

Postmodernism and Christian Theology (Part 8 Disc 1)

By Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

...that consciousness is linguistic. Consciousness has a substance of its own independently of language. And then the language comes in to help it to misdirect it, to do this that and the other. But the substance of consciousness is being not linguistic until the 20th century and especially after the second Wittgenstein whom we must talk about today. Any comments on that. Do you see how that hand hangs together?

Speaker 2:

As I'm trying to process and understand this, it seems to me that there's a lot of what the postmodernists are saying that does make sense in that there is that truth outside of what we can comprehend and the only way that we know to express it in our society is quantitatively or linguistically [inaudible] but our understanding will be different [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

Now then a a Christian thinker will want to go ahead and explore why we see dimly Now in Paul's understanding. And it might have some interesting connection to what the postmodernists are saying. Sorry June go ahead.

Speaker 2:

The whole content of what it does educationally to our society is destroying any semblance of sharing culture or understanding on which to face values and pass this on [inaudible].

Dallas Willard:

Well. That's. Interesting. Because what you see what you're suggesting here is what you. Had a chance to look through but not totally. You know it comes up over and over again this fear of. Postmodernism. And. Usually the fear is directed right at what you're saying. the postmodernist wants to pull back a bit by saying in effect you cannot help but share culture. Because that's the nature of the human self. It is a product of a culture and the language that it uses must be shared. That's the Wittgenstienian point, that you learn your language in a society. And that learning is what makes it makes it possible for you to be a human being. But the constant concern. Is. Of course in our culture where power curiously is not really effective in coercing people. That we have had many many cultures. And again the postmodernist affirm that we have many cultures. that for example we have a religious culture. In fact, we have a lot of different ones that may have a market culture. We have an educational culture an entertainment culture and that these do not say the same things to us.

And one of the things that I think we need to try to. Understand is how this affects religion. Because you see this guy's pretty good at saying what it meant to one have one God over the world. Because it really meant there was one culture. There was one truth. That was the one. God. Himself. Conveys to others to his covenant people. Now. Of course the postmodernist approach undercuts the possibility of that. I would think [inaudible] the number one issue. That has to do with postmodernism. Generally, is what could revelation be if post-modernism were true. [inaudible comment and laughter] Yes and I know you are not Todd Pickett. The. Symbol there will not just leave that to you because I want to ask you if you would. Kindly perhaps people can you be here this afternoon. OK I'm just wondering because I think we're going to be about to the point where this would. Be most appropriate if you wouldn't mind giving us your thesis in your book and just outlining the argument because it bears right on the issue I'm just mentioning. what can revelation be. In a post-modernist framework.

Tradition. Traditional thinkers would want to say something like this and this is the modern solution. That. God is big enough to overcome any barriers to communication. And apparently he's capable. Of grabbing us by our arrow of consciousness in such a way that we don't distort necessarily distort what he's saying to us. Now. Obviously we can distort it. And obviously somebody has. Maybe not me but somebody has because a lot of people haven't read what I have read in my most recent experience with this is with chapter four of the Divine Conspiracy. I give an unusual not novel because there are others who held it but the unusual interpretation of the Beatitudes. Generally speaking, the New Testament scholars and pastors who've been preaching on the Beatitudes for. Decades. Just look what I say. This cannot be right. Somebody is wrong here. Somebody has not got it right. And it's a little uncomfortable discomfoting to say well everyone is right. Which I think is often foisted off on the post-

modernist. And I don't think that's what they're saying. But the problem is there. So we want to keep that in mind and if you don't mind Ryan after lunch when we come back a few would just be willing to come up here. Give us a mini lecture on your book. Which I have written and I enjoy it it was a fine piece of work. But I'm sure you know better than I'm sure you know better than I do. [inaudible comment, laughter] Not. Going to let up on you I guess.

