

## Postmodernism and Christian Theology (Part 8, Disc 2)

By Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

...he thought plagiarism was better. And so simply took Sarte's views. And when you know Sarte's views and you know Derrida it's just like and you put Bergson on top of side it's just like whole cloth. But now see this is this is what the discussion is really about. And especially as Christian scholars. How do you you cannot approach this just in terms of who's going to win the argument because the real the real issue here is who's going to solve the problem. Who's going to solve the problem. It's one thing to rhetorically or logically beat the crap out of a deconstructionist. It's another thing to solve the problem that the deconstructionist is basically concerned about.

Speaker 2:

So the deconstructionist, if I'm understanding correctly, understand power as violence so that's coercion immediately-

Dallas Willard:

Right. So it's much deeper than what we would call self-conscious power. [inaudible comment] Yeah. Right. And if you read the section of Sartre being of nothingness on the other you will see all of this played out much better than these guys later ever do. But you're absolutely right Yvonne.

Speaker 2:

So interaction by definition is violence.

Dallas Willard:

Yes.

Speaker 2:

Well then how can anything ever happen-

Dallas Willard:

Well maybe they're wrong. About interaction. Maybe they're wrong about that.

Speaker 2:

Well I feel they've been doing a lot of work with the power trust issues something that struck me very much [inaudible] Herbert in the last line [inaudible] power and love [inaudible] love and trust. [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Now if you want to see that done philosophically exquisitely read Gabriel Marcel. Gabriel Marcel is a Christian who was converted as an adult. He understands that perfectly. So in him you don't have this struggle. Of Power. You have a domain of grace which is understood to be not just. Theological but also a basic feature of human relations. [inaudible question] Well probably the best place to start. Would be. The most organized- He's a very disorganized writer. The most organized book is called a book called The Existential background of human dignity. Existential background of human dignity. But probably if you can put up with his exploratory form he has a little book called being and having. That is more like a transcript of his own experiences. He was a musician. His music fits into his thinking. As it has done with quite a number of philosophers who knew music. Well. Wasn't that. A. Quite a rabbit chase. That's great. Let's break and there are a few things I want to make sure we look at here about religion especially.

[hustle and bustle of break time 4:01- 6:35]

Dallas Willard:

...I'm not going to be able to do much here... but that is that whole section here, [inaudible] now what did you say about it? The wall exists for us, at least that is a nice statement, back to the wall. Ok bottom of page 21 is that real? Is that wall back of you real?

Speaker 3:

And I was just saying Natoli's comment on the bottom of 21, is I think another example of what you're calling arrow of intentionality where we say we always observe from within where the blank is observed as an object of observation and I think that as uh [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

Theory laden perception. Well let's just yes. [inaudible question asked] He wants to change how he wants us to be righteous to stop acting as if there were absolute truth. [inaudible comment] But you see the thing is he thinks that the terribly bad consequences come of that. And he wants to avoid those consequences. [inaudible comment] Well he thinks for example if I'm saying he but in general I'm making general statements here. This tendency of tendency of thought is that the bad things that happen happen because people believe in absolutes. And by the way. Politics religion and the market. Look at the bottom of page 14. You see here about 12 lines up. You see that line that says classic realism is the preferred approach of both marketing and politics. A transparently obvious and it goes without saying context is sought in both Enterprises. You see that that's quite a significant say look at the next paragraph. But what of religion. The original purveyor of the naive realist attitude.

So you can see I think Yvonne here that there's this sounds like a nice little negation but you can see that there is some really big game in the sights. Market politics, religion. the Protestant requisition muddy the waters here. There were suddenly two Christian representation or interpretations of God's words in other words now we become conscious of our representations. That's what he said is the distinctively modern move. And I've said that the modern says yes. So you need a method of handling these so you can know reality as it is in itself. And then the postmodern comes along and says Well it's very fine. But you also have to recognize that you're going to be quite limited in what you can do with this and you can never get outside the circle of consciousness and then that of course is cultural consciousness not individual consciousness.

