. You got to wonder. How this could be the state of mind. Now many people say well it's a post-modern state of mind. But the question is is there any recovery from it and I'm certainly not I hate I hate to go back and use words like well a religious revival a religious revival that is not an intellectual awakening cannot do it. And if you will look at the substance of the religious Christian revivals that have changed culture. You will see that they were with one accord intellectual awakenings.

OK well you have anything more you want to say about this because I'm hoping that you now say you're sitting there saying I see I've got it right here. This is what this is about. It concerns my work. What counts as good work in your field? I guarantee you that in every case it will have something to do with knowledge won't it. Nancy. [inaudible question] And here the post-modernist answer is very strong. We have developed ways of doing this that are socially

accepted. [inaudible comment] Well that's right. So. [inaudible comment] Well of course I think. The postmodernists side would say that's not a fair way of putting it but it's not clear what the fair way of putting it is very sophisticated people like Foucault. Will simply say there are dominant. Patterns of knowledge which validate themselves in institutions that do things like certify people. Fore Foucault, Foucault is not like Kuhn [sp] and others who believe. There is a progression that we get closer to actually Kuhn has problems with that too. This whole issue of approximation and truth. Foucault just explicitly dismisses any idea of this. There are just powers. That express themselves. In. Methods of certification and control. Control is the ultimate aim and certification is a way of controlling. [inaudible comment] That's exactly right. Yes there is no question of anything beyond certification because certification expresses the Social Construction of Reality. Well. What is real? This comes up in fields like medicine and others. So the problem is you see to state an alternative to certification. And we all I think have a feeling somehow that you can be certified to fix Pontiacs and couldn't fix Pontiacs. That there actually is a difference.

But then back to this issue what counts as knowledge. How do you how do you how do you distinguish knowing from being certified? To do that you would have to retreat to a description of knowledge that was independent of social process. And that is scary to people. Most postmodern as well. That's why most postmodernists take a social view of the mind. Which is usually expressed in terms of linguistic structure. [inaudible] ...the route of saying well there are there are mental states which constitute knowledge. That is regarded as modern, right. That is Cartesian individualism. Other. Words. They use a line from William Moors the poet at the end of the last century. "It gratifies my soul to know that though I parish, truth is so." That's a view of the modern in the old in this sense as opposed to postmodern that's the modern perception of the

self. You might know something and the whole social order be wrong. They might be out here busily certifying people for Responsible action when in fact the people were being responsa-certified for responsible action are misguided and misleading everyone. That becomes very close to a logical impossibility on the postmodernists view. It's it's like the older view in ethics that social opinion. Or feeling determines the distinction between right and wrong. It follows from that. Follows from that that there are no moral prophets. Moral Prophets are always wrong. Why because right means what society approves of and the moral prophet of course is the one who says society is wrong.

So it's very very important to understand that. This idea of responsible action is what. Is taken over by certification. And then if you say how do you know the certification is right then you, then you refer to the experts. And then you say how do you know the experts are right. You have to refer to the social process that made them experts.

[gap in recording]

But you avoid the trap of individualism you see. And we will be looking to go to that in just a few minutes here and look at Descartes and some others to illustrate how that works. But that will that really will give you if you understand that point that will give you a solid hold on what is essential to postmodernism. Which is the idea that social process determines what knowledge is. Not just what we say knowledge, what we count as knowledge. This language can be a little misleading. Now what knowledge is the concern to make sure that the individual

cannot make an end run here? And have knowledge that is not recognized as knowledge in the social process.

Speaker 5:

On the issue of certification I just want to bring this up so people [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Yes that's a lovely illustration. I mean SAT has played a fundamental role in credentialing hasn't it and it was developed by people who were thought to be expert. But it is now running into other social structures. That are driven by egalitarianism and the forces of mass education. What happens in education is education gets redefined. So that all of the people who have access to it can succeed at it. Or have a shot at succeeding at it. This is a beautiful illustration of how this whole thing works. Yvonne and then JP and then I think John you had your hand up.