Speaker 2:

Dallas, I didn't understand when you said postmodernists um would not say that anything [inaudible] in that if what is knowledge is socially and culturally mediated then would it not be possible to have two opposites being held as knowledge simultaneously-

Dallas Willard:

Yes, yes. Or reality is the way that postmodernists likes to talk is that we have many different realities. So. Reality is not what we remember we talked about Perce the other day the first day that definition where he puts it in realistic terms and then he takes it back and puts reality and truth in terms of the convergence of the community of inquirers. So what is true in a field would be a matter of What the inquiries in that field will eventually converted to. So I now you know any generalization but my generalization there was I I don't think or certainly not in the heat of the discussion. Well I've never heard of postmodernists say that everything all the different things are true all the different interpretations are true. They would say there are different realities but the realities are not realities. They are things taken as reality taken to be real and very often a given writer will not even tell you what they mean by being real.

Actually. I think Natoli's view in his discussion of film is something like fits into my narrative of identity we take things to be real if they fit into our narrative of identity. If we have a narrative. So it's troublesome to know what to say there June. Is that what Natoli's getting at when he says you're outside the film. When he says the problem of the director is to get you inside it and you're outside and if you can't get inside you're going to say. So. The problem is to get the film to be seen. And the director has the problem of framing realities in such a way that the viewer. Will integrate that into their narrative of identity. Am I right there Mike? I think that's what he's saying. so if you if he doesn't then you're outside. What does it mean to be outside, it means not to be able to integrate what you're seeing in the narrative of your identity. [inaudible comment] Well yes within some measure it will be the same.

But I suppose in many of the cases like you know ordering veal or a transaction with a bank. It's it's it's not in a situation where there's any problem with your identity you know unless the teller comes back and says we don't know you. We don't. What is your name. We don't have any such number. And so forth then psychopath's say Who am I. After all, I often give a postmodernist to someone who walks up to me and says you're Dallas Willard and I'd say something like Well I was this morning. So that's nice to provoke discussion. But if you had a few experiences like this with the bank or something you may really wonder who you are. JP.

Speaker 3:

I wanted to uh just impress some idea that might be good for us to ponder sometime. I've been giving a lot of thought to a question I've thought about this for about ten years or so is what should a Christian scholar be concerned about in his or her teaching. What what should drive us,

how should we decide what should drive us apart from our personal love of Christ and [inaudible] number one, making beautiful those things that are central to Christianity itself. Are there things central to the religion that need to be oh taught in a good light, put centrally. The second thing would be being there areas in the world we are trying to reach like discipleship t Christ in y field. now that would be culturally relevant I think in that cultural nod and I believe to day those unites to make all of us concerned with the questions is Christianity a body of knowledge and you pointed that out and I've arrived at the same thing, not a body of beliefs but a body of knowledge and in light of that I'm just a little concerned when we say thing like we see through a glass darkly or we all see things though our cultures and language. and air think at that point as Christian scholars we need to step back and be willing to say thing slice I think there's areal different between knowing something exhaustively and having genuine knowledge about it.

So If I have knowledge about [inaudible] it's not saying I have total knowledge about it I also don't think when you say you have genuine knowledge about something [inaudible and on the other hand I want to be careful to phrase how I maybe I we see things though our culture or whatever because I do fee this trapping us behind culture or language or whatever because at the end of the day if that's the case if becomes hard for the bible to be revelation in any authoritative sense. So those are just concerns I have about our time together this week and I bring to the table maybe no one else hears those.

Dallas Willard:

Last point JP I want to spend the last 30 or 20 minutes this morning on. Because there has to be a response. to The so-called postmodernist take on that arrow that we've been talking about.

I think that you can say some useful things and I'm going to try to say that on the other hand. Here I think is where one can easily fall into an into a mistaken position about this Arul consciousness which of course is what we're exercising when we sit down and read the scripture study as we go so far Mike here to write commentary digging in digging and digging and digging in one of the things that one can do. And I think actually many. Certainly I know many of the people who would be regarded as fundamentalists do this and many evangelicals I think perhaps do it sometimes just because they don't know what else to do which is simply to deny their own subjectivity. Just to deny it. I once heard a. Very well-known speaker on television programs say well you know we have all these disagreements.