Speaker 4:

Just to piggyback on your comment and tie it back to what Todd was saying about violence the way that postmodernists think that we act badly and believe in absolutes is that we are so sure that we're right that we are willing to impose it upon other people even including violent means and so this is the critique that's made of Christianity in particular in postmodernist perspective and unfortunately they have a history to look back on to support it so they'll look at the way in which Native Americans were treated and such things. So that helps me to have an example [inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

No no no that's right now. But let me just add on to that. This is where the analysis of consciousness and thought comes in because what that analysis says if You are absolutely certain of your views. You don't know what's going on. So then you shouldn't. If you're absolutely certain of your views you have misunderstood how the mind works how language works and what's the function of that to undercut absolute certainty. I mean absolute certainty isn't a peculiarly Christian phenomenon in human history. Genghis Khan for example. And Tambar Lane and people like that. They were absolutely certain. They didn't write books about absolute certainty is a dangerous thing it's a dangerous thing. Now then we live in a context in which it is said uncertainty is a dangerous thing. Uncertainty is equated with doubt. And doubt as opposed to faith which is saving and doubt is losing. So you begin to see the tremendous dynamics that we set up so how is a thoughtful loving careful person to avoid Cilla and Caribdeous here and manage to stay really close. That's the only thing that makes doing what we're doing here worthwhile.

That's why these questions you see these are the primary questions. And we have other questions like. Does knowing. Mean that you are intolerant. That's commonly assumed today if you say you know, that you are intolerant. That you are taught this is why people are now outraged at JP as he was talking the other day when he goes on a college campus now as opposed to what used to happen. See it used not very long ago it was not thought that assurance of your stand that meant that you were morally dangerous. Now it means you're more morally dangerous. For. These reasons. And as Brian says it is not without some basis. [inaudible question] Like. Well I think that you have to say that that's part of the price that human beings and God pays for freedom. I think that's what you have to say. And. We know that even within the old testament there was a progression for example from corporate responsibility such as you

see in the case of Achan. Right. To Ezekiel saying the soul that sinneth it shall die which is normally put on fencepost in southern Missouri they indicate that if you sin you're going to die what is the point of the passage was you will die for someone else's sins so now then you have to ask yourself what was God doing in the case Achan. And now the whole method of knowing the will of God there becomes in question, they drew lots and so on. And that was a common way of doing it. Like Jonathan or Saul did that to figure out who had eaten on the day of the battle when they were not supposed to eat. So now what. What you have to I believe and I'm just going to answer your question and not worry about all the finessing. From my point of view an answer which is we have to understand that the Bible is an accurate record of how God deals with people. And that does not always represent God's will independently of the historical circumstances.

So for example in the case of Achan did he really believe that his dogs and cats and Babies and all that should be killed. Or was he preparing. Was he prepared to handle that scene in the larger context of his kingdom and care for those people also. But within the framework of his intention of developing a nation which could adequately prepare for the coming of Christ you can't imagine that Jesus himself would have when he came authorized what happened to Achan. In fact, the cases are quite contrary. Let the one who is without sin cast the first stone. It's easy not to appreciate what a radical departure. That was. Because this is a challenge to the hearts of those people but one has to recognize, I think, the condition of the people who came out of Egypt, what kind of people they were and God's willingness not just to make sure they didn't do anything wrong but to continue to work with them. While they came to the point where in the fullness of time they could receive Christ and reject Christ freely. So that's a long winded answer to a very difficult issue perhaps others would like to speak to that. You understand June's point.

We have the absolute truth in the Bible. Now many people would immediately turn away from that. Ok you understand that. Certainly many people identified as postmodernists among Christian thinkers wouldn't even touch it. They wouldn't even take it seriously enough to try to deal with it. But I I want to take it seriously so then we have to answer those kind of questions. [inaudible question] What culture did you grow up in?

Speaker 5:

I grew up in Africa, and in Africa death is one snake bit [inaudible] death is not-

Dallas Willard:

They wouldn't even worry about this question. [inaudible comment] Most of the world has not progressed beyond corporate moral responsibility. Of course. To say have not progressed is to put my reading on this which of course is based on biblical biblical understanding in fact the moral views of the Western world still are fundamentally those of the Bible. They're just not based on the Bible. Not based on anything. J.P. and Brad were you trying to get back in here.

Brad: I just want to say really quickly while Mike is here I think that it's crucial question that is raised in the Old Testament classes for students but especially in this postmodern context

Dallas Willard:

Yes. Yes. It is. Absolutely.



JP:

[inaudible]

Dallas Willard:

JP tell us.

JP:

Well no no no no no. I just- [laughter] I know your tricks I've studied under you for two years. Well I was in San Diego yesterday spent three hours with a hundred and fifty college students and I was asked that question-

[End]