Yvonne:

Is it accurate that in the post-modern worldview to say that certification is [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

If I understand you I don't think postmodernism will easily allow you to distinguish those two. [inaudible question] Well I think if I think you can and indeed I want to try to as we go along through the days here hopefully make emerge a way that you can. But in order to do that I'm going to have to draw some other distinctions. Let me get into that in a moment but please keep that question up. You have asked the question. Especially from the viewpoint of a group of educators who are in the minority JP you're next I think.

J.P.:

Dallas there is another issue that I think is very central to our work as Christian scholars uh that I hope you will disambiguate and clarify and I think it has to do with you response to the question should we allow secularists to define what is meant by knowledge. And it seems to me that this is oversimplifying and there are two primary answers to that question and both begin with no but one goes on [inaudible] to support complementarian approach that says there is a Christian definition of knowledge and there is a secular definition of knowledge and we're going work on that one. And there is no common ground. I think the other way to say is No we're not going to let secularists define knowledge this would be more of a cultural realist approach that there should be an understanding of what Knowledge is that if true should count for everyone. and there may be certain sources of information from Christian revelation that would inform how to formulate that nevertheless what we arrive at should form common ground Those are gonna have radically different views of [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Yes. Those two. Distinctions that's extremely important. The problem is knowing what to do with the second response. See the second- is everyone clear about the responses. The first response is to say no we're not going to allow you to decide what knowledge is. We can do that too. And that's where you get what is called the reformed epistemology if you're familiar with that language. And the other response is actually to say say no we're not going to allow the secular us to define knowledge in such a way that secularism turns out to be true. And we're not going to allow Christians to do that. We're not going to allow anybody to do that. At that point large Guffoffs from the postmodernists' camp which says who do you think you are that you can stand outside of your social group and say what anything is. You see how that works. The real challenge is whether or not there is a point of view from which one can say what knowledge is without begging the question in favor of a particular group.

So for example the Christian would want to define or say what knowledge is in such a way that it was possible to know something because God told you. In other words. Now this isn't true. The folks that did the thing on from Jesus to Christ were very careful not to do anything along those lines. That's what in my mind left the huge explanatory gap in what they were trying but that's that's the basic idea. Let me let me say let me give you an indicator something a statement about knowledge that I believe does not beg any questions. We will be talking about this more as we go. I'll put both the dispositional and the current sense of knowledge knowledge is the ability to. Represent. A subject matter as it is on an appropriate basis of thought and of experience. Let me just suggest that to you as a non-question begging statement. Some of the things you'll notice immediately it doesn't say anything about belief or certainty. I think that's a great advantage and in fact this is not novel with me. Many good thinkers Plato always thought

that knowledge had nothing to do with belief you could know things you don't believe and you certainly can believe things you don't know.

Knowledge is the ability to represent a subject matter as it is on an appropriate basis of thought and or experience. And you may say well but doesn't this beg the idea of something being what it is. I don't think so it leaves it open for you to make of that whatever you can. You can say you can be a complete idealist you can be positivist you can be a social constructionist you just have to make a case for it. And that's what we want. I think is we want to state that now for all of your fields I think this holds up you I know for a fact that you know a lot of stuff about your field and by the way these are the interesting cases know like the philosopher cases like [inaudible] what matters is do I know the Cyrillic alphabet, right. Do I know how to write it? Do I know the history of Napoleon's career, do I know the way to San Jose and there are people who know the way to San Jose.

And there are people who don't and those who do know it on the on an appropriate basis of thought or experience another thing here that you want to notice is in order to know you don't have to know that you know and that's crucial because most people who get hornswoggled into general skepticism do it because they think that if I don't know that I know I don't know. Well of course if you need to know that you know in order to know you'll never know anything because that's an infinite regress. If you have to know that you know in order to know you'll have to know that you know that you know in order to know that you know that you know and so on. And this is just silliness. Frankly a lot of stuff that we know and we're not sure whether we know it or not. For example all of you that took qualifying exams for your Ph.D. you probably knew a lot of things you weren't sure you knew that you did and it wasn't because your professor said you did. It was because you had an appropriate basis of thought and or spirit.