Everyone would just accept the Bible as the word of God. We wouldn't have the disagreements and you wonder where that guy had been. it's Because all these different groups accepted the Bible was the word of God that they had a disagree. If they hadn't accepted his word of God, they wouldn't have had any disagreements. At least the ones they had. Because it's all precisely about interpretation. So what we have to do is to reconcile. The subjectivity of our consciousness. And you know one of the things we all agree on is we're not going to deny anything that's obvious. We just shouldn't do that. And one is that we are subjects we are subjective we have a subjective being. Now then where it becomes not obvious is what you're going to do about. And that's where we get into trouble. On the one hand you deny subjectivity and everyone who's on the other side will say this person is simply not dealing with the facts. and So now on the other hand you see the person who emphasizes the subjectivity. Has to be very careful to not misunderstand it in such a way that it makes impossible the very things they themselves are trying to say. In other words, it doesn't turn their own statements about subjectivities simply into more subjective ravings.

And that is the bind that the postmodernists find. And I've said several times that if you look at the post-modernists you'll see they are stating eternal essences having to do with this with this era. With this arrow. They are telling you how it really is with the world and consciousness and they don't have the least idea that they are suggesting something that is merely relative to their own cultural background. Now if you pin a smart one down like Derrida he will wiggle out of that. He will when you press him say oh yes what I say to is that all of the things I've already said but that's where I've said to you. Now you must distinguish between what they say and what they say about what they say because you look at what they say and you will see that they are giving in a quite modern tone. The essence of conscience. And really we don't have any. There's no way you can escape that except to keep your mouth shut which none of us are about to do. And of course all of us in this room we are in the talking business. Sowed have to keep talking. or We get another job.

So if you're going to talk you're going to say you're going to talk like this. Now Derrida really I think the only one who has the audacity to go right ahead and say Yes that's true. We cannot escape logo centrism. All we can do is sort of shake the bushes and make people suspect that there's something else going on. And. That's that's his routine. We've talked about that word today. Trisha you had a couple of comments. [inaudible comment] Yes. You know with the objectivity of what consciousness is consciousness. And of course I realize that some people say well that's just to beg the question that's where I come back and say let's talk about what you're saying about consciousness. Do you intend that to just be subjective ravings or do you intend to tell us something about how things really are? So that's how the dialectic moves there. But. See the the person who has especially a fundamentalist attitude and we can all beat on those today because no one is willing to self-identify as a fundamentalist. No. They're the ones who have to

just deny subjectivity. It's just bad. You got it. And Toly if you want to look at a couple of passages he actually does a pretty good job of expressing that particular viewpoint. Patricia.

Speaker 4:

Yeah a question about just terminology in reference to [inaudible] Natali talks in this text here about [inaudible] constructions of truth and reality and that deconstruction is the fabricated reality. Is that just Natalie's view of the postmodernist approach.

Dallas Willard:

Well deconstruction has now gotten a life of its own. I'm almost afraid to read the piece that you gave me. I was afraid the guy would say something dumb like deconstructing Harry. The movie you know deconstruction has come to mean about many people. Anything that's just falling apart. So something like the law of entropy. Which is applying to all of us the constant deconstruction is a term that. Derives from the philosophy of Heidegger. And that has given been given a new life to philosophy by Derrida. but what it basically means is not just things are evolving but that every everything has within it a necessary connection with what other everything has within. The necessary connection either other strongly contrasts with. I want to talk more about that I'll spend some time with Derrida and Wittgenstein today because I felt a little more about. In Heidegger. It doesn't mean a process. Of. Digging back into our conceptualizations of reality. In such a way that a world of discrete entities causally interacting. That can be subjected to technology. Disappears. Heidegger sees that as the modern that's the course of Heidegger picks up Husserl's theme of crisis.

Remember Husserl says our interpretation of knowledge has taken a route which is destructive of European science and civilization. What is that route. Well for Husserl it was it was adopting the model of mathematical physics as the form of knowledge. And then the world is simply being the world of mathematical Physics. In that case everything human just disappears. That Derrida goes somewhat further. I'm sorry Heidegger goes somewhat further. it's any form of thought. Which projects the world. As consisting of discrete entities. Not necessarily empirical entities but discrete entities that can be subjected to technological manipulation. So it's slightly different really. Obviously he had read Husserl. He understood what he was saying though the idea of a crisis in Husserl doesn't really get concerned about cultural issues until late in his career. 30s and Heidegger's already. had been writing a long time since so now for Heidegger what deconstruction means is to think about thinking in such a way that that preoccupation with technologically manipulable entities disappears. And it really is a version of returning to the life world. The world we live in as human beings.

Derrida has this further move to the effect it's his critique of presence. [inaudible] I'm going to deal with this at length sometime today. What Derrida does is attack the very idea of identity. Heidegger does not attack the idea of identity Though he does think it's misapplied to human beings. But Derrida attacks the very idea of identity and that's why the [inaudible]. Which has a nice set of ambiguous meanings but really it means. Anything is essentially something other than itself. It has an essential tie to something other than itself. We will discuss writing a little bit. The key move for Derrida is when he Reads the tradition which as he would say privileges of speaking over writing. Which comes out of classical antiquity and comes all the way to the modern period. That somehow speaking is real language and writing is just a supplement and we would say. And. Then what he does is to show. That. Language spoken.

Essentially relate. To writing could not be what it is unless there was writing That's pragmatic of what he would call a deconstruction. you take something in this case spoken discourse. And. You show. That it does. It might not be what it is unless it had this relationship to something other than. That it breaks that into numerous levels. And we will talk about that this afternoon. But. Deconstruction just to emphasize it does not mean something is falling apart. Indeed, it may not be falling apart and you may need to deconstruct it to help people understand what it is. [inaudible question] I don't think anything very sophisticated referred to as with the idea that. as a world view that any reality. Is subject to control and manipulation by human beings Technology is really what we see around us except it is when it's with the. Modern. European philosophers attack it or question Is all this not just technology in that sense it is it is the view that all of life is subject to. Technology. It's the it is the art of controlling reality. [inaudible] This. Actually that you're making a point.

What you're saying is that. Essentially C.S. Lewis' point in the abolition of man. Who's going to control those who control. Is that right. [inaudible question] where does technology fall between the ins and the out. [inaudible comment] You have an interesting field then which has accepted nearly everything that Heidegger and Derrida want to criticize. You see and indeed many people in the fields where management is involved would like to think. That they could put the technology. Education also a lot of people who would like to think there's a technology of education. There's always something that doesn't work. Isn't that a way in your field. Well it does does it. Can you get it down to where what you say? I'm not. This is going to be the input that's going to be the output. Does it work that way? It's an interesting term. You know right now that part is normally thought to be understood by technology. The contingent factors and the subjectivity. Someone else had their hand up, Shana? [inaudible question] I'm sorry what was the

question of the value of technology. Is always very. I mean here's the that's what drives technological society Is the value of technology. is you can be sure you will get out what you wanted. So you have improved technology like now before the oil glut people were going back into old oil wells that had been abandoned. And with new technology and forced oil out of those wells. And make it economic worthwhile. technology changed. So the technology apparently of smart bombs or smart weapons has changed since the Gulf War and our last little round of fisticuffs in Iraq. They were blowing about how you could put a bomb down a ventilation shaft in the Gulf War remember that.

Now they say well I don't know how you could be more accurate than that but if it hit a gnat. So that's technology. Anyone else. We need to. Move on here I think. Let me I will spend some more time on Natalie and on some of this I'll be fairly quick. We had just concluded discussing the passage of 7 through 9 where he was talking about the advantage of this. Why is this important and so? You should have that I. Guess. Just move on from there. His main point of the top of page 9 we have to shift our understanding our perceptions into a postmodern frame of realizing and realizing means creed and constructing realities and that means somehow fitting it into the narrative of our identity. Now if any of you pick up different ways of understanding this in a court of course I'm assuming you will throw a shoe at me and speak up. In that order. And begin to connect. See here's the crucial. This is what it's all about. And if I'm not mistaken all people identified as postmodernists writers would agree with connect how we act to a new understanding a new way of making reality. So the ultimate goal here is action. How do we act. And I believe that the primary point here is that we will not act on the basis of absolutist assumptions. I think that's right. I think that's what they want to say. we will stop acting on the basis of absolutist assumptions.