Now this doesn't beg the question in any way. It's possible that we wouldn't know anything but if you're going to be a skeptic you have to give us a good reason which has interesting problems built in because if you don't know anything you couldn't possibly have a good reason for skepticism. That's one reason skepticism is an irrational position at best.

John:

Actually that brings me the answer to my question but I'm trying to in epistemology take postmodernism seriously and I'm finding exceedingly difficult to do because I'm having a hard time differentiating it from traditional epistemological skepticism. And I once sat in a class someone asked earl carney [sp] and he said his response if you'll pardon me was literally why the hell should I believe that to this sort of infinite regress type response to traditional skepticism which is the traditional response to this kind of argument. Could you make clear to me what is other than the political side what is there to postmodernism epistemologically that I couldn't find reading ancient skeptics?

Dallas Willard:

The difference is this ancient skeptics are all individualists. The reason why postmodernists think they aren't skeptics is because they reject individualism. And this is where Wittgenstein's private language or anti-private language argument becomes crucial because what the postmodernists say is look we've got to be in a world where we couldn't even think so if we're thinking we are in a world and if we're in the world we're not skeptics. That's the quick and dirty version of Heidegger it has a different way but it works the same way as Wittgenstein.

[inaudible question]

It's subject to all of the things that afflict Kantianism or [inaudible] or any other attempts to show that there is a quick way out. Kant's version is certain things must be true in the world otherwise we wouldn't have a world, right. And this was presented as an [inaudible] to Hume. Hume would have just looked at him and said ok we don't have a world. [inaudible] Wittgensteinianism and across the channel, break out about language and culture when you ask how am I in contact with language and culture [inaudible] So then you start to say what is language made of or alternatively what is culture made of. How does it come into me then you'll hear stories like well you went through a process of certification didn't you? And you learned through your research you've learned to choose your problems you've learned how you work from them and so on and so on and the only answer is not if there's not world. At this point that usually degenerates into name calling. But if you if you stay with it it will degenerate into name calling at the other end when it turns out that we wind up in different worlds. Then there's no, this is the first option J.P. pointed out that I well I am a Baptist and in a Baptist's world and you're a charismatic or you're a whatever.

Let's take a quick break and come back and then I want to I want to go to the two issues that lie beneath the discussion that we just got into.

Announcer:

Very good. Those of you, now you can maybe some question have been prompted maybe you want to write down some questions, many of you may feel lost on some things if you do write down some questions some may feel lost on some things if you do write down some questions that can be addressed even anonymously.

[inaudible section of many voices overlapping/muffled voices from 01:01:50 to 01:12:26]

Announcer:

...some questions as you go along. Uh, good. And there's nothing I can do about the heat uh they say it's gonna vary from you're gonna be cold and then very hot so bring a sweater and uh a bathing suit [chuckles]

Dallas Willard:

Yes. I found that with reference to air conditioning we now have air conditioning in the Hall of Philosophy and that there is nothing that counts as knowledge with respect to it except bring your jacket, put it on when it's cold, and take it off when it's hot. OK Now what I'd like to do now. I do want to stress you see this is the kind of thing you just need to cook. You just need to think about it in your field please. We were discussing here a very interesting question about the difference between nurses and doctors and what doctors know and what nurses know and what each thinks the other does not know that they think they know. And that's a very interesting case. And in fact nursing is a fascinating field to study with this sort of material the background

also of music but for example you know a lot in your field and you know it on an appropriate basis. It may well be that that basis will not fit someone's paradigm of what counts as knowledge. Try not to worry about that. Just try to think about knowledge in this way. Now then, there are two basic concepts that are always coming up in the discussions about postmodernism. One I like to give the common language version of concepts if I can. Ofness or Aboutness. And this is sometimes called meaning. A big word for it is intentionality.