OK with the side bar one here on page 13 some of the language here. So if you have any any discussions on this I put this this is three pages. Yes, well yes of course. [inaudible question] Critical. Yes. I agree with that. Well two things to say there Only if you accept an absolute logic. I mean that's the reply from the side. Well of course except naps. Would you want to remember that logic is one of the things that is deabsolutized [inaudible question]? Actually they would not think so they would think that the force of the statement would come from your social environment one way or the other. They don't. I don't know of a single postmodernist who conceives of logic in the way that would fit in with what you are suggesting and I'm just giving them a run for their money you understand because what they would say Well of course not. I mean the force of the statement depends upon many factors coming from them. Whether you accept it or not is basically. Not an old fashioned rigorous sense but it's a causal question. What causes you to accept. Postmodernity. Replaces reasons. In the old fashioned sense with causes in a social sense.

Now that's not going to satisfy you and it won't satisfy me. But then we have to assume the burden of producing some Way of thinking that will help them. And of course we can't give in to their theory and say Well what I should do is I will attempt to cause them to think the way I do. Well I don't know because the question begging but of course you and I are bothered by question back question begging is not great reproach in the writings of the postmodernists. I mean if you many postmodernists don't understand these issues and so you can confront them in this way but a very clever person will. Will not be bothered by this at all. And if you want to see how this works. Look at this. I don't I said encounter but I'm not sure I want to call it that between John Searle and Derrida. It's just two ships passing in the night I think. But of course each ship thought that they had encountered the other head on and sunk it. [inaudible question]

Oh it's Inc., I-n-c limited Inc. It first appeared in Glyph, the literary magazine but literary Inc. is the name of it. and I forget uh Derrida keeps coming back to it and you really want to. If you really want to get the texture of this stuff you can't beat this place this little thing. And to watch the way they deal with one another. Derrida decides very soon to call Searle sorrow to change his name to address him as Sorrow. Of course it isn't just being mean on Derrida's part. He wants to watch the effect of that word on Searle. Because his point is that language does not just function to convey information and do a few other jobs that is languages like this loose cannon in the ship that is always banging around you and so you know. You know Searle's should have called him Do-Da. All right.

In any case. I'd like to just glance at the sidebar one because this really just comes right out and says so much of. The first paragraph here a 13 page 13 cultures construct construct reality frames that we live in. But since they're always concocting multiple and opposing stories of what is real there is no one all powerful. So then he does a kind of quick. History of scholasticism with Aristotle's. Classical realism. Lessons in a paragraph modernity like classical realism and postmodern. It is a mindset and attitude. A way of making meaning and values. The approach in the discussion of postmodern is to say that all of you other folks are just doing what we're doing. And why how do you know that. Because that's the only thing we can do. That's where the essence begins to slip in. Now we start with the Western world view of faith and God. Faith. Mysticism and magic permeate the world and stand for as the means of connecting word and world representation and reality. Only by magic only magic in this period is aware of the gap between the two. And therefore for the need for connection. How does that come about in magic member? Magic is always a matter of getting the right words. If you don't get them right. Well either nothing happens or something you didn't want to have happen.

You say the wrong word then instead of the person of the Frog turning into a present turned to a Hippopotamus. So the problem of getting the right connection arises for magic. But faith and mysticism allowed no such distance only the unbeliever in the center were cast out of the oneness of God's world. Right at the bottom of the page. Faith holds that Adam named the things and creatures of the world that story a biblical story is repeated endlessly in postmodernist writings. This sense that there was a sort of transparent pane of glass between what we said about the world what was in the world between representation was actually the top of this page. It was God's power and goodness that secured a fixed unwavering always reliable opinion between what man could say was real and true. It's true though fundamentally what is at work here is simply the idea that God really does know. I mean there's God's apprehension of reality is not relative. He sees it. Absolutely. And then when he conveys the word to human beings. They know now if they are. Crosswise of God's word they don't know. And they can't make life work.

So then he continues on the classic realist. This. Is the one that is associated with God's view. And Putnam uses the phrase God's eye view and you will have read it this literature I think several times That's what it really refers to the idea that there is this is one way the world is there and that the human mind at least subject to God is capable of grasping the world. That way. And the idea that transparent pain is that your consciousness on this view does not necessarily cut you off from the world as it is to make sense. But then when you bring as we move along here. We become conscious of our representations. [gap from 45:36-54] That there are many ways that we think about the same thing or see what seems to be the same thing. Many different ways. So then the question is which ones are those really get it. Modernity is a story of how to manage your representations so that they get reality. We talked about that stated that several times. modernity is a story. Watch the idea of a problem in representation and. Then the problem is how do you

use representations to a new reality. That's modernity's project. And the assumption is of course it's solvable. The change to Postmodernity is. That. Framework of representations is all we can know. There may be more there maybe not but all we can know is not reality but realities that is what we take to real. God's voice cannot help us because with God's voice comes to us what we experience are not God's voice but representations of God's voice just as when I see an apple what I see is not the apple but the representation of the apple. By the way I need to just Disconnect Heidegger from that whole view Heidegger actually. In my. View. Was very close to a naive realist. But that's a long discussion.

So now just a little more here on this page 14 a little about the middle. Dates modernity with the publication of Descartes discourse and method can you see why that would be because that is how do you work with your representation to achieve reality. Descartes has no doubt this is possible. All you have to do is figure out how to do it. What does sin amount to for Descartes sin for Descartes is not an affliction of the mind. It's an affliction of the will. The mind is OK if you just won't let your will out run. Your. Appropriate conceptions like you know. You know what it is to overdrive your headlights. When you're driving so fast that you can't stop before you hit what your headlights are not yet reaching. That's over driving your headlights. [inaudible comments and laughing] Don't quickly. We were never that we can't get this done anyway. So let's do well what we're going to do [inaudible question] I think it is basically right. But it's not very helpful to say. Descartes thought it was helpful to say because he believed he had a certain view of how this worked. That meant you absolutely could avoid all error if you would just know my view is that you'd be dead if you tried that. Because you're in a situation of action. Where you're not going to be able to get your ideas clear. I think Descartes in his own way came to admit that. But the problem is that we can't get. In our finitude we can't give enough clarity and

distinctness about the reality we're dealing with to allow us to act within the purview clear and distinct ideas. Clear and distinct ideas for Descartes of course were ideas that were absolutely right. Brian is raising something here. The Noetic Corruption.

Speaker 5:

Yeah how in the world can you stare us in the face and say that you agree with Descartes when there is scriptural text all over the place that talks about the mind being darkened.

Dallas Willard:

He Doesn't say why it's darkened. See Descartes doesn't say the mind is not darkened and the whole story of passions in the continental rationalists is a story of darkness obscurity and so Descartes doesn't say that he realizes there's a great danger. For example, he has to take the compromise of accepting established authority while he works out his problems. By the way if you haven't read Descartes' Discourse on Method it's a charming piece and you would really enjoy it I think just to read it. And one of the problems when we get caught up in these kinds of discussions is that we don't really go back and do justice to these guys we're talking about I think I've mentioned this but I don't know how many books I've seen in the last last uh century, no [laughter]. In the last decade that you know are dumping on Descartes. I mean you could write a book by that title. Just Descartes it's just he just taken like an idiot and he wasn't an idiot. But no I think there's plenty of darkness in the mind.

But I do believe that a will set on God will succeed in not basing their life on it. So I essentially agree with Descartes. And see this as Descartes' The Odyssey what he's doing in the meditations is he's developing his theology. who is responsible for evil? And his view is human beings are. God isn't. God made you where you wouldn't have to do anything wrong. [inaudible question] His endless endlessly retold. Don't believe it. And they say things that just make you want to holler [inaudible comment] Well I wouldn't say it wouldn't help because you see you want. You can never tell. It might cause an avalanche in his mind and he might suddenly. But what you can't do is expect just that he would say oh the laws of logic. Yes. You can't expect that. But on the other hand the friendly discussion with some humor and. Sometimes even you. After all, one who is not a postmodernist doesn't dismiss causality and doesn't say rhetoric is pointless. So it's it's like we've got the best of both worlds on that one.

Speaker 6:

Because for example Plato was willing to play games with language and look at language playfully and do other things which postmodernists don't recognize at all and their picture of the medieval world is overly scholastic and seems consist of Thomas Aquinas by himself in the garden and in both of those things are wrong and I'm wondering how much postmodernism depends on an incorrect view of history.

Dallas Willard:

Okay now this is one thing that you can do with it if you're interested in encountering postmodernists is they do respect scholarship. In fact, much of their rhetoric and people like

Fuchou and Derrida depends on pulling out stuff that is some of the most. Deep digging Cinder sifting and scholarship you'll find true. Fuchou Basically won by intimidating his world with scholarship of a sort that was fearsome. So it is appropriate to go back and say look I mean how about doing justice to Aquinas. Or. Plato or whoever. Yes, here's here's the one on 21. This is this is typical you just want to say ouch. Right at the top here. Here I want to put my representational of classic realism here into the mindset that allows us to think that our pictures of the world are not pictures but the world itself. Right.

I mean strictly speaking. I have never heard any philosopher ever say anything remotely close to that. [inaudible comment] Well I think that's true but actually that is an incredibly sloppy statement. Pictures of the world are not pictures but the world itself. I mean that's just forcing it something down their throats. That they would never accept. All right at the top to the bottom of the page the last into the last paragraph ending. Talk about Lepuschion's reality self-present self-evident self-communicable. As they didn't dispose of themselves. The constructions of reality that their minds were already in. So those kinds of statements aren't helpful.

Speaker 7:

Dallas I've seen people try the self-preferentiality response. They've heard it, it's the first response they get and it just doesn't touch it. So I think that your approach, what you said is a lot better to go back and show that [inaudible].

Speaker 8:

Yeah I'm trying hard to differentiate because I'm [inaudible] that we're looking at just like when they deal with Christians to deal with our best thinkers and not sort of Folk Christians, Folk Christian apologists.

Dallas Willard:

but now you can take that point to the many writers really do suggest that there isn't anything called post-modernism. That they do not have a positive view of things. Now that's the Wittgensteinian element that is coming through primarily because Wittgenstein is the absolute genius at advancing a view without admitting that he's advancing it. You see that the virtue of this sort of thing is that then of course you don't have to defend it. And the real the real catch now is whether or not the postmodernist has to defend their views and how they're going to do it. So one they might say they have no views. They don't have they don't have to defend their views or they can defend their views by whistling and dancing.

So let me just line that up again and say there must be a view. Secondly it has to be defended and somehow rationally not by street fights. You wouldn't you would never think of having a hollering contest. Or. Submitting it to the law or something of that sort. I think there's got to be some kind of rational defense. That would mean that rationality has to mean something as opposed to nonrationality. See now that's the point. You can go back to your point about logic. OK. That's not what is.

Speaker 8:

My first point is and I didn't mean to make anything so simple as sort of a relativism uh I guess my difficulty is knowing how to carry on a conversation with someone whom I can suddenly decide to take ironically. Everything Natali says is irony and so he doesn't mean any of it and there would be sort of illogical reason that I should [inaudible]. It's difficult to carry on a conversation with someone where-

Dallas Willard:

That's where you have to come back to this question John. I mean you have to say Do you have if you will just let them speak. Is there reason to accept. Yes, or no what does reason mean. What are the reasons. Are they good reasons on your account of reasons. I don't think any postmodernists writer that I know of including the totally dismiss those questions

Speaker 8:

The one time I ask a question like that to an academic postmodern is why would you ask such a question. [inaudible comment from group] Right. Right.

Dallas Willard:

Well if that's the intent then you should pursue it by saying what is the right question. Help me out. Help me out. So just throw yourself on their mercy. Well. But now look I've seen some very bizarre situations here. And I know that there are many people who have big names as post-modernist writers who simply cannot engage in this kind of discussion. They don't know

how to do it. It isn't that they know how to do it and they won't. This is simply a fact now that is not true of Richard Rorty. But it is true of many many writers in postmodernism and they actually and especially if they are in the literary fields they tend to be people who assume that they don't need to learn how to do this other at all because it is wrong. And so they will just charge you with something or ask you a question like a favor favorite charge to these people as well. You're just re ontologies.

Right. So. Basically if you're dealing with a flesh and blood person you have to love them as yourself. They are your neighbor. And so that means to humble yourself to. And to ask them to explain try to get them to say something other than just spouting lies. That's true of the modernists. Likewise, because you know all of us all sides of that discussion in religion and philosophy are prone to the same human foibles. Postmodernists like to put the burden of proof on someone else. [inaudible comment] Well but you see not that that's where I see I I try never to put the burden of proof on someone else because my attitude is I'm the one who wants to know. I. Am not engaged in a process of refuting people. I want to understand. And so I don't put the burden of proof on them. I've got it. I am the one who needs to know. The primary aim of work in the intellectual world is to come to know. Not to show that others are wrong.

Speaker 10:

Do you say that in the philosophy department?

Dallas Willard:

Oh I do all the time because this is one of the primary things that afflicts philosophy as a field. Nobody's listening. It's just like the Senate. Nobody is listening they're there to show that everyone is wrong. So this is quite a different approach that I think we need to adopt and I think actually to be a disciple of Christ in our in our field is precisely among other things not to shift the burden of proof to others. [inaudible comment] Modern. Bell versus the experts that has. And often dismissing questions. Saying why would you ask that question. Now that could be said in a way that was genuinely designed to start a conversation. It was. Well it rarely is really being. I mean I've seen that done to students in classrooms teachers use that to just embarrass students and shut them up. I mean what. What's the answer to why would you ask that question. Well you see sir it's because I'm an idiot. I that's that's why I asked the question.

Speaker 9:

[inaudible] Discussion of apologetics, [inaudible] postmodernism it has occurred to me throughout these several days that what seems logical postmodern many postmodern is this concern with ethics especially with violence. Yeah and I think one of the main concerns with absolutist or hierarchical structures of knowledge is that it inevitably results in misuse of power and ultimately violence [inaudible] that shows that our way of knowing, our way of understanding our way of doing things doesn't have to [inaudible] to power or [inaudible] in our own behavior but also in our language because violence is one of those words that is now interpreted in many manways. postmodernist take the word violence to mean many am any different things, as do feminist, some of which are very good uses of the word extensions of the word but any part of our scholarship needs to focus not just on the question of [inaudible] but also the question of how are the violence, does our way of doing things as Christians necessarily

lead to misuse of power or violence or can we actually say no uh it doesn't have to and they will show you why it does' thereto but [inaudible] that postmodernist do throw around white sometimes lazily and that's where we need to reign in some discussion too.

Dallas Willard:

You have really get the root here. You see. This is Derrida's view and their view is that names and predicates invariably do violence. I cannot call you Todd. Without doing violence to you. I cannot call you a male or a teacher or anything without doing violence to you. Anything that suggests you are this is false. because identities. Are not what you find in reality you only find differences. So here's a very high blown philosophical theory. And what is its point precisely. Social political personal. So let's about this a moment. This is an attempt to deal with sin and redemption. And it does it by approaching it ontologically. because what this is is not just a discussion of language but evap to which language applies. What Christians would deal with by Grace Derrida and others try to deal with by nonidentity. It's very interesting to see how all of these issues were carefully worked through by the existentialists. Sart and Marcel in particular are to be both. Sart essentially has the same view. As it's not an accident. I think I've mentioned to you Derrida came to Paris intending to write his master's dissertation on the thought SART. Mightily a cynical attempt to say-

[End]